CORPORATE STRATEGY
October 2017 to October 2020

INSPIRING PEOPLE
CHANGING COMMUNITIES
OUR VALUES

Our values underpin everything we do. They shape our ambitions and our behaviour.

WE ARE:

- Honest and transparent
- Collaborative
- Ambitious
- Innovative
- Inclusive
Volunteering Matters exists to provide high quality volunteering opportunities for people of all ages and abilities across the UK.

Eighteen months ago, we developed a short term strategy which embedded our transformation and rebrand and helped us to focus the organisation around our four pillars of work (young people, disabled people, vulnerable families and retired and older people) and our employee volunteering engagement. The direction of this new three year strategy is consistent with that document and builds on it. We have now added stretch; we are an ambitious organisation and want to grow. We also build on our evaluation and impact measurement tools and systems developed over that period.

Our three year strategy is in line with our mission and vision and embodies our organisational values.

As you read through our strategy, I hope you will be able to see our focus on consistent excellence - whether this is in the collection of impact data, respect for volunteers and the experience and ideas they bring, or a focus on collaborative working both internally and with external partners and stakeholders.

I want to use this opportunity to thank our trustees, our staff and our volunteers for all the hard work, engagement and commitment they bring to the organisation.

I invite you to work with us to bring this strategy to life in communities across the UK, transforming lives through the power of volunteering.

Oonagh Aitken
WHO WE ARE

Volunteering Matters is the national charity leading UK volunteering in policy and practice.

Our vision is of a society in which everyone can participate in their community through volunteering. Our mission is to invest in people’s ability to volunteer, thereby reducing inequalities and isolation, improving health and wellbeing and building a stronger and more inclusive society.

Volunteering Matters was born in 2015 – giving a new name, and renewed purpose to Community Service Volunteers (CSV), established in 1962. We deliver volunteering solutions to some of the toughest challenges facing individuals and their communities. In 2016/17 we involved around 30,000 volunteers and 90,000 beneficiaries of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

We develop our expertise and target our support by clustering projects in four particular areas of social action: young people; disabled people; vulnerable families; and retired and older people. The projects in these thematic pillars vary in design and size. Some pilot new ideas. Some refine models that have been rigorously tested over many years. They range from peer-led knitting groups that combat isolation among older people to professionally integrated family support interventions that tackle child protection concerns.

For 25 years, our Employee Volunteering team has led the movement for ambitious, high quality business volunteering. We provide tailor-made solutions to companies that want strong and flexible volunteering programmes to meet their corporate social responsibility and organisational objectives. The programmes we help to plan and facilitate enable employee volunteers to engage meaningfully with local communities, sharing time, improving skills and improving lives.

Volunteering Matters is collaborative, outward looking and internationalist. Our Full Time Volunteers come not only from the UK, but also from Europe, South and Central America and East Asia. In Europe, we share learning and influence policy and practice through our membership of key civil society networks. We host the secretariat for Volunteurope, an international network promoting volunteering, active citizenship and social justice in Europe and beyond.

Our journey

The last eighteen months have seen significant achievements. We reviewed how our key programmes operate – including their local fit and their transferability to new areas. As a result, projects have been strengthened, and a number have been extended into new
regions. For example, our inter-generational mentoring programme for care leavers, Grandmentors, was extended to Kent; and we secured additional support from the innovation foundation Nesta for an externally validated review, with a view to ambitious national expansion in 2017/18.

Where we developed new programmes, sometimes in partnership with other local and national charities, we used our experience to be quick and flexible. Our Sporting Chance projects in Middlesbrough, Sheffield and Stockton-On-Tees made rapid progress, providing physical activity opportunities for men aged 50+. As a delivery partner for the Get Out Get Active programme, working in a consortium led by English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS), we helped to put capacity building for volunteering at the heart of a national, £4.5 million initiative.

