



Department for  
**Social  
Development**

[www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk)

# Join In, Get Involved: Build a Better Future

## A Consultation Paper on a Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland

### July 2009





## Contents

### Ministerial Foreword

- i. Executive Summary
- ii. Introduction
- iii. Context

Chapter 1: Aims and Objectives

Chapter 2: Definition of Volunteering

Chapter 3: Our Vision for Volunteering

Chapter 4: Objective 1 Volunteering: Recognising the Value and Promoting the Benefits

Chapter 5: Objective 2 Volunteering: Enhancing Accessibility and Diversity

Chapter 6: Objective 3 Volunteering: Improving the Experience

Chapter 7: Objective 4 Volunteering: Supporting and Strengthening the Infrastructure

Chapter 8: Objective 5 Volunteering: Delivering the Strategy

Appendix 1: Equality Groups in Section 75 Pro-forma

Appendix 2: Rural proofing checklist

Appendix 3: Freedom of Information Act 2000 - Confidentiality of Consultations

Appendix 4: Volunteering Strategy Steering Group Membership



## Ministerial Foreword

I have always had a keen interest in, and passion for, volunteering. I recognise the tremendous contribution which volunteering makes to Northern Ireland society. I strongly believe that volunteers are the lifeblood of our communities. In economic terms formal volunteering alone is worth over £500 million each year in Northern Ireland. More importantly it has a huge beneficial impact across society both for volunteers and for people who avail of the valuable services they provide. Volunteering is a cornerstone of civic life.

I want to encourage the growth of volunteering and provide new and better experiences for volunteers. I want us to create the conditions that enable volunteering to flourish. This is why I am consulting on a Volunteering Strategy. This Strategy will provide us with the opportunity to take forward many actions to ensure that volunteering thrives in Northern Ireland.

I firmly believe in a fair and inclusive society for all, in a better future for everyone in Northern Ireland. The Strategy will convey a strong message about the value of volunteering and how it can strengthen us as a region – to connect citizens and communities, to reinforce the fabric of society and to create a more inclusive and cohesive society.

Today's economic climate certainly presents challenges for Government, the voluntary sector, business and indeed for everyone across Northern Ireland. But these circumstances also provide us with opportunities to grow together as a society, to come together to meet the social challenges we face and to join together to tackle disadvantage in all forms. Government alone cannot meet all of the challenges nor take advantage of all these opportunities.

There will be a role for everyone in realising this Volunteering Strategy, from volunteer involving organisations, central and local government, employers and of course volunteers themselves.

We have much to do, much to aim for and much that we can achieve by all of us playing our part. Now is the time to join in, get involved and together build a better future which we can all share.



Margaret Ritchie  
Minister for Social Development



## i. Executive Summary

This consultation document aims to facilitate wide ranging discussion on the main challenges facing volunteering in Northern Ireland. The Volunteering Strategy, which will be developed as a result of the consultation process, will set out high-level activities which will seek to strengthen volunteering.

### Aim and Definition

The aim of the Volunteering Strategy (the Strategy) is to involve more people in volunteer action in order to build a better future for themselves and the people of Northern Ireland.

The definition of volunteering referred to in the consultation document is:

**“the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment or individuals outside (or in addition to) one’s immediate family. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.”**

This definition refers to both *formal volunteering* (carried out with, or under the auspices of an organisation/group) and *informal volunteering* (carried out outside an organisation, often at neighbourhood level but outside the immediate family). It comprises the widest spectrum of activity, for example, community development, arts, sport, faith based, education, neighbourliness, youth, environmental, health and direct care.

### Volunteering in Northern Ireland: the Current Picture

*It’s All About Time*<sup>1</sup>, a research report into volunteering conducted in 2007, estimated that over 282,000 individuals over age 16 were formally volunteering and over 470,000 individuals over 16 were informally volunteering. Economically, volunteering is estimated to be worth £937 million per year (£433 million informal and £504 million formal). *It’s All About Time* showed that over three quarters of volunteer involving organisations could not manage without volunteers. However, 55% of organisations indicated that they were finding it more difficult to recruit volunteers. Research shows that formal volunteering levels in Northern Ireland since 1995 are at best static. In 2007, 21% of individuals surveyed were formal volunteers (in 2001 this figure was 29% and in 1995 it was 18%). Informal volunteering has fallen sharply since 1995.

In 2007, work commitments were the main reason people gave for not getting involved or for not increasing involvement, with organisations also ranking this as the most important reason why individuals do not volunteer. The main reasons people ceased volunteering were due to changing work or changing home circumstances. Volunteers are giving less time on average than they were five years ago and they are also more likely to give time to only one organisation than in the past. Most volunteers report getting satisfaction of seeing results and enjoyment as the key benefits of volunteering. People are motivated by wanting to improve things or help people and by the importance of the cause.

This consultation builds on the positive aspects of volunteering while addressing some of the challenges.

---

<sup>1</sup> *It’s All About Time* Volunteering in Northern Ireland, Volunteer Development Agency, 2007

## i. Executive Summary

### The Consultation Document

The consultation document is structured in relation to the objectives identified for the Strategy by the Department for Social Development. In each chapter a series of proposals are made to address the issues facing volunteering at present and in the future. The following section summarises the proposals contained in the document.



### Proposals for consideration

#### Definition

#### The definition of volunteering is:

the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment or individuals outside (or in addition to) one's immediate family. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.

**For Consideration:** Does the definition provided reflect your understanding of volunteering? If not, what comments or suggestions would you make?

#### Vision

#### The Government's vision for volunteering is:

A society where:

- Everyone values the part that volunteering plays in building strong communities and a healthy participative democracy.
- Everyone has the opportunity to have a meaningful volunteering experience.

**For Consideration:** Does the Government's vision for volunteering described above include the correct components? What, if any, other components should be included?

## i. Executive Summary

### Objective 1 Volunteering: Recognising the Value and Promoting the Benefits

1. Volunteer involving organisations should be encouraged and supported to recognise and publicly acknowledge the achievements of their volunteers and the impact they have had in their communities and in society.
2. Encourage volunteer involving organisations to increase the importance they place on good volunteering practice and to invest in it.
3. Champion volunteering within Government and across the public sector to encourage increased recognition and value for volunteering as a key component of a healthy, participative democracy.
4. Engage the Northern Ireland media, over the lifetime of the Strategy, to promote, encourage and influence attitudes to volunteering and to provide opportunities for the recognition of volunteers.
5. Encourage young people to become involved in volunteering and help them develop skills and gain experience through their voluntary activity.
6. Measure the impact of volunteer involvement on volunteers, individuals, organisations and society.
7. Support the development of a Northern Ireland wide volunteering database and associated website to support new and existing volunteers and volunteer involving organisations and provide the key information point for volunteering opportunities.
8. Provide and maintain an easily accessible range of comprehensive volunteering information in a variety of formats.
9. Develop and implement a volunteer recruitment programme.
10. Promote and encourage Employer Supported Volunteering within Government and across the public sector.
11. Encourage employers to recognise the relevance of skills and experience gained by employees through voluntary activity.
12. Make it easy for employers of all sizes to engage in Employer Supported Volunteering.
13. Encourage employers to build good practice and gain recognition for their participation in Employer Supported Volunteering.
14. In line with the *Compact between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland*, Government will seek to ensure that volunteering is protected from the unintended consequences of legislation and Government policy.
15. Explore opportunities with the Government of the Republic of Ireland to develop volunteering in border areas and volunteering on an island wide basis.

**For Consideration:** Do the proposals in this section address the main issues in relation to recognising the value and promoting the benefits of volunteering? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

## i. Executive Summary

### Objective 2 Volunteering: Enhancing Accessibility and Diversity

16. Encourage volunteer involving organisations to develop practices that enable them to involve a diverse range of volunteers and offer a welcoming environment to everyone.

17. Review mechanisms to encourage people with disabilities to become involved in volunteering.

18. Work across Government, the volunteering infrastructure and the insurance industry to limit the potential for insurance to be a barrier to volunteering.

19. Encourage volunteering among older people and other under represented groups.

20. While ensuring the protection of children and vulnerable adults, explore ways to mitigate any negative impact of policy/legislation on the recruitment of volunteers.