Over the last eighteen months, we did more than ever to listen to, empower and celebrate our volunteers. We invested in a large representative survey of current and recent volunteers. 97% told us that their volunteering experience met their objectives, and 92% of those who had received training said that it had prepared them well. These findings have fed into a comprehensive review of our induction and training procedures.

We made sure that volunteers’ achievements were celebrated wherever possible; and we are proud that several projects received awards and commendations. The WASSUP (Women Against Sexual exploitation and violence Speak UP) project won a Crimebeat award in Suffolk, and was runner up in the national Red Cross Humanitarian Awards in 2017. Our innovative peer-led sex education project Sex Matters Too was nominated for both the Third Sector Cymru and Welsh Council for Volunteer Action (WCVA) awards. Full Time Volunteering was recognised in 2016’s Children and Young People Now awards, winning the Youth Volunteering and Social Action Award.
Our sector leadership and public policy influence was particularly strong in health and social care. We worked with the Royal Voluntary Service to lead NHS England’s People and Communities Board, and to support the implementation of a vision for volunteering and social action in the social care system. We worked with Nesta and the Health Foundation to support the promotion and dissemination of the Realising the Value Programme, which enables people to take an active role in managing their own health and care. We worked with the Local Government Association (LGA) to publish Public health working with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector - encouraging greater cross sector collaboration and more volunteer-enabled solutions.

We were part of a coalition of organisations that urged government to look at doing more to encourage and recognise full time volunteering, particularly for young people. In December 2016 the government announced an independent review into full time youth social action. The chair, Steve Holliday, launched his work by meeting some of our Full Time Volunteers at our Hackney head office.

These are challenging times for most charities – financially and operationally. Nevertheless, we come to the end of the period covered by our first corporate strategy (as Volunteering Matters) with rising beneficiary numbers, high levels of volunteer satisfaction, and strengthened relationships with government, funders and sector partners.

Our resources

We have been developing flexible and cost efficient operational models and strengthening our core team. Our five regions will move from a predominantly project-based staffing structure, to one which makes greater use of standardised roles that include responsibility for managing and developing suites of projects. This ‘hub’ model will keep costs low, further build our staff team’s expertise, and ensure a coherent place-based approach.

We regularly review our estate in order to support high quality work, minimise unnecessary costs and realise the value of under-used assets where appropriate. Going forward, our infrastructure – including our IT – will be increasingly robust and able to support a variety of working patterns and information demands.

Our people are our most valuable asset. By focussing on shared organisational values, by demonstrating direction and leadership, by valuing collaboration and by demonstrating impact, we will maintain high levels of motivation and confidence among our current staff team, and aim to attract ambitious and talented individuals in the future.

Our aim is steady and sustainable growth. This will be reflected in a year on year surplus.
OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our new corporate strategy runs from October 2017 to October 2020, and will be reviewed annually. It retains the three priorities established by its predecessor, while updating how we will deliver on them. In each case we will be more ambitious, more inclusive, more agile and more transparent in how we work as an organisation.

To increase our reach and impact we will:
- Diversify our offer
- Engage with more volunteers and beneficiaries, and do more with them
- Engage more inclusively and more smartly
- Extend our coverage
- Establish sector-leading impact measurement
- Open up our work for learning and challenge

To provide the best possible experience for volunteers and ensure their voices are heard we will:
- Make excellent volunteer management our default
- Validate and communicate our good practice
- Learn from and empower our volunteers
- Create relationships with volunteers that are more valuable to them
- Bring more volunteers into policy forums and give them a stronger public voice
- Test ourselves against developing sector standards

To provide leadership on effective volunteering, influencing public policy and public service design we will:
- Be a recognised source of advice to public policy makers on the value of volunteering
- Be a recognised source of advice, as well as a trusted provider of services, to local government and other public services
- Establish an annual policy focus, communicated by the whole organisation
- Support and promote a shared voice for the volunteering involving sector
- Raise standards and ambition around employee volunteering
- Champion the international case for volunteering at a time of Brexit

Our strategic analysis

We have chosen to retain our three strategic priorities. Committing to consistency and long term development may seem counterintuitive at a time of profound volatility. In the eighteen months covered by the previous strategy our national direction and temper shifted dramatically in ways that confounded prediction. Longstanding divisions between social classes, regions and generations burst through established political structures and orthodoxies. The UK is exiting the EU under arrangements that are as yet unknown, and we currently have a minority government and a resurgent opposition.