21. Tackle the barriers, real and perceived, which may prevent people on benefits from volunteering.

**For Consideration:** Do the proposals in this section address the main issues in relation to enhancing the accessibility and diversity of volunteering? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

## i. Executive Summary

### Objective 3 Volunteering: Improving the Experience

22. Encourage and support volunteer managers and volunteer involving organisations to improve their volunteer management practice and gain relevant accreditation.
23. Continue to have a small grants fund to support local volunteer involvement.
24. Support volunteers involved in management committees to enhance their skills and knowledge base and improve their volunteer experience.
25. Utilise Employer Supported Volunteering to develop and strengthen management committees.
26. Support significant regional cultural and sporting events to involve and recognise volunteers.
27. Build volunteer management skills in the faith-based sector to increase volunteer recruitment and retention.
28. Encourage and support the development of volunteering opportunities that are attractive, varied, and flexible.
29. Encourage family volunteering opportunities that enable families to volunteer as a group to encourage volunteering from an early age.
30. Encourage the development of “turn up, take part” volunteering opportunities that provide immediate opportunities for people to volunteer.
31. Encourage and support the development of skills by volunteers and, as appropriate, the achievement of recognised qualifications that are beneficial to carrying out their voluntary activities.
32. Enable careers information in schools to present volunteering as an option for gaining skills and experience.
33. Encourage the development of volunteering within central and local Government and across the public sector as a means of involving people in supporting the delivery of services for the public.
34. Encourage funders, where appropriate, to ensure the quality of volunteer involvement and management is of an effective standard when considering funding an organisation or awarding a contract where volunteers play a significant part in delivering services.

**For Consideration:** Do the proposals in this section address the main issues in relation to improving the volunteering experience? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

## i. Executive Summary

### Objective 4 Volunteering: Supporting and Strengthening the Infrastructure

35. Develop and implement an integrated regional and local infrastructure which provides appropriate services to support volunteer involvement and the delivery of the Strategy.

36. Review existing funding structures within the Department for Social Development to create a comprehensive investment programme to deliver the Strategy and underpin the future of volunteering in Northern Ireland.

**For Consideration:** Do the proposals in this section address the main issues in relation to supporting and strengthening the volunteering infrastructure? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

### Objective 5 Volunteering: Delivering the Strategy

37. Establish a Monitoring Group, with representation at senior levels from across central and local Government, the voluntary and community, statutory and private sectors to monitor and report on the implementation of the Strategy.

38. Undertake an evaluation of the Strategy throughout its lifetime with a final report and recommendations after the end of the Strategy period.

39. Conduct a survey of the public and volunteer involving organisations at the end of the Strategy period to update the findings of the 2007 *It's All About Time* report. This would include information about volunteering levels at council and regional levels.

40. Encourage volunteers and volunteer involving organisations to get involved and remain involved in delivering the Strategy.

41. Develop mechanisms to ensure that the cross cutting nature of volunteering is reflected in close working between Government departments to deliver the Strategy.

42. Encourage public bodies such as health trusts, local authorities, and education bodies to get involved and remain involved in delivering the Strategy.

**For Consideration:** Do the proposals in this section address the main issues in relation to delivering the Volunteering Strategy? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

## ii. Introduction

This consultation document aims to facilitate wide ranging discussion on the main challenges facing volunteering in Northern Ireland. The Volunteering Strategy, which will be developed as a result of the consultation process, will set out high-level activities, which will seek to strengthen volunteering.

The consultation document is laid out in chapters. Each chapter contains sections outlining key issues and proposals which we are making to strengthen and support volunteering. The chapters are:

**Chapter 2:** Definition of Volunteering

**Chapter 3:** Our Vision for Volunteering

**Chapter 4:** Volunteering: Objective 1 Recognising the Value and Promoting the Benefits

**Chapter 5:** Volunteering: Objective 2 Enhancing Accessibility and Diversity

**Chapter 6:** Volunteering: Objective 3 Improving the Experience

**Chapter 7:** Volunteering: Objective 4 Supporting and Strengthening the Infrastructure

**Chapter 8:** Volunteering: Objective 5 Delivering the Strategy.

At the end of each chapter there is a question for consideration in relation to the proposals made in that chapter. Please feel free to respond to the questions, or to highlight issues, which are most relevant to you. It would be helpful if you could give practical examples to explain or illustrate your points.

## Other Formats

This consultation document is also available on audio CD and in Braille. If you would like this document in another format, or if you wish to obtain further copies, please contact us. This document is also available on the Department for Social Development website: [www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk)

A shorter version of the consultation document is also available on the Department for Social Development website: [www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk).

## How to respond

The closing date for responses is 9th October 2009. Responses, or queries, can be made in one of three ways:

In writing to:

Volunteering  
Community Support Team  
Department for Social Development  
Voluntary and Community Unit  
Lighthouse Building  
1 Cromac Place  
BELFAST  
BT7 2JB

Or by email to:

[volunteering@dsdni.gov.uk](mailto:volunteering@dsdni.gov.uk)

Or via the Department for Social Development website

[www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk)

If you have any queries you can also contact us by:

Telephone: 028 9082 9430  
Fax: 028 9082 9431  
Textphone: 028 9082 9446

## Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Volunteering should be open to everyone, regardless of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race or where they live. Research, published in *It's All About Time*, shows that volunteering is not as inclusive as it might be and that participation levels in certain groups can vary. For example, while the formal volunteering level in the overall population is 21% only 17% of people over 65 and 3% of people with disabilities are formal volunteers. Some people from black and minority ethnic communities, new migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities may also encounter barriers in engaging in volunteering.

The Department will be carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment on the proposals contained in this consultation document. An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy. Its primary function is to assess the extent of differential impact of policy on Section 75 categories, and groups within those categories (please see Appendix 1 for information about the Section 75 groupings), and to determine whether that impact is adverse, i.e. whether the policy negatively affects people within one or more of the equality groups.

A key part of assessing the impact of any policy is the gathering and consideration of evidence and information. The Department would therefore also welcome your views on the proposals in the consultation document from a Section 75 perspective. Comments should be made preferably by using the questionnaire at Appendix 1. We have asked two questions:

- Question 1 Is there any evidence of higher or lower volunteering levels in any of the following equality groups?
- Question 2 Are any of the proposals likely to have a different impact on volunteers in any of the following groups?

You should indicate which of the equality groups are impacted and the reasons why. The completed pro-forma should be returned to us with any other comments you might have.

### **Rural Proofing**

A number of rural issues have been identified in the development of the consultation document. These issues, along with mitigating measures, have been shown on the Rural Proofing Checklist at Appendix 2. Further Rural Proofing will be undertaken when the findings from this consultation are known and the Strategy is developed.

### **Consultation Responses**

Your response may be made publicly available. If you do not wish to have your response made public, or if you would prefer it to be used anonymously, please indicate this when responding.

### **Freedom of Information**

The information you send us may be passed to colleagues within the Department and published in any summary of responses received. Under the Freedom of Information Act all information contained in your response may be subject to disclosure. More information about the Freedom of Information Act is at Appendix 3.

### **Consultation Events**

The Department for Social Development plans to hold consultation meetings in relation to this document. For more information on the dates and venues for these consultation events:

- visit our website at: [www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk); or
- call 028 9082 9430 or use our textphone on 028 9082 9446; or
- email us at: [volunteering@dsdni.gov.uk](mailto:volunteering@dsdni.gov.uk)

### iii. Context

The Department for Social Development has identified the need for a strategic approach to the promotion and development of volunteering in Northern Ireland. Volunteering underpins much of our community life and the services which benefit people. Volunteering is already impacting on how the Programme for Government is delivered across a range of areas. Some examples of this are:

- Volunteer coaches underpin the delivery of the Sports Strategy and how we respond to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games;
- Volunteers in the arts ensure a vibrant cultural community life;
- The Youth Service relies on the vast majority of its staff who are volunteers;
- Volunteer school governors help to shape the education delivered to our children;
- Volunteers in literacy and numeracy support and assist in skills development which will impact on the whole economy;
- Volunteer befrienders and counsellors impact on mental health services and victims groups;
- Rural communities are dependent on volunteers to deliver community development;
- Activists continue to work for the environment;
- Residents groups work to improve the community life of many disadvantaged areas;
- Volunteers on management committees support the delivery of a range of public services;
- Community playgroups continue to deliver high quality, affordable childcare involving volunteers;
- Mentors work with young people in the criminal justice system;
- Volunteers across a range of areas continue to work for equality and better community relations;
- Groups run by volunteers continue to deliver support to older people;
- Volunteer drivers assist in the delivery of community transport services.

There is a need for a strong public policy context to create the conditions that enable volunteering to flourish and to ensure that its impact on public policies such as shared future, education, criminal justice, health etc. is maximised. The Department for Social Development currently core funds the support infrastructure for volunteering. This is provided by the Volunteer Development Agency, a regional organisation, which provides information, policy, training and support to enhance the involvement and maximise the contribution of volunteers. At a local level fifteen volunteer centres, which are independent organisations, provide support in the promotion and development of volunteer opportunities and the recruitment of volunteers across Northern Ireland.

The Department has also provided direct support to volunteering through the Community Volunteering Scheme. During 2008/09 this supported over 250 organisations to improve their volunteering practice and increase levels of volunteering, particularly among under-represented groups. Volunteering is also indirectly supported through other Department for Social Development funding, such as funding for organisations providing advice, community development activities, etc. Government Departments and local councils also have funding streams, which enable and support volunteers in organisations to deliver services.

Since the end of the Active Community Initiative in 2004, there has not been a co-ordinated, planned approach to volunteering in Northern Ireland at regional and local level. As a legacy of the Year of the Volunteer in 2005 the Department for Social Development agreed to produce a Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland. In 2006 the Department took the lead in establishing a Working Group made up of representatives from the public, voluntary and community, faith based, business, sports and arts sectors to consider the development of a volunteering strategy. (See Appendix 4 for the Volunteering Strategy Steering Group Membership.) In August 2007 the Minister for Social Development gave her agreement to take forward the development of the Strategy. The Volunteering Strategy is included in the Programme for Government in relation to promoting active citizenship and sustaining volunteering, alongside a target to increase volunteering and active citizenship by 10% by 2012.

In September 2007 the *It's all about Time*<sup>2</sup> research report was published. This report gives a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of volunteering in Northern Ireland from the perspective of individuals and organisations. Similar reports were published in 2001 and 1995. The research referred to in this document is *It's All About Time* unless otherwise stated.

The Volunteering Strategy Steering Group has been involved, along with other stakeholders, in identifying the issues which need to be addressed to support and enhance volunteering in Northern Ireland. Details of the findings from the stakeholder groups are available on the Department for Social Development website: [www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk). Evidence in relation to volunteering from across the UK, Republic of Ireland and further afield was considered in framing this consultation document.

This consultation document presents issues and proposals for consideration in relation to the way ahead for volunteering in Northern Ireland across a range of sectors.

---

<sup>2</sup> *It's All About Time* Volunteering in Northern Ireland, Volunteer Development Agency, 2007

## Chapter 1: Aims and Objectives

### Aim of the Volunteering Strategy

To involve more people in volunteer action in order to build a better future for the people of Northern Ireland.

### Objectives

#### Objective 1

Volunteering: Recognising the Value and Promoting the Benefits

#### Objective 2

Volunteering: Enhancing Accessibility and Diversity

#### Objective 3

Volunteering: Improving the Experience

#### Objective 4

Volunteering: Supporting and Strengthening the Infrastructure

#### Objective 5

Volunteering: Delivering the Strategy.

### Key Performance Indicators

We will know that we have been successful by considering the following key performance indicators:

- A more diverse volunteering population more reflective of our society;
- An increase in the number, range and accessibility of volunteering opportunities;
- An increase in the number of organisations meeting quality standards in volunteer management;
- An increase in the number of volunteer managers, paid and unpaid with accredited qualifications in volunteer management;
- An increase in the level of Employer Supported Volunteering;
- Increased levels of satisfaction with the services provided by the volunteering infrastructure;
- An increased recognition of the value of volunteering; and
- An increase in the numbers of people volunteering.

These are indicative of the kind of performance indicators which are under consideration. Following the consultation process, an action plan will be developed as part of the final Strategy. It is intended that key performance indicators will be a feature of the action plan.

## Chapter 2: Definition of Volunteering

The use of language in relation to volunteering is important as many people engaged in voluntary activity may not necessarily regard themselves as volunteers. They may see themselves as “just helping out”, “doing a favour” or “lending a hand”.

In order to be clear about the meaning of volunteering in relation to the formulation of the Strategy, the Volunteering Strategy Steering Group agreed the following working definition based on the one used in the Compact between Government and the Voluntary & Community Sector<sup>3</sup>:

**Volunteering is defined as the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment or individuals outside (or in addition to) one’s immediate family. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.**



This definition refers to both *formal volunteering* (carried out with, or under the auspices of an organisation/group) and *informal volunteering* (carried out outside the organisation, often at neighbourhood level but outside, or in addition to, the immediate family). It comprises the widest spectrum of activity for example, community development, arts, sport, faith based, education, neighbourliness, youth, environmental, health and direct care.

**For Consideration:** Does the definition provided reflect your understanding of volunteering? If not, what comments or suggestions would you make?

<sup>3</sup> Building Real Partnership: Compact between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland, DHSS, 1998

## Chapter 3: Our Vision of Volunteering

The Government's vision for volunteering is:

A society where:

- Everyone values the part that volunteering plays in building strong communities and a healthy participative democracy.
- Everyone has the opportunity to have a meaningful volunteering experience.

This is underpinned by the following values:

- **Fairness and Equity:** Volunteering enhances social inclusion and should be open to everyone.
- **The importance of free will/choice:** Volunteering is a matter of free choice and there should be no compulsion to take part.
- **Benefit to individual and society:** Volunteering is of benefit to the volunteer and to society in contributing to the building of social capital and progressive social change.



**For Consideration:** Does the Government's vision for volunteering described above include the correct components? What, if any, other components should be included?

## Chapter 4

### Objective 1: Volunteering: Recognising the Value and Promoting the Benefits

Volunteering is at the heart of a democratic society where people can contribute to social change through giving their time. There needs to be an understanding of the importance of volunteers in delivering the many things we take for granted such as youth activities, sports clubs, faith based activities, arts festivals and many other services and activities that make a positive contribution in our society. There needs to be widespread recognition **across society for the value of volunteers** and the benefits of volunteering to people and their communities.

In Northern Ireland we have a strong history and ethos of volunteering. However, in recent years it would seem that involvement in formal volunteering has become, at best, static. We need to move volunteering to a position where it is valued and seen as an important aspect of every day life.

Everyone has a role to play in encouraging and fostering a positive value for volunteering but some groups and individuals can take a lead. For example:

- Central and local Government can help create a positive and accessible environment for volunteering, formal and informal, to thrive. Politicians can recognise and celebrate the contribution of volunteers in creating a better society, building social capital, improving community relations and supporting the integration of people coming to Northern Ireland. Local councils can record levels of volunteering in their areas in order to benchmark involvement at a local level.
- Employers can value volunteering in building skills and experience for paid positions. Schools and youth organisations can ensure that young people are aware of the benefits of volunteering and the impact they can make on issues they care about.
- Volunteer involving organisations can value good practice and profile how the volunteer involvement in their organisations impacts on their service delivery.
- Volunteering infrastructure organisations have a role in developing good practice and promoting volunteering through, for example, national campaigns such as Volunteers' Week or International Volunteer Day.
- People in the public eye can give a lead by involving themselves in volunteering and celebrating the difference it makes to their own and other people's lives. Individuals can let friends and neighbours know about the fun and enjoyment they get from volunteering.

In many cases these things are already happening to some extent but they may need to be strengthened and developed. The following proposals are aimed at recognising the value and promoting the benefits of volunteering.

### Proposal 1

Volunteer involving organisations should be encouraged and supported to recognise and publicly acknowledge the achievements of their volunteers and the impact they have had in their communities and in society.

### Proposal 2

Encourage volunteer involving organisations to increase the importance they place on good volunteering practice and to invest in it.

### Proposal 3

Champion volunteering within Government and across the public sector to encourage increased recognition and value for volunteering as a key component of a healthy, participative democracy.

### Proposal 4

Engage the Northern Ireland media, over the lifetime of the Strategy, to promote, encourage and influence attitudes to volunteering and to provide opportunities for the recognition of volunteers.



### Proposal 5

Encourage young people to become involved in volunteering and help them develop skills and gain experience through their voluntary activity.

### Proposal 6

Measure the impact of volunteer involvement on volunteers, individuals, organisations and society.

In *It's All About Time*, people were asked about the barriers to getting involved or becoming more involved in volunteering. 15% of respondents had not heard about opportunities to volunteer whilst 11% of respondents felt they would not know how to get involved. Others indicated that people felt too old or unskilled to participate or, that they felt their illness or disability prevented them becoming involved. These issues raise the question of **communication of information about volunteering**, the roles available and the skills and background needed to carry out these roles. In addition almost 30% of people said that in response to a direct approach for help they would be pleased to get involved.