In days like these, strategy risks being outpaced by events - which is precisely why we are maintaining a strategic approach that focusses on the underlying picture. Whatever turns our national politics might take in the coming months and years, the
big national challenges and opportunities to which volunteering can make an important contribution remain largely the same. Our interventions are being developed to meet long term shifts in demography, in the economy and in our cultural and social lives.

Firstly, there is the challenge and opportunity of an ageing society. Volunteering has a key role in helping our longer lives to be healthier and more satisfying. Secondly, there is the challenge and opportunity presented by the changing nature of work, with rising self-employment, micro-enterprises, part-time employment and career switching. Volunteering can have an important role in building the relational skills and aptitudes that help people thrive in a modern economy. Thirdly, there is the challenge and opportunity of increasing diversity. Volunteering is a critical way of bonding communities, bridging differences and fostering inclusion.

Because our underlying analysis is clear and consistent, our strategic priorities can remain broad and flexible – increasing our reach and impact; increasing volunteer voice; providing sector leadership. Our strategy is concerned with how we can continue to be ambitious in these areas, and honest and transparent about how we are faring; and it therefore makes a number of commitments that are precise and prescriptive. To that extent, the strategy incorporates the discipline of strategy as planning and target setting.

But just as importantly, the strategy also supports us in becoming an organisation that is as agile, relationally rich and endlessly creative as volunteering itself. We will be a locally embedded organisation that draws on the innovative and collaborative potential of all of its staff, as well as local people and communities. This is a strategy to support our adaptive capacity. It strengthens the skills and relationships that will allow us to make change happen in a fast moving environment. It also requires, and is underpinned by, our organisational values of ambition, inclusion, collaboration, innovation and transparency. During the period covered by this strategy we will therefore be embedding these organisational values in our recruitment and appraisals systems, and in our staff and volunteer management.

Our organisational values underpin all our strategic organisational commitments. For example:

**VALUE:**

- **AMBITIOUS**
  - Diversify our offer

- **INCLUSIVE**
  - Learn from and empower our volunteers

- **COLLABORATIVE**
  - Develop the National Network of Volunteer Involving Agencies (NNVIA)

- **INNOVATIVE**
  - Establish sector-leading impact measurement

- **TRANSPARENT**
  - Test ourselves against developing sector standards

**NOTE:** see back of document for a full list of our commitments and the values that underpin them.
Increase our reach and impact

Volunteering benefits everyone. But the benefits fall unequally because of individual characteristics (such as class, ethnicity and age) and local circumstances (where you live). Many of the people who could benefit most from volunteering are precisely those who are least likely to participate.

We will therefore do more to ensure that whoever you are and wherever you are, especially if volunteering hasn’t been part of your life up to now, we will create exciting opportunities for you to participate and make a difference. Our range of opportunities will be broadened to reach more communities; we will innovate to improve access; and we will continually review our established programmes to ensure deeper impact. Because we know that people tend to benefit most from repeated rather than one-off volunteering, we will prioritise our more intensive programmes, including Full Time Volunteering.

The impact and sustainability of volunteering programmes depends to a large extent on how well they are informed by and inform other local systems, services and ways of doing things. Our approach will therefore be increasingly place-based. Regional teams will develop a detailed understanding of the assets and circumstances of their local communities, so that our work with them produces genuinely inclusive and powerful volunteering opportunities. We will match our local insight and flexibility with sector leading expertise in impact measurement and evaluation, using validated measurement tools to track progress, drive improvement and share learning with localities, peers and policy makers. By tightening our evaluation processes to identify the ‘must have’ core elements of our programmes, we will be able to offer funders and partners assurances around replication and fidelity, while also co-producing locally embedded solutions.