Information about volunteering opportunities needs to be more readily available in a variety of styles and formats. An accessible, national **database of volunteering opportunities**, such as [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk) in England, could provide one solution; a telephone helpline could provide another. We also need to learn to effectively harness word of mouth, which has always been such a powerful recruitment tool for volunteering, to ensure that we build on the best aspects of it and reduce the risk of limiting diversity by recruiting in this way. **New ways of communicating** must be explored such as the use of social networking sites and text messages. We need to be better at welcoming everyone to volunteer and to find ways of targeting the messages appropriately.

### Proposal 7

Support the development of a Northern Ireland wide volunteering database and associated website to support new and existing volunteers and volunteer involving organisations and provide the key information point for volunteering opportunities.

### Proposal 8

Provide and maintain an easily accessible range of comprehensive volunteering information in a variety of formats.

### Proposal 9

Develop and implement a volunteer recruitment programme.

**Employer Supported Volunteering** is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of the community by individuals or groups of employees, with the help and encouragement of their employer. It is undertaken freely and without concern for financial gain. It is widely valued as a mechanism for encouraging participation, developing corporate social responsibility and building skills. However, in Northern Ireland since 2001, we have seen a decline in levels of employers offering schemes which encourage employees to take part in community projects.<sup>4</sup>

Given the fact that the majority of adults are active in the workforce at one time or another, engagement with employers is a real necessity in promoting and encouraging volunteering. Government, both local and central, is a major employer in Northern Ireland and has a role in acting as an exemplar in relation to Employer Supported Volunteering. Government can also set a policy context which makes it easier for employers to take part. There is a range of good practice within many companies here and the Strategy should consider how we can build on this experience.

---

<sup>4</sup> *It's All About Time* Volunteering in Northern Ireland, Volunteer Development Agency, 2007

There are particular challenges in Northern Ireland in relation to Employer Supported Volunteering because 97.9% of organisations which are VAT registered or operating a PAYE scheme have fewer than 50 employees.<sup>5</sup> A key challenge is therefore to encourage and enable employers of all sizes of businesses to take part. We need to create linkages and understanding by employers about the skills gained in volunteering and how this can be relevant to applications for paid employment or staff development.

### Proposal 10

Promote and encourage Employer Supported Volunteering within Government and across the public sector.

### Proposal 11

Encourage employers to recognise the relevance of skills and experience gained by employees through voluntary activity.



### Proposal 12

Make it easy for employers of all sizes to engage in Employer Supported Volunteering.

### Proposal 13

Encourage employers to build good practice and gain recognition for their participation in Employer Supported Volunteering.

---

<sup>5</sup> Facts and Figures from the Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR) – Edition Ten, Department of Trade and Industry

At present volunteering is not specifically **defined in law**. It is impacted by a range of other legislation such as minimum wage, asylum seekers and refugees or equality legislation. It is also impacted by Government policy on issues such as sport, careers, youth work etc. The ***Compact between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland***<sup>6</sup> (the Compact) commits to “*assess proposed legislation, new policies and policy changes for their potential impact on the voluntary and community sector and on volunteering and to consider the scope for mitigating any unintended negative impact*”. There is a need to consider how best to ensure that volunteering is protected from the unintended negative consequences of other legislation or policy changes in line with the commitments made in the Compact.

#### **Proposal 14**

In line with the *Compact between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland*, Government will seek to ensure that volunteering is protected from the unintended consequences of legislation and Government policy.

Many community organisations, charities, churches and sporting bodies operate on an all island basis and volunteers in border areas, which are predominantly rural, may live in one country and volunteer in the other. The Taskforce on Active Citizenship<sup>7</sup> in the Republic of Ireland reported that:

*“An important aspect of the Taskforce’s consultation process and discussions was the all-island dimension of Active Citizenship, which is particularly relevant given that many community, sporting and other organisations operate on an all-island basis, while both parts of the island face many of the same challenges in terms of levels and trends of civic engagement.”*

#### **Proposal 15**

Explore opportunities with the Government of the Republic of Ireland to develop volunteering in border areas and volunteering on an island wide basis.

**For Consideration:** Do the proposals in this chapter address the main issues in relation to recognising the value and promoting the benefits of volunteering? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

---

<sup>6</sup> Building Real Partnership: Compact between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland, DHSS, 1998

<sup>7</sup> The Taskforce on Active Citizenship, Secretariat of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship, March 2007

## Chapter 5

### Objective 2: Volunteering: Enhancing Accessibility and Diversity

Volunteering should be open to everyone, regardless of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race or where they live. Volunteering can be an excellent way of developing better community relations and it has a strong part to play in the shared and better future<sup>8</sup> agenda. Research<sup>9</sup> shows that the majority of volunteers report their contact with other religions has increased as a result of their volunteering. Yet volunteering is not as inclusive as it might be. While levels of volunteering by young people are holding up well, people over 65 are the least likely to be volunteers. This poses big challenges in the context of an aging population. People with disabilities are also under represented in volunteering and people from rural areas, people from black and minority ethnic communities, new migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities may also encounter barriers in engaging in volunteering. **Diversity in volunteering** is a strength and good practice places a strong emphasis on volunteering being open to everyone. However, some organisations may need training and support in developing policy and managing diversity.

There may be **resource implications when involving volunteers** from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in terms of translation services or developing new skills to enable involvement. Many organisations struggle to manage risk and provide appropriate **insurance cover** for their volunteer activities, particularly where they are offering volunteering opportunities to older or young people. At present organisations wishing to provide **reasonable adjustments** for volunteers with disabilities have to fund these adjustments themselves. Schemes exist, such as the Department for Employment and Learning's Access to Work, which are available to provide support for people looking for paid work opportunities. However there are currently no similar schemes for volunteers.



#### Proposal 16

Encourage volunteer involving organisations to develop practices that enable them to involve a diverse range of volunteers and offer a welcoming environment to everyone.

<sup>8</sup> Programme for Government 2008-2011, Northern Ireland Executive, 2008

<sup>9</sup> It's All About Time Volunteering in Northern Ireland, Volunteer Development Agency, 2007

## Proposal 17

Review mechanisms to encourage people with disabilities to become involved in volunteering.

## Proposal 18

Work across Government, the volunteering infrastructure and the insurance industry to limit the potential for insurance to be a barrier to volunteering.

## Proposal 19

Encourage volunteering among older people and other under represented groups.



In April 2008, **Access Northern Ireland (AccessNI)** was introduced to enable organisations in Northern Ireland to make more informed recruitment decisions by providing criminal history information about anyone seeking paid or unpaid work in certain defined areas, such as working with children or vulnerable adults. This service is free for volunteers, subject to the definition in the *Guide to Access Northern Ireland*, except for two specific and narrowly defined categories. These are where the person is volunteering for a statutory organisation or where the person is volunteering for a non-profit organisation in a position which delivers statutory services under contract or in a specific project, for which the organisation has received funding from the Government which includes provision covering the costs of disclosures for volunteers<sup>10</sup>. This has resulted in an increase in the costs of volunteering in the statutory sector.

The research shows that currently over 41,000 volunteers are working with young people, 29,335 visit people, and 23,975 people are befrienders or mentors<sup>11</sup>. Most of these volunteers, around a third of all volunteers working within organisations in Northern Ireland, may be carrying out roles currently subject to vetting arrangements. While the need to protect children and vulnerable adults is recognised, organisations have reported that people may be put off volunteering by criminal record checks and fear of bureaucracy.

A Vetting and Barring Scheme (Scheme) is being established under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007. From October 2009 the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) will be central to the new Scheme, which will fully replace arrangements established under the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Order.

Full arrangements for the implementation of the Scheme are not yet in place. However, it will apply to volunteers as well as paid staff working with children and vulnerable adults. It remains to be seen what impact the implementation of Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups will have on volunteering.

## Proposal 20

While ensuring the protection of children and vulnerable adults, explore ways to mitigate any negative impact of policy/legislation on the recruitment of volunteers.

---

<sup>10</sup> A Guide to Access Northern Ireland, Access NI, 2008

<sup>11</sup> *It's All About Time* Volunteering in Northern Ireland, Volunteer Development Agency, 2007

Volunteering does not impact on **Social Security benefits** as long as the rules in relation to particular benefits are followed. Volunteering can provide a valuable mechanism to assist people seeking paid employment to keep skills up to date or develop appropriate new skills.

Volunteering can also be a useful way of assisting people with illnesses and disabilities to develop confidence and skills which may lead, in some instances, to paid work. Sometimes people feel unable to take up volunteering in these therapeutic situations because of a perceived threat to their benefits.

The preliminary work which has been done in preparation for this consultation has shown that there is still a degree of confusion in relation to volunteering and benefits. There appears to be a lack of clear, easily accessible information on this issue. There is a need to revise the information leaflets and online information available about volunteering and Social Security benefits. There may also be a need to encourage people on benefits to take part by offering them the opportunity to try out volunteering to demonstrate how easy and worthwhile it is to become involved.

### **Proposal 21**

Tackle the barriers, real and perceived, which may prevent people on benefits from volunteering.

**For Consideration:** Do the proposals in this chapter address the main issues in relation to enhancing the accessibility and diversity of volunteering? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

Volunteers should have an enjoyable rewarding and effective volunteering experience. Volunteers should be engaged in meaningful activity – responding to their passions and interests. Opportunities should be attractive, varied, flexible and well managed. Organisations should look to extend the **range of roles** available and to ensure that they challenge the boundaries of what activities can be done by volunteers. This should help to retain existing volunteers and to attract new people into volunteering.

Organisations and groups that involve volunteers are vital to the delivery of this Strategy. A large number of organisations across all sectors depend on volunteers to enable them to carry out their role. Research has shown high levels of appreciation and value for the work of volunteers in those organisations. In order to ensure effective delivery we must consider **building capacity** in those organisations to enable them to have access to the skills and information they need.

Volunteering is not without cost. Organisations must recognise both the importance of volunteering and its associated costs in order to secure the resources necessary to deliver effective services. This may be particularly true of organisations in rural areas which may find volunteer expenses more costly because of the greater distances involved or the lack of suitable public transport. Many organisations depend on the work of volunteers but do not have sufficient resources to provide support for volunteers and/or to provide volunteer expenses. **Standards of volunteer involvement** should be raised, ensuring that all volunteers have a worthwhile experience and that organisations provide support for volunteers as a priority. Volunteer involving organisations need to offer volunteers expenses so that no one feels financially excluded from volunteering. Organisations should also offer training, accredited or otherwise, to volunteers which will develop the skills of the volunteer and enable them to carry out their tasks in a better more fulfilling way.

DSD has provided financial support to volunteering through the Community Volunteering Scheme which aims to improve volunteering practice and increase levels of volunteering, particularly among under-represented groups. Last year 237 groups received Small Grants under the scheme which is widely seen as successful in helping support local volunteer involvement. DSD will continue to have a small grants scheme to support local volunteer involvement similar to the CVS Small Grants scheme.

Volunteering is organic so good volunteer management should not be overly bureaucratic. It should nurture the desire of people to help and get involved while ensuring that it is done in a framework of good practice which supports and protects the volunteer and the organisation. There is a need to **develop the skills of the individuals responsible for managing volunteers**<sup>12</sup> whether they are doing it in a paid or unpaid capacity. These skills in recruiting and supporting volunteers should be embedded within volunteer involving organisations to ensure that every volunteer has a meaningful experience.

---

<sup>12</sup> Northern Ireland Voluntary and Community Sector Skills Survey, NICVA, June 2008

## Proposal 22

Encourage and support volunteer managers and volunteer involving organisations to improve their volunteer management practice and gain relevant accreditation.

## Proposal 23

Continue to have a small grants programme to support local volunteer involvement.



The context for volunteers involved in **management committees** of charities in Northern Ireland is changing. The introduction of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland will see changes in the requirements and rules around operating as a trustee. Volunteers involved in governance will need additional support over the coming years as the new Commission gets up and running. There is also a danger that any perceived increase in bureaucracy may create difficulties in recruiting for what can be a challenging role. However many people, in the course of their employment or life experience, have skills that would make them excellent management committee members. We need to attract such people to take up this important role.

## Proposal 24

Support volunteers involved in management committees to enhance their skills and knowledge base and improve their volunteer experience.

## Proposal 25

Utilise Employer Supported Volunteering to develop and strengthen management committees.

Some particular types of volunteer involving organisations are likely to face specific challenges over the life of this Strategy.

Volunteer involvement will continue to be an important aspect in the planning for **London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games** and the **World Police and Fire Games in 2013 in Belfast**. There is a need to ensure that there are linkages made between volunteering and sport, which not only provide support for the Games but also leave a legacy for volunteering in the coming years. There are also other significant regional cultural and sporting events, which happen annually, which have a large volunteering component, which we should seek to build on to create a longer-term benefit to volunteering.

### Proposal 26

Support significant regional, cultural and sporting events to involve and recognise volunteers.



The **faith based sector** has seen a significant decline in volunteering since 1995. However it is still the second largest sector involving volunteers across a wide range of activities such as youth and children's work, befriending, luncheon clubs, transport etc. To ensure volunteering in this sector remains vibrant there is a need to enhance linkages between the faith based sector and the volunteering infrastructure in order to provide better support and information in relation to the involvement of volunteers.

### Proposal 27

Build volunteer management skills in the faith based sector to increase volunteer recruitment and retention.

Time is a precious commodity and research shows that the pressures of other work and home commitments are seen as the biggest barriers to volunteering in Northern Ireland. We need to find ways of allowing volunteering to have a better fit in people's lives. Organisations need to develop greater **flexibility** in their volunteering opportunities and training to allow people to give time and still meet their other commitments. This might mean, for example, volunteering during weekends or evenings or virtually, by working on projects online.

Volunteer roles at set times or for set lengths of time are going to become increasingly difficult to fill and organisations are going to have to consider alternative ways of offering these opportunities. Consideration will need to be given to re-designing some of these roles to break them down into smaller pieces, for example, an advice centre might offer an opportunity for a two hour shift instead of a four hour shift or a charity shop might enable preparation of goods for sale to be done in the evening when the shop is normally closed, administration could be provided from home via email at a time to suit the person concerned. Greater flexibility may bring greater costs in supporting volunteering opportunities and this needs to be given consideration.



International volunteering can provide both an opportunity for people to come to Northern Ireland and for people from Northern Ireland to go abroad to volunteer. It can provide a useful mechanism to develop skills and gain experience of other cultures. Consideration needs to be given to ensuring that these opportunities meet good practice standards and provide a fulfilling experience for volunteers.

Opportunities for **family volunteering** will need to be explored so that people can participate with their children during their leisure time. It may be useful to have a selection of **immediate volunteering opportunities** available where people can literally turn up and take part. These could be advertised via the internet or in local press.

### Proposal 28

Encourage and support the development of volunteering opportunities that are attractive, varied, and flexible.

### Proposal 29

Encourage family volunteering opportunities that enable families to volunteer as a group to encourage volunteering from an early age.

### Proposal 30

Encourage the development of “turn up, take part” volunteering opportunities that provide immediate opportunities for people to volunteer.

Volunteering can provide an important opportunity for people of all ages to **develop skills**. In studies relating to volunteering, people report that it gave them opportunities to: develop new skills (including social skills); develop confidence; improve employment prospects and, in some cases, to gain a recognised qualification. It can allow people to discover the passions which motivate them and it can help them to take decisions which shape their future careers.

Volunteering can also provide an opportunity to get **experience of a chosen career** through things such as taking a Service Learning approach where young people bring academic knowledge to real world problems and so provide solutions as well as vital experience for the young people involved. Not everyone comes to volunteering to build their skills but, where they do, volunteer involving organisations should examine ways to ensure that learning opportunities are provided and volunteers are able, where appropriate, to get recognised accreditation for the skills developed.



### Proposal 31

Encourage and support the development of skills by volunteers and, as appropriate, the achievement of recognised qualifications that are beneficial to carrying out their voluntary activities.

### Proposal 32

Enable careers information in schools to present volunteering as an option for gaining skills and experience.

Volunteers play a range of roles within **public sector organisations** from providing practical services as varied as fundraising to governance in schools. However, with the large scale changes associated with the Review of Public Administration, there is a possibility that volunteering will not be given a policy focus or priority. There is a need at a strategic level for Government to set the policy agenda within, for instance, local councils, health, education and criminal justice around the involvement of volunteers, to ensure that there is a value for their contribution and an emphasis on good practice.

### Proposal 33

Encourage the development of volunteering within central and local Government and across the public sector as a means of involving people in supporting the delivery of services for the public.

**Funders\*** should consider the need to ensure good practice in volunteering is, or would be, embedded in an organisation when assessing applications which involve volunteers. Funders should take a view on the quality of the proposed volunteer involvement when assessing applications/contract bids from volunteer involving organisations. They should ensure that appropriate costs are included within the proposal budget to support volunteer involvement within the scheme.

### Proposal 34

Encourage funders, where appropriate, to ensure the quality of volunteer involvement and management is of an effective standard when considering funding an organisation or awarding a contract where volunteers play a significant part in delivering services.

**For Consideration:** Do the proposals in this chapter address the main issues in relation to improving the volunteering experience? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

\* Funder is taken to include independent funders such as charitable trusts as well as public bodies such as Councils, Trusts etc.