1. Diversify our offer
We will expand the range of volunteering opportunities for all ages and abilities, including through new types of Full Time Volunteering. During 2018 we will scope the benefits of online volunteering opportunities.

2. Engage with more volunteers and beneficiaries, and do more with them
We will increase the number of volunteers and beneficiaries annually; increase the proportion of volunteers who are full time; and increase the proportion of beneficiaries who are multiple (rather than one-off) contacts.

3. Engage more inclusively and more smartly
To meet our aim of more inclusive volunteering that benefits those most likely to miss out we will increase the proportion of volunteers from lower socio-economic groups and ensure that the ethnic make-up of our volunteers becomes increasingly representative of the regions in which we operate. To support this we will ensure that
all new projects that recruit local volunteers have inclusion plans that are prepared with reference to up to date place data, including public health data.

4. Extend our coverage
We will extend our geographical reach, developing projects within each of our regions that reach communities that we do not currently serve.

5. Establish sector-leading impact measurement
We will introduce an impact and evaluation framework that accurately captures socio-demographic data, and consistently uses validated measurement tools to track progress for volunteers and beneficiaries across all of our programmes. The framework will be operational for all new projects by the end of 2017. We will follow this with training and support packages for qualitative and user-led evaluation by the end of 2018. From 2018/19, we will publish an annual impact report with comprehensive data and analysis from across all aspects of our work.

6. Open up our work for learning and challenge
We will convene external expert groups (including volunteers and service users) for all four thematic pillars, meeting biannually, to review emerging evidence and make recommendations to our board of trustees in order to improve current practice and direct future business planning.

Provide the best possible experience for volunteers and ensure that their voices are heard

Volunteers are the heart of Volunteering Matters. The time that they give transforms the lives of beneficiaries; and it is our responsibility to ensure that volunteers find their time with our projects similarly rewarding. We recognise that people step forward to volunteer for a multitude of reasons which often change with age and circumstance. Volunteers who want to make a positive difference to their communities may also be motivated by the wish to develop new skills, new friendships, greater self-confidence or simply by curiosity. We will introduce systems and frameworks to ensure that, as far as possible, all of our volunteers in all of our projects find their experience with us as rewarding as it is worthwhile, at the time and subsequently.

The volunteer management systems, frameworks and externally validated standards that we will introduce will be essential to quality and consistency. But
they will be dead letters unless animated by our strong organisational values of inclusion, collaboration and innovation. We see our volunteers as our partners. They bring not only their time, but their ideas, their life experience and their creativity. In just the same way that we respect our beneficiaries by taking an asset-based and co-productive approach – designing programmes with them not for them – we will respect our volunteers by getting better at listening to, learning from and collaborating with them to make our programmes effective and sustainable. The voice of volunteers will be louder in our internal decision making, and also in our conversation with government and other policy makers.

1. Make excellent volunteer management our default
We will ensure that our systems and culture consistently promote excellence in volunteer support. By involving staff in a comprehensive update and harmonisation of our policies and resources to take the best of current programmes and extend it across the board (including through a new handbook) we will further raise our standards and inspire each other to be ambitious. For our Full Time Volunteers we will, by the end of 2017, introduce a new Standards Pledge to ensure: equal and realistic allowances; regular opportunities for socialising with peers; greater access to local service discount schemes for leisure and travel.

2. Validate our good practice and celebrate volunteers’ achievements
To demonstrate pride and confidence in our refreshed systems we will become a certified Investor in Volunteering organisation in 2018. From 2018 we will introduce national awards for excellence in volunteering, which recognise the achievements of our volunteers and others.