## Chapter 7

### Objective 4: Volunteering: Supporting and Strengthening the Infrastructure

The Department for Social Development, as a strategic investment, core funds the current infrastructure support for volunteering. This is provided by the Volunteer Development Agency, a regional organisation, which provides information, policy, training and support to enhance the involvement and maximise the contribution of volunteers. In addition, fifteen volunteer centres, which are independent organisations, provide support in the promotion and development of volunteer opportunities and the recruitment of volunteers across Northern Ireland. There is a need to review the regional and local infrastructure to ensure it is economic, efficient and effective in supporting and developing volunteers and volunteer involving organisations. There is also a need for a strong policy framework to ensure a consistent approach to service delivery at all levels. The infrastructure needs to make it easy to **access good quality, consistent volunteering information**<sup>13</sup>.

The successful delivery of a Volunteering Strategy is dependent on a high quality **volunteering infrastructure**. The Department for Social Development will undertake to consider, and consult on, models to provide an integrated regional and local infrastructure to support volunteering and the delivery of the Volunteering Strategy and will bear in mind a range of factors including the implementation of the Review of Public Administration, the Strategy for Support Services and the capacity to deliver the objectives of the Volunteering Strategy. The successful model will be compatible with the need to provide high quality, contract based, value for money services to society in both rural and urban areas. The services must also be focused on meeting the current and future needs of volunteers and organisations that involve them.

There are a **range of services** which infrastructure support organisations provide to enhance the capacity of all sectors involving volunteers. These services may include policy development, training on recruiting and supporting volunteers, information on specific issues relating to volunteer involvement, promotion of volunteering, recruitment of volunteers, assistance with good practice in relation to the protection of children and vulnerable adults, the development of standards in relation to volunteer management and support with governance. There may be other services not currently available which need to be considered and provided.

As well as the volunteering infrastructure currently in place there are a number of other regional and sub-regional organisations providing support to organisations in the voluntary and community sector across generic or specialist/thematic areas, for example, rural groups. Some of these are funded by the Department for Social Development and some are funded by other Government departments. These organisations are also involved with promoting and developing volunteering as substantial numbers of volunteers are engaged in their particular areas of interest.

The infrastructure also needs to make **strategic linkages** on behalf of volunteering with Government and public bodies, policy makers, employers, funders and others. This role could be enhanced by a more consistent co-ordinated approach.

---

<sup>13</sup> Evaluation of the DSD funding of the Volunteer Bureaux Initiative, Department of Finance and Personnel, March 2008

### Proposal 35

Develop and implement an integrated regional and local infrastructure which provides appropriate services to support volunteer involvement and the delivery of the Strategy.

As set out in Chapter 6, in addition to the infrastructure funding, the Department for Social Development has also provided direct support to volunteering through the Community Volunteering Scheme. Volunteering is also supported indirectly through other central and local Government funding for organisations providing direct service delivery advice, community development, etc. As a result there are currently a range of objectives in the provision of funding for volunteering by Government. This Volunteering Strategy provides an opportunity to consider a co-ordinated programme of investment focused on the objectives of the Strategy, so ensuring effective and efficient use of public money.

### Proposal 36

Review existing funding structures within the Department for Social Development to create a comprehensive investment programme to deliver the Strategy and underpin the future of volunteering in Northern Ireland.



**For Consideration:** Do the proposals in this chapter address the main issues in relation to supporting and strengthening the volunteering infrastructure? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

## Chapter 8

### Objective 5: Volunteering: Delivering the Strategy

In order for the Strategy to succeed there needs to be **accountability and ongoing monitoring** of the implementation of it by a range of stakeholders. There is also a need to review the achievements at the end of the period of the Strategy and consider any future measures that would support the ongoing development of volunteering.

The **implementation of the Strategy** will be underpinned by an action plan, which will be published with the Strategy. The action plan will set out how the Strategy will be implemented and will include, key tasks, outcome measures, key performance indicators, timeframes and the person or organisation leading on the delivery of the actions. The Strategy will also include a section on resources.

#### Proposal 37

Establish a monitoring group, with representation at senior levels from across central and local Government, the voluntary and community, statutory and private sectors to monitor and report on the implementation of the Strategy.

#### Proposal 38

Undertake an evaluation of the Strategy throughout it's lifetime with a final report and recommendations after the end of the Strategy period.



#### Proposal 39

Conduct a survey of the public and volunteer involving organisations at the end of the Strategy period to update the findings of the 2007 *It's all About Time* report. This would include information about volunteering levels at council and regional levels.

There has been extensive pre-consultation in relation to the development of the Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland. In order to implement the Strategy effectively there will need to be **ownership by volunteers, volunteer involving organisations** and other bodies and organisations involved in putting it into practice. This ownership needs to be sustained over the five year life of the Strategy.

#### Proposal 40

Encourage volunteers and volunteer involving organisations to get involved and remain involved in delivering the Strategy.

While the Department for Social Development has a **lead role** in relation to volunteering it is clear that a number of other departments and public bodies also have a role on the delivery of the Strategy. For example, the 2006 Youth Council for Northern Ireland Geomapping Report, shows the number of staff involved in the registered Youth Service in Northern Ireland was 23,305, 91% of whom were volunteers. The Department of Education, which has responsibility for the Youth Service, therefore has a clear interest in volunteering. Similarly the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister has a keen interest in volunteering because much of the community relations work is done by volunteers. Volunteers work with local community leaders, marginalised young people, local service providers and the Police Service on issues such as tackling violence (sectarian and racial), hate crime, anti-social behaviour, recreational rioting, alcohol abuse and drug related issues. In order to ensure that the Strategy is implemented effectively there needs to be good co-operation and co-ordination across departments and public bodies. It may also be useful to develop the role of champion for volunteering within Government, to safeguard the value for volunteering across a number of policy areas.

#### Proposal 41

Develop mechanisms to ensure that the cross cutting nature of volunteering is reflected in close working between Government departments to deliver the Strategy.

#### Proposal 42

Encourage public bodies such as health trusts, local councils, and education bodies to get involved and remain involved in delivering the Strategy.

**For Consideration:** Do the proposals in this chapter address the main issues in relation to delivering the Volunteering Strategy? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

## Appendix 1: Equality Groups in Section 75 Pro-forma

**Question 1** Is there any evidence of higher or lower volunteering levels in any of the following groups?

Equality Groups	Volunteering Levels			What is the evidence and how might we increase the volunteering levels? (please continue on a separate page if necessary)
	Higher	Lower	Similar	
Religious belief				
Political opinion				
Racial group				
Gender				
Marital status				
Age				
Persons with a disability or persons without <sup>1</sup>				
Persons with dependents or persons without <sup>2</sup>				
Sexual orientation				

<sup>1</sup> Disability - By disability we mean any physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term (lasted or expected to last 12 months or more) adverse impact on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, without mechanical or electronic assistance or the adaption of your workplace.

<sup>2</sup> Dependants - By 'having dependants' we mean persons with primary responsibility for the care of a child; persons with personal responsibility for the care of a person with a disability; persons with primary responsibility for the care of a dependant elderly person.

**Question 2 Are any of the proposals likely to have a different impact on volunteers in any of the following groups?**

Equality Groups	Impact			What are your reasons and how might we minimise any negative impact? (please continue on a separate page if necessary)
	Positive	Negative	None	
Religious belief				
Political opinion				
Racial group				
Gender				
Marital status				
Age				
Persons with a disability or persons without <sup>1</sup>				
Persons with dependents or persons without <sup>2</sup>				
Sexual orientation				

<sup>1</sup> Disability - By disability we mean any physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term (lasted or expected to last 12 months or more) adverse impact on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, without mechanical or electronic assistance or the adaption of your workplace.

<sup>2</sup> Dependants - By 'having dependants' we mean persons with primary responsibility for the care of a child; persons with personal responsibility for the care of a person with a disability; persons with primary responsibility for the care of a dependant elderly person.