3. Learn from and empower our volunteers
We will ensure that we are consistently collaborating with, rather than delivering through our volunteers. This will involve taking their ideas and experiences more clearly into account in the design and the day-to-day running of our programmes – those that are explicitly volunteer-led, but also those that are led by paid staff. In 2017 we will agree and introduce a new Volunteer Engagement Strategy with input from our volunteers that will cover induction, training, involvement and co-design, and reward and recognition. Our biennial survey of volunteers’ experience and views will help us to track progress and pick up emerging issues.

4. Create relationships with volunteers that are more valuable to them
We will make it easier for former volunteers to stay in touch with the organisation and the friends they make during their time with us. Central to this will be a new alumni scheme that will be introduced in 2018. We will also do more to support volunteers who are particularly keen to improve their skills, and potentially their employability, through volunteering. In each of our four thematic pillars we will introduce accreditation
frameworks that can be aligned to current or future projects. The frameworks will recognize and evidence the volunteers’ skills and understanding.

5. Bring more volunteers into policy forums and give them a stronger public voice
We will support volunteers to have a direct presence and voice in policy discussions. Wherever possible, the voice of Volunteering Matters will include the voice of its volunteers, bringing their experience and views into professional and public and debates. As part of this commitment, we will ensure that volunteers are featured in a rising number of stories and articles in local, national and specialist media, traditional and digital.

6. Test ourselves against developing sector standards
We will annually benchmark our relationship with our volunteers against that of comparable volunteer involving organisations and report publicly on whether we improving or falling behind. We intend to do this working with the Volunteers Count organisation, which will enable us to monitor areas of interest including: retention, learning and development opportunities, awards and recognition.

Provide leadership on effective volunteering, influencing public policy and public service design

Because volunteering is such an established and familiar part of our national life it is tempting to take it for granted. But formal volunteering (facilitated through organisations like charities) is neither a free good, nor a fixed proposition: a changing society has different needs, presenting different opportunities and challenges. In recent years, for example, we have seen a dramatic upsurge in social activism, not only online, but in person. We have also seen the blurring of boundaries between traditional public services – publically owned and professionally delivered – and services that are volunteer delivered with different types of ownership and partnerships. Shrinking public funding has forced the pace, but change has also come out of a belief that some public services have been too distant and transactional to be effective, and that active citizens ultimately make for a stronger society. There is a live conversation about what volunteering can, cannot and should not do. By virtue of its size and experience, Volunteering Matters has a key role in leading that discussion.

In doing so, we will follow our values as a collaborative, open and transparent organisation. With our sector partners, we will identify shared concerns and opportunities, and work to take forward the case for good quality that benefits society as a whole and leaves no one behind. Our arguments will be based on the best evidence available and rooted in our practice, where we will continue to innovate, adapt and learn about our impact. We will set out our evidence and arguments publicly, engaging candidly with government and all relevant stakeholders, including business leaders. In making our case we will fully respect the different
decision making structures of Scotland and Wales, progressively developing our capacity to play an active role in public policy discussions in all of the UK’s nations. We are determined that the knowledge, good practice and volunteering opportunities that are currently associated with the UK’s membership of the EU should not be lost with Brexit. We will remain an outward looking organisation that connects internationally through volunteering.

1. Be a recognised source of advice to public policy makers on the value of volunteering
We will engage regularly with parliamentarians to promote evidence based policy that recognises the value of volunteering. Our public affairs activity in the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly will support our Scottish and Welsh operations to influence their own national agendas. Our public affairs strategy will be a publicly available document, underlining our commitment to transparency. To promote consistent use of robust volunteering data in policy and planning, we will collaborate with partners to support the publication of a Volunteering Almanac for England and Wales annually from 2018.

2. Be a recognised source of advice, as well as a trusted provider of services to local government and other public services
We will develop relationships with key policy makers in local government, with particular reference to our four thematic pillars. We will describe how volunteering programmes have a role to play in preventing unmanageable demands on costly and sometimes unsatisfactory institutional services. As part of doing so, we will test out cost-benefit models for some of our programmes from 2018 onwards.

3. Establish an annual policy focus, communicated by the whole organisation
We will identify one core policy issue or opportunity each year around which research, policy and communications will be aligned. In year one, that will be community cohesion and inclusion. At least two policy and research publications will support the influencing work on the chosen theme. In addition, we will hold an annual showcase event for work in each of the four thematic pillars, aimed at practitioners and funders, with separate bespoke events in Scotland and Wales.

4. Support and promote a shared voice for the volunteering involving sector
We will build the influence and effectiveness of the National Network of Volunteering Involving Agencies (NNVIA) – the unique network that we chair and for which we provide the secretariat. By supporting NNVIA to embrace a collaborative leadership model (where more than one organisation is responsible for decision making) we will increase its ability to develop and articulate shared policies and positions.

5. Raise standards and ambition around employee volunteering
We will develop a business case for an academy for Good practice in employee volunteering. Working collaboratively with an academic partner, we will in 2018 set out a business case for an Academy which taps into leading edge international practice to offer programmes, planning and evaluation services to UK companies.

6. Champion the international case for volunteering at a time of Brexit
We will continue to host the secretariat of Volonteurope in the UK, and will play a full role in European and international volunteering and social action networks, sharing opportunities and good practice. In Brussels and Westminster we will make the case for maintaining the greatest possible access to cross-national volunteering opportunities, particularly for young people.
## APPENDIX

Our organisational values against our strategic priorities and actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our organisational values</th>
<th>Our strategic priorities</th>
<th>Our strategic actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reach and impact</strong></td>
<td>Diversify our offer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reach and impact</strong></td>
<td>Engage with more volunteers, and do more with them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reach and impact</strong></td>
<td>Extend our coverage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reach and impact</strong></td>
<td>Establish sector-leading impact measurement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volunteer experience</strong></td>
<td>Make excellent volunteer management and voice our default</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volunteer experience and voice</strong></td>
<td>Create relationships with volunteers that are more valuable to them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide leadership on effective volunteering</strong></td>
<td>Become a recognised source of advice to public policy makers on the value of volunteering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We are ambitious</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We are inclusive</strong></td>
<td>Diversity our offer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We are collaborative</strong></td>
<td>Engage more inclusively and more smartly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide leadership on effective volunteering</strong></td>
<td>Establish sector-leading impact measurement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide leadership on effective volunteering</strong></td>
<td>Learn from and empower our volunteers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide leadership on effective volunteering</strong></td>
<td>Create relationships with volunteers that are more valuable to them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide leadership on effective volunteering</strong></td>
<td>Learn from and empower our volunteers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide leadership on effective volunteering</strong></td>
<td>Broaden our active membership of relevant professional, membership and campaigning bodies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide leadership on effective volunteering</strong></td>
<td>Develop NNVIA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide leadership on effective volunteering</strong></td>
<td>Advocate for the maximum possible continued access to European volunteering opportunities post-Brexit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide leadership on effective volunteering</strong></td>
<td>Broden our active membership of relevant professional, membership and campaigning bodies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our organisational values</td>
<td>Our strategic priorities</td>
<td>Our strategic actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We are innovative</strong></td>
<td>Reach and impact</td>
<td>Diversify our offer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reach and impact</td>
<td>Establish sector-leading impact measurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer experience and voice</td>
<td>Create relationships with volunteers that are more valuable to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer experience and voice</td>
<td>Bring more volunteers into policy forums and give them a stronger public voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide leadership on effective volunteering</td>
<td>Develop a business case for an Academy for good practice in employee volunteering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We are open and transparent</strong></td>
<td>Reach and impact</td>
<td>Open up our work for learning and challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer experience and voice</td>
<td>Validate and communicate our good practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer experience and voice</td>
<td>Test ourselves against developing sector standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>