## Appendix 2: Rural proofing checklist

### Rural

#### Assessment Of Impacts

	Positive Negative None	Qualitative (Detail Evidence)	Quantative (Detail Evidence)	Consideration Of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitigating Measures; and</li> <li>Alternative Policies</li> </ul>
<b>1. Service Provision</b>				
<p><b>Centralised service outlets:</b>                      rural people or businesses generally need to travel to an urban centre to use service outlets.                      How will the proposed rural beneficiaries of a policy have reasonable access to it?                      Does policy delivery depend upon outlets, which are sparse in many rural areas?</p>	None	<p>There is a need to provide an integrated regional and local infrastructure compatible with the need to provide high quality, contract based, value for money services to society in both rural and urban areas.</p> <p>The findings from the consultation will determine the services and support volunteers and volunteer involving organisations need, which, in turn, will help determine the infrastructure to deliver the services.</p>		<p>Proposal 35 proposes to develop and implement an integrated regional and local infrastructure which provides appropriate services to support volunteer involvement and the delivery of the Strategy.</p> <p>This is underpinned by the vision for volunteering in which there is a society where everyone values the part that volunteering plays in building strong communities and a healthy participative democracy and everyone has the opportunity to have a meaningful volunteering experience.</p>

## Assessment Of Impacts

	Positive Negative None	Qualitative (Detail Evidence)	Quantative (Detail Evidence)	Consideration Of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mitigating Measures; and</li> <li>• Alternative Policies</li> </ul>
<p><b>Few information points:</b> rural areas contain fewer (formal) places to obtain advice and information e.g. libraries, Citizens Advice Bureaux, public Internet points. If the policy's successful delivery requires communication with clients, how will those in rural areas have ready access to information and advice?</p>	Positive			<p>The development of volunteering under the strategy has a number of ways for communication and engagement. For example, the media in Proposal 4, websites in Proposal 7, range of information in leaflets posters and formats as in Proposal 7. Proposals for engagement with the public and private sectors, government in ROI, faith based organisations and schools also offer the opportunity for communication.</p>
<p><b>2. Mobility</b></p>				
<p><b>Greater travel needs:</b> on average rural people and businesses travel further to reach jobs, facilities, clients and other opportunities. What will the policy effects be upon existing requirements to travel, or the time, convenience and costs entailed for rural businesses or people (especially those on low incomes or without easy access to a car or public transport)?</p>	Positive	<p>In pre consultation workshops across NI it was raised that people from rural areas, among others, can have additional costs associated with their voluntary activities. Also some organisations working in for example environment and heritage based activities are often based in rural locations with additional costs and public transport.</p>		<p>Proposal 22 seeks to encourage and support volunteer managers and volunteer involving organisations to improve their volunteer management practice which includes the recognition that volunteering is not without costs and that organisations should offer expenses. Proposal 23 provides for a small grant fund for organisations to support local</p>

## Assessment Of Impacts

	Positive Negative None	Qualitative (Detail Evidence)	Quantitative (Detail Evidence)	Consideration Of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mitigating Measures; and</li> <li>• Alternative Policies</li> </ul>
		<p>Volunteers with these organisations may have extra costs travelling from rural and urban locations to get to these opportunities.</p> <p>In <i>It's all about time</i> and in pre consultation workshops the issue of time and convenience has been raised by volunteers in all areas as people are finding increased demands on their time typically due to work, family and personal commitments.</p>		<p>community based volunteer involvement.</p> <p>Subject to the findings from the consultation this would, as is presently the case, provide volunteer expenses including travel costs.</p> <p>Proposal 28 sets out the need to encourage and support the development of volunteering opportunities that are attractive, varied, and flexible to meet volunteers needs. Proposal 29 seeks to encourage more family volunteering while volunteering and Proposal 30 seeks to establish immediate opportunities.</p>

## Assessment Of Impacts

	Positive Negative None	Qualitative (Detail Evidence)	Quantative (Detail Evidence)	Consideration Of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitigating Measures; and</li> <li>Alternative Policies</li> </ul>
<p><b>Higher service delivery costs:</b> rural distances plus small and dispersed populations can make it more difficult and costly to provide services to rural clients. Does the unit cost of providing the service to rural clients limit the extent or quality of service provision? Are there alternative ways to reduce costs and increase provision?</p>	Positive	In pre consultation workshops across NI it was raised that organisations delivering services in rural areas can have additional costs, typically transport, and this is especially relevant where the services are delivered by volunteers.		<p>Proposal 22 seeks to encourage and support volunteer managers and volunteer involving organisations to improve their volunteer management practice which includes the recognition that volunteering is not without costs and that organisations should offer expenses. Proposal 23 provides for a small grant fund for organisations to support local community based volunteer involvement. Subject to the findings from the consultation this would, as is presently the case, provide volunteer expenses including travel costs.</p>
<p><b>3. Economic Vibrancy</b></p>				
<p><b>Employment Opportunities:</b> will the policy affect the distribution of intended economic activity in different areas, or the level of access to employment or training opportunities, e.g. the distribution of public sector jobs and the relative accessibility of jobskills training.</p>	None	The consultation is about volunteering as opposed to employment. Nevertheless volunteering can have a positive impact on employment opportunities by developing skills and gaining experience.		<p>Proposals 5, 31 and 32 recognise that voluntary activity builds skills, offers opportunities to gain experience and if appropriate recognised qualifications. This is likely to have a positive impact on employment opportunities and career development.</p>

## Assessment Of Impacts

	Positive Negative None	Qualitative (Detail Evidence)	Quantitative (Detail Evidence)	Consideration Of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitigating Measures; and</li> <li>Alternative Policies</li> </ul>
<p><b>Employment Flexibility:</b> many households require part-time employment or employment with flexible hours to allow them to balance work and life needs (for example, in maintaining a small farm or balancing care arrangements). Will the policy help or hinder this sort of employment need or reduce the need for flexibility through, for example, encouraging better childcare provision?</p>	Positive	The consultation is about volunteering as opposed to employment. Nevertheless developing flexible volunteering opportunities and tailoring opportunities to suit volunteers is likely to have a positive impact. Examples might include volunteering on line, volunteering at home or volunteering at different times.		<p>Proposal 28 outlines the need to create volunteering opportunities that are attractive, varied and flexible. These take account of the individual circumstances of the volunteer including where they live, work and home commitments and the care of dependants.</p> <p>Proposal 23 provides for a small grant fund for organisations to support volunteer involvement. Subject to the findings from the consultation this would, as is presently the case, provide volunteer expenses including for the care of dependants.</p>
<p><b>Small Firm Economy:</b> more businesses are micro-businesses in rural areas (in particular agricultural) and there are few medium-sized or large firms. Will a policy or initiative target and be of benefit to, small (as well as larger) businesses?</p>	Positive	NI has a small number of large size employers. Small businesses are particularly prevalent and there is a significant challenge to involve small businesses in Employer Supported Volunteering. This is particularly the case in rural areas which have more micro businesses	In NI almost 98% of businesses employ less than 50 people.	<p>Proposal 12 is to make it easy for employers of all sizes to engage in Employer Supported Volunteering. Proposal 13 seeks to encourage employers to build good practice and gain recognition for their participation in Employer Supported Volunteering.</p>

## Assessment Of Impacts

	Positive Negative None	Qualitative (Detail Evidence)	Quantative (Detail Evidence)	Consideration Of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mitigating Measures; and</li> <li>• Alternative Policies</li> </ul>
		and which may be more sparsely dispersed.	According to Office of National Statistics in 2008 there were 58,950 businesses in NI employing 0-4 people and 13,790 employing 5-9.	<p>Proposal 11 encourages employers to recognise the relevance of skills and experience gained by employees through voluntary activity.</p> <p>Proposal 25 seeks to utilise Employer Supported Volunteering to develop and strengthen management committees.</p> <p>When combined these proposals seek to develop employees and businesses and build closer relationships with local voluntary sector organisations</p>

## Assessment Of Impacts

	Positive Negative None	Qualitative (Detail Evidence)	Quantative (Detail Evidence)	Consideration Of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mitigating Measures; and</li> <li>• Alternative Policies</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weak infrastructure:</b> telecommunications infrastructures are generally less developed in rural areas, especially remoter areas. If a fast or high-capacity infrastructure (e.g. "broadband" telecommunications) will play a significant part in implementing the policy or initiative, how will it be delivered in rural areas?</p>	None			<p>Proposal 7 seeks to develop a website to support volunteers and volunteer involving organisations but this is only one aspect of delivery of support. As well as providing a volunteering infrastructure there will be a range of information in leaflets posters and formats as in Proposal 7. Proposals for engagement with the public and private sectors, government in Republic of Ireland, faith based organisations and schools also mitigate for a lack of telecommunications infrastructure in a rural area or for people on low incomes etc.</p>
<p><b>Infrastructure innovations:</b> often, new innovations in infrastructure or service provision are introduced into urban areas first. Can innovations also be tested in rural areas? Might rural areas provide a stronger test in the first instance? Are there plans to roll out new services or infrastructure to rural areas to minimise long periods of inequality?</p>	None	<p>There is a need to provide an integrated regional and local infrastructure compatible with the need to provide high quality, contract based, value for money services to society in both rural and urban areas. The findings from the consultation will determine the services and support volunteers and volunteer involving organisations need which, in turn, will help determine the infrastructure to deliver the services.</p>		<p>Proposal 35 proposes to develop and implement an integrated regional and local infrastructure which provides appropriate services to support volunteer involvement and the delivery of the Strategy.</p>

## Assessment Of Impacts

	Positive Negative None	Qualitative (Detail Evidence)	Quantative (Detail Evidence)	Consideration Of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mitigating Measures; and</li> <li>• Alternative Policies</li> </ul>
				<p>This is underpinned by the vision for volunteering in which there is a society where everyone values the part that volunteering plays in building strong communities and a healthy participative democracy and everyone has the opportunity to have a meaningful volunteering experience.</p>
<p><b>High Impact Infrastructure:</b>                      could a fast or high capacity infrastructure requirement represent a significant impact on environmental or social assets in rural areas (e.g. the impact on social cohesion of increased mobility stemming from the upgrading of roads)? Could it be modified to reduce these impacts whilst still delivering policy benefits?</p>	None			

## Assessment Of Impacts

	Positive Negative None	Qualitative (Detail Evidence)	Quantitative (Detail Evidence)	Consideration Of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mitigating Measures; and</li> <li>• Alternative Policies</li> </ul>
<b>4. Social Well Being</b>				
<p><b>Countryside amenity and access:</b> the countryside provides important recreational opportunities and a place to get away from it all for people wherever they live. What will be the impact of the policy or initiative for people wishing to reach and use the countryside as a place for recreation and enjoyment?</p>	Positive	There are a number of volunteer involving organisations working in rural areas including those involved in conservation, the environment, heritage, churches and sports.		<p>The proposals aim to increase volunteer numbers, provide rewarding volunteering experiences and support organisations that involve volunteers. These should strengthen the organisations and give them a sound basis to carry out their activities.</p>
<p><b>Needs not concentrated:</b> rural disadvantage and social exclusion does not exist in the types of concentrations found on urban housing estates or in inner city neighbourhoods. It is generally scattered and in wealthier parts of the countryside, exists side by side with affluence. Will a policy, especially area-based initiatives, have provision for reaching people or households in the open countryside as well as more concentrated locations of disadvantage?</p>	Positive	No initiatives in the proposals in the consultation document are area based.		<p>Our vision for volunteering is a society where everyone values the part that volunteering plays in building strong communities and a healthy participative democracy and everyone has the opportunity to have a meaningful volunteering experience.</p> <p>The comprehensive range of proposals to support volunteers and organisations is reflective of the vision of providing everyone with the opportunity to volunteer.</p>

## Assessment Of Impacts

	Positive Negative None	Qualitative (Detail Evidence)	Quantitative (Detail Evidence)	Consideration Of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mitigating Measures; and</li> <li>• Alternative Policies</li> </ul>
<p><b>Different types of need:</b> the mix of deprivation characteristics is somewhat different between rural and urban areas. Poor access to services (including health &amp; social services), low local wages, limited job opportunities and a lack of affordable housing are key rural issues. What needs or deprivation indicators will be used to target an initiative: will they reflect both rural and urban concerns?</p>	None	No proposals have been made in the consultation document relating to the deprivation indicators to be used to target services.		<p>The findings from the consultation will help determine the services and consequently the deprivation indicators to be used when targeting the initiatives to meet the needs of people and organisations in rural and urban areas.</p>

## Assessment Of Impacts

	Positive Negative None	Qualitative (Detail Evidence)	Quantative (Detail Evidence)	Consideration Of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitigating Measures; and</li> <li>Alternative Policies</li> </ul>
<b>5. Social Capital</b>				
<p><b>Low institutional capacity:</b> private, public and voluntary sector bodies in rural areas tend to be smaller and often struggle to forge partnerships or submit bids, especially to tight timescales. If a policy or initiative depends upon local institutions, how will it allow for areas with low institutional capacity? How might it avoid a bias in favour of urban representation and influence if partnership formation is a key method for delivery or for subsequent mainstreaming of learning from pilot initiatives?</p>	Positive		<p>Almost 1/5 of all formal volunteers (approx 55,000) have been involved in leading groups or sit on management committees or are trustees.</p>	<p>Proposal 24 seeks to support volunteers involved in management committees to enhance their skill and knowledge base and improve their volunteer experience.</p> <p>Proposal 25 intends to develop Employer Supported Volunteering to develop and strengthen management committees.</p> <p>Proposal 22 will encourage and support volunteer managers and volunteer involving organisations to improve their volunteer management practice and gain relevant accreditation. These proposals support capacity building in the organisations and their management committees.</p>

## Assessment Of Impacts

	Positive Negative None	Qualitative (Detail Evidence)	Quantative (Detail Evidence)	Consideration Of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitigating Measures; and</li> <li>Alternative Policies</li> </ul>
				<p>Proposal 35 proposes to develop and implement an integrated regional and local infrastructure which provides appropriate services to support volunteer involvement and the delivery of the Strategy. This integrated approach will ensure a consistency of service across rural and urban areas.</p>
<p><b>Social Capital and community cohesion:</b> provision of services or design of village renewal, new or regeneration of housing estates can impact on sense of community and social capital. Will the policy contribute to strengthening or weakening social capital and hence, the health and sustainability of rural communities?</p>	Positive			<p>The strategy aims to increase volunteering levels, provide rewarding volunteering experiences and support organisations that involve volunteers. The vast majority of the proposals will in some way contribute to developing and supporting volunteers and volunteer involving organisations developing capacity and strengthening the social capital.</p>

## Assessment Of Impacts

	Positive Negative None	Qualitative (Detail Evidence)	Quantative (Detail Evidence)	Consideration Of: • Mitigating Measures; and • Alternative Policies
<b>6. Natural &amp; Cultural Capital</b>				
<p><b>Land-based industries:</b> land-based industries (e.g. agriculture, forestry, fishing and extraction / mining) have an important impact on the rural landscape, environment and biodiversity, and remain significant employers in certain rural areas (despite being a fairly small element of the overall rural economic base). Will a policy have any particular impacts on land-based industries and, therefore, on rural economies and environments?</p>	None			
<p><b>Landscape quality and character:</b> our rural landscapes are highly valued for their beauty and distinctiveness and contribute significantly to our tourism potential</p>	Positive	<p>Volunteer involving organisations working in rural areas on conservation, environment and heritage projects support the quality and distinctive character of natural and built rural landscapes.</p>	<p>1.4% of formal volunteers in NI (almost 4000) cite the activity of the organisation they volunteer with most as being involved with conservation, the environment and heritage.</p>	<p>The strategy aims to increase volunteering levels, provide rewarding volunteering experiences and support organisations that involved volunteers.</p>

## Assessment Of Impacts

	Positive Negative None	Qualitative (Detail Evidence)	Quantative (Detail Evidence)	Consideration Of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mitigating Measures; and</li> <li>• Alternative Policies</li> </ul>
<p>What will be the likely policy impact upon the quality and distinctive character of natural and built rural landscapes, especially (but not only) on protected landscapes and on biodiversity?</p>				<p>Volunteer involving organisations working in rural areas on conservation, environment and heritage projects may benefit through the proposals.</p>
<p><b>Local craft and food production:</b>                      A key resource for the growth of many micro-businesses in rural areas is the use of traditional crafts, foods and recipes. Will the policy have an impact on the production of any of these, (e.g. regulations affecting food hygiene and production standards) and if so how might traditional approaches be accommodated.</p>	None			

## Appendix 3: Freedom of Information Act 2000 - Confidentiality of Consultations

The Department will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.

The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity, should be made public or be treated as confidential. If you do not wish information about your identity to be made public please include an explanation in your response.

This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided
- the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature
- acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office (or see web site at: <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk/>).

## Appendix 4: The Volunteering Strategy Steering Group Membership

**Western Health & Social Care Trust**

**Youth Council for Northern Ireland**

**Volunteer Centres Northern Ireland**

**South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust**

**Princes Trust**

**NICVA**

**Northern Ireland Sports Forum**

**Department for Social Development**

**Business In The Community**

**YouthNet**

**Rural Community Network**

**Voluntary Arts Ireland**

**Churches Community Work Alliance**

**Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities**

**Disability Action**

**Department of Education**

**Lisburn City Council**

**Age Concern Help the Aged Northern Ireland**

**NI Environment Link**

**Department of Culture Arts and Leisure**

**Your Notes:**





Department for  
**Social  
Development**

[www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk)