

# Opportunities for Volunteering - the legacy report

30 years of funding volunteering  
in health and social care



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## Foreword

Volunteers play an important role in building resilient communities. In the context of health, public health and social care, they contribute to the delivery of high quality health, care and support services; improving health and well-being; and helping to reduce health and social inequality. They frequently offer support to people at the most vulnerable points in their lives.

It is within this context that I want to pay special tribute to the Opportunities for Volunteering (OfV) Scheme which, since 1982, has been delivering valuable results for local people; supporting them to take action to meet their needs and the needs of their communities.

I am particularly struck by the observations of the Opportunities for Volunteering National Agents who delivered this scheme on our behalf, as they reflect on what they have brought to the scheme and what it has brought to them in return. For example, developing the volunteering infrastructure, improving volunteer management practice, fostering an environment for projects to seek out new alliances, helping small and emerging organisations to recruit volunteers and involve service users, and in turn empowering service users to become volunteers themselves.

Such reflections provide a real sense of the journey that has been undertaken since 1982. One that comes to a close in 2012. What this Legacy Report clearly demonstrates is that the scheme's work provides firm foundations to build on for the future, particularly with the Department's Health and Social Care Volunteering Fund (HSCVF) that was launched in December 2009 as the successor.

The noble and proud tradition of volunteering across the full range of health and care settings, that Opportunities for Volunteering has embodied with distinction for so long, is being continued through this new fund which in turn is closely aligned with the four priorities of our Strategic Vision for Volunteering that we launched in October this year.

Because the Government recognises the tremendous contribution of volunteers, we want to ensure that this wealth of activity is acknowledged and celebrated - this report does just that.



**Paul Burstow MP**  
**Minister of State for Care Services**  
**Department of Health**



For the past 30 years, the Opportunities for Volunteering (OfV) scheme has provided funding, resources and expertise to support volunteering in health and social care settings.

Funded by the Department of Health, the scheme is designed to improve the profile and diversity of volunteers and develop the range and quality of volunteering opportunities in health, well-being and social care service provision.

OfV wouldn't have happened without the National Agents who assess grant applications as well as monitor, evaluate and provide development support to the projects they fund:

- Age UK
- Attend
- Barnardo's
- Churches Together in England
- Crisis
- CSV
- Locality
- Mencap
- Mind
- Nacro
- Radar
- RNIB
- Scope
- The Children's Society
- UK Council on Deafness
- Volunteering England

Thanks also to the British Council of Churches, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and The Pre-School Learning Alliance who were National Agents in the scheme's early years.

The scheme's long history represents a successful partnership between the Department of Health and the voluntary and community sector at national, regional and local level.

Thanks to this work, hundreds of OfV projects across England have been able to play a key role in:

- Increasing the number and diversity of people who get involved in voluntary activities that benefit their local communities
- Supporting the development of good volunteering policy and management support at a local level
- Providing support to local people, helping to improve their health and well-being
- Complementing and enhancing the services of statutory and voluntary health and social care providers.

As OfV comes to an end, this report celebrates the achievements of volunteers across the life span of the scheme and looks to the future opportunities afforded by the new Volunteering Fund.



## A historical perspective

**Academic Ian Mocroft, a researcher on the Opportunities for Volunteering Scheme from 1983 – 1993, reflects on his involvement in the early research and evaluation work for the scheme...**

“Looking for work in 1983, I was fortunate to be asked by the DHSS to establish the research and monitoring element of a new programme, Opportunities for Volunteering (OfV).

“OfV’s establishment followed a difficult period in history. The 1970s had been a period of inflation, followed by rising unemployment and monetary crises; in 1979 the Labour government was replaced by Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government, with a promise of radical change to cut inflation.

“At the same time there was a sharp downturn in the world economy, causing a further rise in unemployment, accompanied by serious riots in England, most notoriously in Liverpool and Brixton in South London. The government response included the Scarman Inquiry along with a series of short-term spending measures to alleviate unemployment.



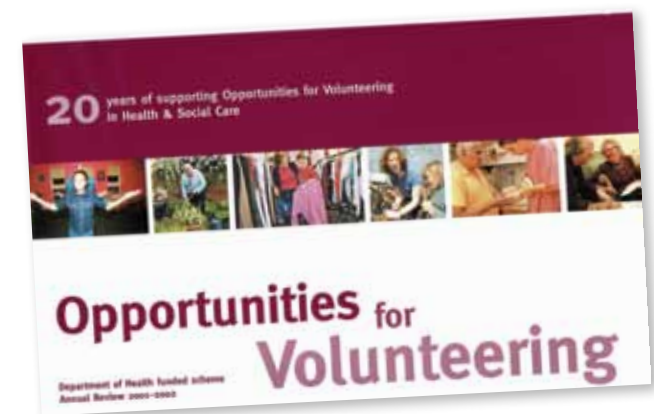
Ian Mocroft, circa 1983

“The Department of Health and Social Security’s contribution was OfV. In its first year, the programme offered £3.3 million to 16 selected national voluntary bodies with extensive national networks of branches or member organisations. The aim was to promote local volunteering in the personal social services by unemployed people.

“When the programme was announced, National Agents had yet to be signed up and it had not been established that they were prepared to be involved at such short notice. Nevertheless, all 16 National Agents were eventually persuaded to join the project.

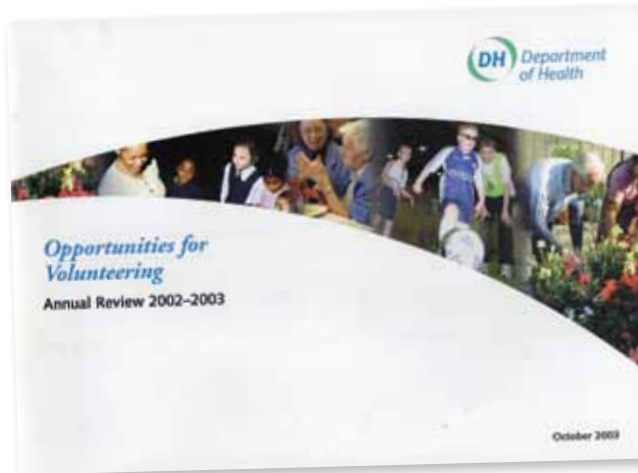
“As researchers, we were also asked to suggest National Agents to cover the personal social services client groups: the most obvious omission being the homeless – hence the inclusion of Crisis as one of the National Agents.

“The monitoring team produced annual reports on the scheme and these gave an idea as to the scale of OfV in the 1980s. In 1987-88, some 21,500 volunteers were involved, of whom two-thirds were unemployed.



“The average project involved over 40 volunteers in the year, not necessarily at the same time, with the majority directly helping others; ten per cent of projects were more in the nature of self-help groups.

“Most volunteers worked in groups in day care or domiciliary / neighbourhood care. Over the year, 60,000 users or clients were helped by the OfV scheme’s projects.

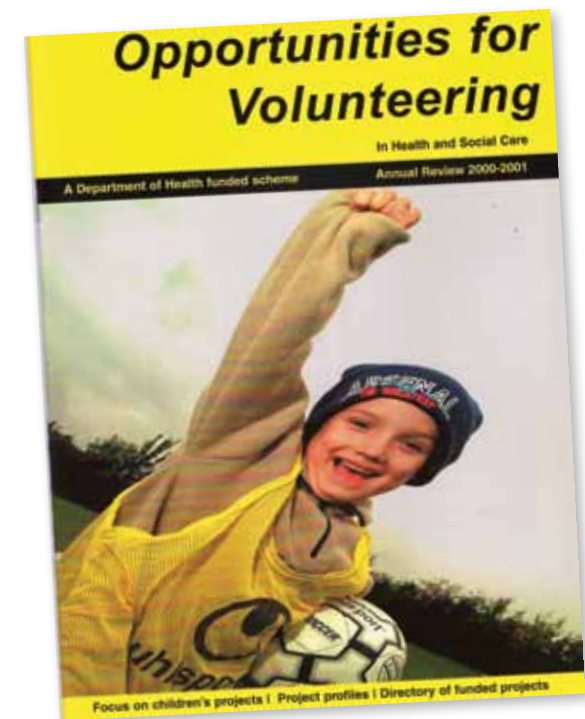


“The initial application of OfV funding was to a large number of small projects. This soon changed in the direction of the ‘fully-funded project’ model, so there was a tendency for the numbers of projects to fall and the average size to rise, with 66 per cent of costs going to staff. This meant paying a development officer, co-ordinator or volunteer organiser plus office expenses.

“OfV was a small programme, with a low profile outside the voluntary sector. It was dwarfed by the Job Creation Programme and the Department of Employment Manpower Services Commission’s Community Programme. By 1986, unemployment had risen to over ten per cent, and these programmes formed nearly half of government expenditure on the voluntary sector (not including Housing Association funding). Unlike OfV, these schemes were reduced in the late 80s, as unemployment slowly declined.

“The increasing emergence of short-term funding schemes pushed the issue of time-limited funding for the voluntary sector to the top of the agenda. Was ‘pump-priming’ a workable policy? Was there a market for new projects and once they had demonstrated their worth and sustainability, could they attract other funding? A comparison of the future-funding of projects after OfV between 1986 and 1989 showed the success rate in obtaining continuation funding was 76 per cent.

“However, most of the continuation funding was statutory in origin and short-term in nature. It demonstrated that voluntary (or indeed statutory) projects in the social services were not like economic goods such as barrels of crude oil or tinned peaches in a market which equated value by demand and supply.



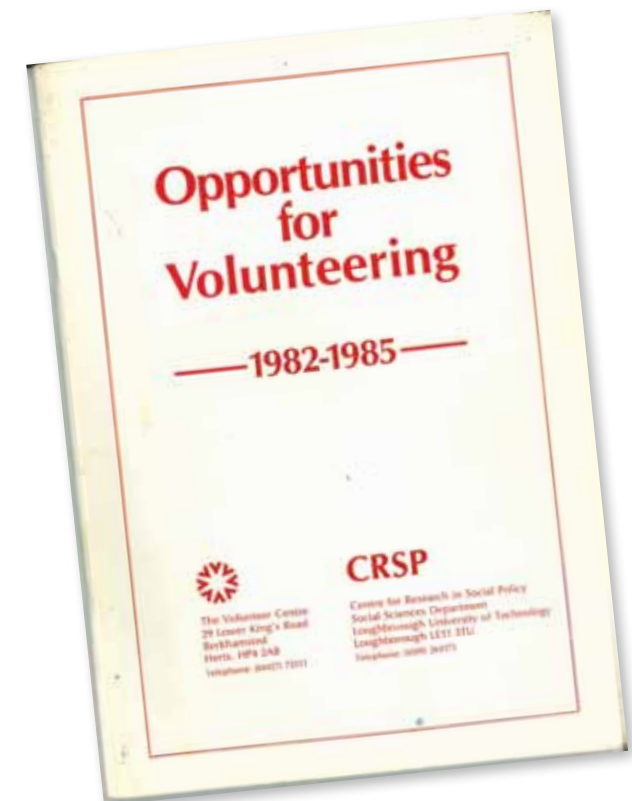
“The OfV scheme provided a separate development fund for new projects. It gave National Agents the power to make decisions over which local applicants to fund. It developed their networks, and insight into those networks. In some cases, it was their only source of new money.

“My role required me to have direct contact with many of the funded projects and I remember visiting some highly innovative projects. For example, St. George’s Church in Southall, funded by the British Council of Churches to encourage isolated Asian women to support each other and encourage independence. Seven Springs Cheshire Home brought unemployed volunteers into its work, teaching them computer skills.

“I still remember, at a Radar-funded project, a profoundly deaf young man communicating with me and others using a computer which translated my typing into Morse Code, played at high volume through earphones; he couldn’t hear it, but he felt it through his skull directly.

“I also visited Central Redevelopment Area Community Association Advice Centre. Funded by the Consortium on Opportunities for Volunteering (now Volunteering England), it provided a volunteer workforce for an advice centre based in a 1960s housing estate, the only community project in an area of high unemployment.

“All in all, the outcomes have been outstanding for a programme that at its launch was described as an ‘experiment’. Moreover, it was not ‘an experiment’ in the sense that I understood it: trying something and evaluating the outcome at the end. Experiment in this case meant that ‘we want to try this, and we don’t necessarily promise to carry it on’. Thirty years on, it has left a lasting legacy, and through my own involvement, I gained unique knowledge of how voluntary organisations work from the inside.”



**Age UK’s vision is of a world in which older people flourish. Its mission is to improve the lives of older people, making a real practical difference to people today, while working for a better later life in the future. Age UK is the new force combining Age Concern and Help the Aged.**

### Reflections on Opportunities for Volunteering

“OfV has enabled the development of a programme of activities and support for older people, delivered by volunteers and designed in response to local needs. We have been able to train volunteers on a variety of general and specialist health issues so that they can empower service users to take charge of their health and lead healthier lifestyles.

“The service users aren’t the only ones to benefit – volunteers are becoming more confident, active and involved in their local communities. For example, three OfV volunteers joined an over 60s weekly dance class after experiencing a taster session during their project. Volunteers have also increased their knowledge and skills, enhancing their employability.

“OfV funding has also helped to provide new, specific, health-focused volunteering roles with accredited training which has helped us to recruit a wider variety of volunteers than before – particularly those

interested in health and employability. Service users have even been able to ‘step up’ to becoming volunteers in one OfV project focused on counselling.

“We have also seen a positive impact on joint working locally. One OfV project has developed an excellent relationship with their local NHS Trust, so that the volunteers can access quality health training. Another OfV project entered into a partnership with a local university and offered placements to psychotherapy undergraduates within its Psychological Support Team.

“What we must take from this is that volunteers are an invaluable resource, but they do not come ‘for free’. Staff, systems and structures must be in place to ensure any volunteering programme is delivered effectively and volunteers are appropriately supported, with out of pocket expenses always reimbursed as a matter of good practice. OfV enabled us to recruit a dedicated staff member in order to recruit and support volunteers to deliver the project. Ultimately, this has expanded the opportunities available to service users and volunteers, leading to all of the fantastic outcomes described above.

“Future volunteering programmes will take on increasing importance in the ‘Big Society’ and therefore need to receive appropriate investment to provide the support that the volunteers need, and enable them to feel a valued part of the community.”



## Project case study

### Eat Well, Keep Well, Croydon

**Becoming thinner is not an inevitable part of the ageing process and the Eat Well, Keep Well project was funded by Age UK to raise awareness of the risks, causes and effects of malnutrition among older people, their families and carers.**

The project undertook a wide range of activities. Outreach health promotion events were held to highlight the causes of poor dietary patterns, which can be both social and clinical. Trained volunteer 'buddies' were also able to provide low level social support for up to six weeks, sharing meals with isolated clients or accompanying an older person to the shops to buy affordable, good quality food.

Preventative measures were also undertaken, such as screening using a Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool. This enabled early identification of older people at risk, and support and advice was provided by project workers to help to improve eating patterns and maintain a healthy weight.

The project did not provide any clinical intervention or personal care, but those with specialist or complex needs were referred onward to appropriate organisations. Referrals were made to shopping schemes, welfare benefit projects, dentists, health visitors, lunch clubs and other health and social care services.

This work had a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of service users, as well as improving joint working locally – and the project helped to identify serious underlying causes of unintentional weight loss.



Amy Bell, 85, enjoys a meal at her home in Croydon

**Attend is a national charity that supports and expands the roles volunteers play in creating healthy communities. It does this in three ways - by supporting those already volunteering, by running projects itself and by sharing what it does through training and events. Attend was formerly known as The National Association of Hospital and Community Friends.**

### Reflections on Opportunities for Volunteering

"I have been with Attend for around ten years, and celebrating 30 years of OfV has given me a chance to reflect on the history of funded projects and where they are now.

*"Genuine innovation has been encouraged and supported"*

"In the earlier years, Friends Groups, which were primarily hospital based, took confidence from the three-year funding to take the first tentative steps in employing co-ordinators. Those people were part of the early tranche of Volunteer Services Managers in hospitals, and some now form part of paid hospital teams. Simultaneously, hospitals saw paid staff as a way of managing the risks associated with volunteering; with that perception managed, there has been a huge growth in the

volunteering contribution on the NHS estate. There has been an increase in volunteer involvement in all sorts of projects which have added value to the patient experience.

"The second area where the grants have been most used is for community-based organisations with a very specific focus; perhaps looking at a local community, or a disease specific patient group. This has meant that genuine innovation has been encouraged and supported and new ideas given the chance to flourish.

"The style of the grant has really supported that. Our member groups value their autonomy; the fact that the funds do not have to be matched and carry light touch reporting obligations have made them accessible to people who perhaps thought grant funding was out of their reach. The fact that the fund manager is their national body, which they know and trust, has also meant that they have been able to explore ideas and raise their fears in a safe environment."

***Personal reflection from David Wood OBE,  
Chief Executive, Attend***



Youth volunteers Leon Brown, Ibrihim Sesay and Anna Lowe outside the Bernie Grant Arts Centre in North London

### Project case study

#### Haringey Shed, London

**Funded by Attend, Haringey Shed is an inclusive music theatre company that gives all young people in Haringey, North London, regardless of ability or background, the opportunity to express themselves creatively and experience the joy and magic of making theatre.**

Haringey Shed uses music, dance and drama to improve the lives of the young people. It runs a range of activities including after-school theatre workshops, bands, choirs and a dance group, alongside outreach programmes in schools, youth leadership and volunteer programmes. Through these activities, the project promotes inclusion – accommodating young people with a range of physical and learning abilities – and works to increase young people’s confidence and skills.

As well as recruiting an Inclusive Participation Officer to support its work, the organisation also used its OfV funding to pay for an OCN accredited course, ‘Helping others to Learn’, where participants with learning disabilities were taught how to teach and mentor others within the theatrical environment. This enabled them to take up meaningful volunteer roles within Haringey Shed and other organisations.

Last year 78 young volunteers were placed in 126 opportunities – and they all agree that the greatest benefit is that of experiencing inclusion in action.



**Barnardo's transforms the lives of vulnerable children across the UK through the work of its projects, its campaigning and its research expertise.**

### Project case study

#### Family Support, Bath and North East Somerset

**Funded by Barnardo's, the Family Support project provided social and practical support to help to bring families closer together, and its volunteers were able to make a real difference.**

One volunteer offered befriending support to a mother who had previously suffered domestic abuse. The situation was particularly difficult as, although the mother no longer had contact with those involved in her past, she wouldn't join any support groups and was left feeling isolated.

Over time, she was able to develop a trusting relationship with the befriender.

Until then, she had not found it easy to share more personal thoughts and feelings, but she began to do so, including insights into her concerns about her own mother, her children and her wish to develop social activities.

The volunteer proved skilful and tactful at encouraging the mother to share her feelings, providing advice and giving information about educational opportunities. The mother also had a relative in prison and the volunteer, who had once been a prison chaplain, provided invaluable support on this matter. In addition the volunteer provided help with literacy to one of the children.

The key to this volunteer role being successful was the good match and the fact that the volunteer concerned had significant relevant experience and was able to use her initiative. Not only that, but outreach by the volunteer to the service user at her home and in local community settings was crucial to the success of the role.



Befriending volunteer Marilyn White with the books and bookcase she donated to Family Support





**Churches Together in England is the national body set up by the churches in 1990, and has partner bodies in Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Its strength comes from people from different traditions finding new ways to work and worship together.**

### Project case study

#### Oasis Project, Plymouth

**Churches Together in England funded the Oasis Project, a community café run by the Methodist Church in an inner city area of high deprivation, unemployment and poor health.**

The café offered a range of activities to support the local community, including coffee mornings, luncheon clubs for pensioners and Time Out, a group for mothers and pre-school children. It also delivered lessons in numeracy, literacy, computer skills for life and healthy cooking for people with learning difficulties.

The Oasis Project also encompassed the Plymouth Food Bank, which provided people in short-term crisis with enough food to last three days and offered help with solving problems such as housing, debt, and addictions.

The Big Issue also ran their office from the Oasis Project premises and four times a year the café hosted a meal for the homeless in the city, enabling them to meet with the various agencies providing shelter and advice in an informal setting.

Oasis offered placements to people recovering from mental health issues and had three people working in catering roles. Its aim was to help people be able to access paid employment though gaining work experience in a less stressful environment. A range of volunteers with educational levels from degree to special needs all benefited from this project.

## Churches Together in England



Volunteer Christine Hele sorts donated food in the Plymouth Food Bank container

**Crisis is the national charity for single homeless people. It is dedicated to ending homelessness by delivering life-changing services and campaigning for change.**

### Reflections on Opportunities for Volunteering

“The OfV scheme has allowed us to create sound, valid and beneficial volunteering opportunities for a range of service users that are combating homelessness or the threat of homelessness.

This project has enabled them to build their self-esteem and self-worth

*“The OfV scheme has allowed us to create sound, valid and beneficial volunteering opportunities”*

at a time in their lives when chaos exists, and to build structure, gain support and acquire new and lasting social contacts. It has enabled many of them to obtain

informal and formal training opportunities, the latter often being the first occasion that they have done so.

“It has also enabled us to raise awareness of issues surrounding homelessness in the rural community, combating the perception that it only exists in large urban areas.

“The scheme has enabled us to be active in delivering a service to the wider community and to positively engage with a range of agencies in both the statutory and voluntary sector. This joined up

approach has directly benefited the service users in making encouraging steps in their often chaotic lifestyles.

“One of our service users, Ben, left home to work away for a year, but he returned to find that, due to his mother’s failing health, she was unable to accommodate him at the family home. Without a job or any permanent accommodation, he took to ‘sofa surfing’ with

*“The scheme has enabled us to be active in delivering a service to the wider community”*

friends in the local area. Through a local job agency he learned of the Homelessness to Opportunities programme and got involved with volunteering. He acquired new skills and found people within his peer group who had gone through similar problems.

Although yet to find permanent accommodation, he now feels strong enough to support his mother with her specific health needs and is working towards getting back into employment.

“Ben is just one example of so many people combating homelessness who have been supported through the scheme. Without the necessary funding it would have been much more difficult to make significant inroads in this sector of the community.”

***Personal reflection from Homelessness to Opportunities project, funded by Crisis***

## Project case study

### Making Milestones, Derbyshire

**Crisis also funded Making Milestones, a project which aimed to enable homeless people to rebuild their self-esteem, confidence, skills and develop coping strategies to achieve their independence.**

Befriending services were at the heart of the project's key activities. Through one-to-one befriending, it provided informal and supportive social relationships for homeless people. This was focused on support for residents of Milestone House, which accommodates single homeless people and couples, Derbyshire Housing Aid's (DHA's) Emergency Accommodation and Support service, and SmartShare, DHA's shared, supported housing service.

Making Milestones also offered group befriending, via group activity sessions for Milestone House and SmartShare residents. These included relaxation therapies for reducing stress and increasing coping mechanisms, sports for improving physical health, self-esteem and interpersonal skills and IT workshops for boosting skills, knowledge and employability.



Volunteers Pippa Woodbridge-Stocks and Julie Morgan (centre) running a mask making art session for the residents at Milestone House

**CSV is the UK’s leading volunteering and training charity. CSV’s vision is of a society where everyone can participate to build healthy, enterprising, inclusive communities.**

**Reflections on Opportunities for Volunteering**

“The OfV scheme has enabled us to increase the capacity of projects to involve volunteers and to introduce people to volunteering who haven’t volunteered before.

“One of our projects with an intergenerational focus found that not

*“The scheme has enabled us to increase the capacity of projects to involve volunteers”*

only was it attracting new volunteers of all ages, but that it was building bridges within the local community.

Relationships between young and old were much improved, and the chance for groups to learn about each other really contributed to a change in perceptions. Older people have benefited particularly, feeling less isolated and having their lives enriched by new activities.

“A second project, which provided support to elderly and disabled people to help them manage and maintain their gardens, found the scheme allowed it to widen its scope to incorporate intergenerational

aspects by linking up residential homes with local schools. The funding also enabled the project to establish a network of volunteers and its success has attracted the support of the local council to continue its work.

“Another of our projects involved volunteers in supporting people who were recovering from mental health illnesses, helping them into volunteering and employment opportunities. As the project itself has told us, ‘without volunteers, this project would not have been possible’ – and without this scheme, it wouldn’t have been able to involve those volunteers.

“The funding has also had a lasting effect on CSV. It has enabled the team to grow, improve their volunteer management practice and broaden the scope of their work. The knowledge that has been developed has been passed through to new staff and we have found that volunteers are continuing to volunteer with local organisations long after our intervention has ceased.”

*“Without volunteers, this project would not have been possible”*





Volunteer Shoker Abobeker with a Kurdish takeaway after being interviewed by BBC Radio Devon

### Project case study

#### Get Out There Club, Devon

**The aim of one of the club's CSV-funded initiatives, the Community Learning Champion project, is to help lonely, isolated and vulnerable people to learn something new whilst socialising.**

Shoker Abobeker volunteers with CSV for both Devon and Cornwall. As part of the Community Learning Champion Project, he held a Kurdish Cultural Taster Session in Stonehouse. The Kurdish community is the largest ethnic minority in Plymouth, and the event was an important opportunity for people to learn about the culture and understand why there are so many Kurds living in Plymouth.

The event was a great success and Shoker was invited onto BBC Radio Devon to talk about his work, highlighting not only the success of this particular event but also the importance of the wider Community Learning Champion project.

**Locality is the UK's leading network for community-led organisations. It believes that every community is a place of possibility. It was formed in April 2011 by the merger of bassac and the Development Trusts Association.**

### Reflections on Opportunities for Volunteering

"I have administered the OfV grant at Locality (previously bassac) for the past three years and have been consistently inspired by the enthusiasm, dedication and innovation of our members and the impact they have had in their communities as a result of the funding.

"The projects we have funded have ranged from supporting young disabled people to develop work-related skills, providing a counselling

*"Opportunities for Volunteering recognised the value that volunteering brings"*

service for survivors of domestic violence, providing intergenerational and intercultural activities for local

people, supporting homeless people to rebuild confidence and skills and enabling people whose first language is not English to develop their language skills and reduce their isolation. Finding funding for these kinds of projects can be difficult so OfV has provided a lifeline to many of our members and has enabled them to carry out hugely valuable work.

"Opportunities for Volunteering recognised the value that volunteering brings to individuals and communities. Across all of the National Agents, thousands of people have benefited from this funding in a whole host of different ways – whether organisations, service users or the volunteers themselves – and we feel really proud to have been part of this.

"In reflecting on the scheme, we spoke to some of our projects about the lasting legacy it has left for them. Cooltan Arts, for example, told us that 'OfV money meant a lot to [us].' As they explained,

*'It gave us the opportunity to engage with the most vulnerable people in our borough and those who are outside services by providing meaningful volunteering opportunities, training sessions and individual support. Also, it enabled us to develop volunteering infrastructure that recognises the needs of volunteers with disabilities and mental health issues. In January this year we were awarded Experts in Volunteering certificate. Our volunteers tell us they have developed interpersonal skills, escaped from bad influences, met new people – and have been helped into employment.'*

"This is just one example of how people have been able to benefit from the scheme – but this type of report is typical of the scheme, which makes it quite fantastic to be a part of."

***Personal reflection from Eleanor Pryde, Programme Performance and Support Officer, Locality***

## Project case study

### Linking Lives, Leeds

**Locality funded the Linking Lives project which provided opportunities for volunteering whilst also addressing social need.**

Linking Lives offered a range of training to volunteers in health and social care issues and related practical skills such as First Aid. Volunteers were then given the opportunity to put their training into practice and gain experience and work-related skills in health and social care as well as community development. They did this by working with older people to improve their understanding of technology and improve their access to information, services and support.

The project improved the volunteers' skills and confidence whilst also reducing the isolation that many older people experience. By aiming to recruit a broad age range of volunteers, the project also helped to bring older and younger people together and promoted better interaction and understanding.



Volunteers Karen Wanless and Julie Simpson working in the Bramley Elderly Action charity shop



**Mencap is the voice of learning disability. Everything it does is about valuing and supporting people with a learning disability, and their families and carers.**

### **Reflections on Opportunities for Volunteering**

“Buddys combines a café with an information centre and meeting place. It relies heavily on volunteers, with the support of a paid manager to run the project, which OfV was able to finance through Mencap.

“Buddys Café is a bright, welcoming and lively establishment, catering for an average of 80 people a day and serving a range of inexpensive but healthy lunches and snacks. The café is open to everyone and our customers benefit from the inclusion of all members of the community.

“As part of our ongoing commitment to improving the lives of people with a learning disability, we provide work experience placements in the café. Currently we are supporting 22 students, who will remain with us for up to a year. Over the past four years we have provided support for a total of 105 students, some of whom have moved on to paid jobs in the community. Working at Buddys allows people to develop skills and learn new ones; it also promotes confidence and self-esteem.

“The demand for work experience for people with a learning disability is huge, and Buddys depends on volunteers to help mentor those on work placements. The contribution of the volunteers to the success of Buddys is immeasurable.

“We provide volunteering opportunities for 17 regular volunteers, amounting to over 200 hours per month. There is no limit on how long they remain with us. People who volunteer at Buddys have a positive impact on the lives of people with a learning disability through practical support and by helping to increase awareness and understanding.

“Buddys would not have had the chance to make this difference without the funding from OfV. We have benefited from three years of funding, which has provided us with a great deal of stability and allowed our volunteers to develop and feel part of the wider community.

“Being part of OfV has left us with a lasting legacy. The volunteering project has introduced us to some fantastic people who have brought with them an abundance of skills that they have been happy to share. We will always be grateful to the OfV project for making this possible.”

***Personal reflection from Buddys Café, funded by Mencap***



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# Buddys

The National Agents

with  
Worthing Me



Volunteers Rosanna Horner and Jason Page outside Buddys Café in Worthing, West Sussex

**Mind is the leading mental health charity for England and Wales. It campaigns vigorously to create a society that promotes and protects good mental health for all - a society where people with experience of mental distress are treated fairly, positively and with respect.**

### Reflections on Opportunities for Volunteering

“The commitment of hundreds of thousands of hours, by tens of thousands of volunteers, in hundreds of Mind projects across England over 30 years has left a lasting legacy for both the individuals and organisations that Mind has been able to support.

“Thousands of individuals with direct experience of mental health problems who volunteered have found support, opportunities to become more involved in their communities and a route back into training, further volunteering and employment.

“In the 1990s, Mind extended its funding criteria to embrace other community mental health projects working with specific groups such as asylum seekers and refugees, black and minority ethnic groups and survivors of incest and sexual abuse. That process of inclusion has continued until the scheme’s end.

*“The commitment of tens of thousands of volunteers has left a lasting legacy for both individuals and organisations”*

“Working together in groups in an OfV project has helped many service users to overcome stigma and discrimination. It has shifted the emphasis from diagnosis, illness and ‘labelling’ to wellbeing and recovery. Helping people with experience of mental health problems to find training and employment, allowing them to move away from living on benefits and enabling them to contribute to their community has given many of these individuals a greater sense of self-worth.

“Considering the impact the funding has had, we are delighted that the scheme leaves behind many well-established projects.

As well as providing the necessary finances, the innovative use of three-

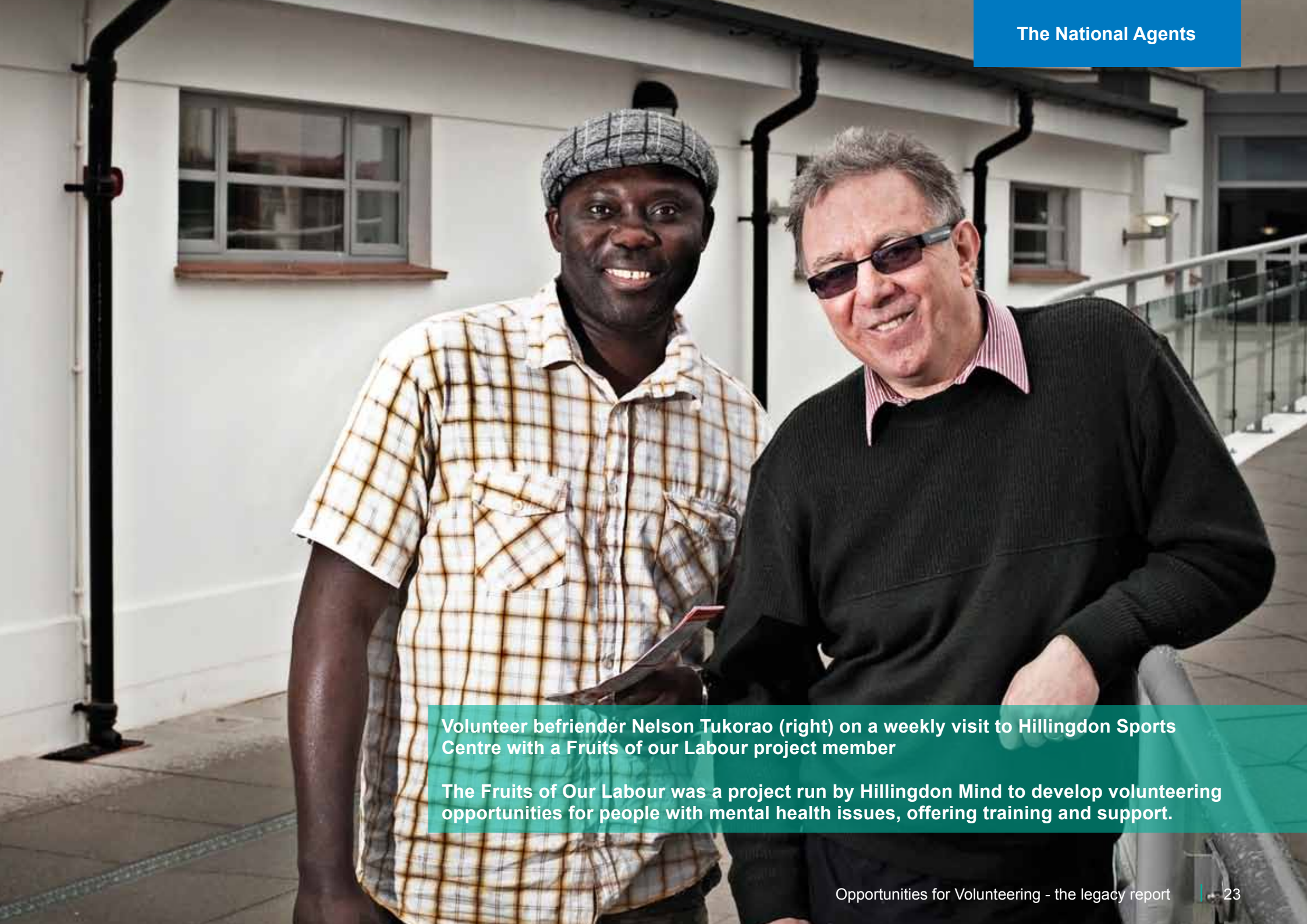
*“The scheme leaves behind many well-established projects”*

year funding gave these projects the time and space to become established and to seek out new alliances and funding streams. This greatly improved the long term prospects and sustainability of these projects.

“As a result, OfV-funded projects are able to continue providing a vital path to recovery as well as a place of safety, solace and support.”

**Personal reflection from Barry Watts, Grants Manager, Mind**





**Volunteer befriender Nelson Tukorao (right) on a weekly visit to Hillingdon Sports Centre with a Fruits of our Labour project member**

**The Fruits of Our Labour was a project run by Hillingdon Mind to develop volunteering opportunities for people with mental health issues, offering training and support.**

**Nacro is the largest charity in England and Wales dedicated to reducing crime, helping over 83,000 people each year. Its team of over 2,000 staff and volunteers works with a network of partners through projects in 300 communities.**

## Reflections on Opportunities for Volunteering

“OfV has provided 30 years of funding which we have been able to utilise to support and develop volunteering projects with hard to reach young people in some of the most diverse and disaffected high crime neighbourhoods in England.

“At Nacro, we have run over 500 local projects, many where one paid volunteer coordinator has recruited, trained and supported 20 – 30 volunteers, who have then developed a rich programme of sports and arts-based activities to enrich the lives of the community.

*“Many of the volunteers have gone onto paid employment”*

Involving local parents / older people as volunteers has proved a good way to break down real and perceived barriers with the young people – so that

everyone understands the ‘fear’ that groups on street corners can create and are able to acknowledge that young people are ‘on the street’ as they had no-where else to go.

“By training young people as role models / volunteer mentors to their peers and siblings, we have seen major benefits in that young people listen to their peers and behaviour has changed through this intervention.

“Many of the volunteers, and indeed the young people, have gone on to paid employment in youth and community and social work – some of whom would never have had the opportunity without the experience that volunteering gave them. We also know of many young people who would now be in prison without the support that the volunteers provided.

“Local agencies and community groups have also been able to benefit as a lot of people who initially volunteered with Nacro went on to volunteer with other projects. Without Nacro giving them the confidence and skills, they may not have accessed these other volunteering opportunities.

*“The main legacy of the project for Nacro is the proof that volunteering works”*

“The main legacy of the project for Nacro is the proof that volunteering works and that even the most prolific offender can, with support and guidance, become a volunteer and help and support others.”





Volunteers Emma Sharp and Zena Aslam supporting Nacro in Telford's drug and alcohol recovery service

### Project case study

#### Community sport volunteer programme, Reading

**This project, funded by Nacro, aimed to build a sustainable community volunteering structure for grassroots sport and physical activity opportunities across Reading.**

The volunteer programme supported new and existing sport and physical activity opportunities with Nacro sports projects, Sport Reading, local sports clubs, youth and community and the local Primary Care Trust. The various activities were organised and led by local people; in particular those who were unemployed and could benefit from training and mentoring provided to aid personal skills and development.

It also helped marginalised young people to find constructive activities and develop their skills, through volunteering in its projects. The service was designed to boost the skills and confidence of young people, who might otherwise be getting into trouble, by matching them to placements and supporting them through the experience.

Those involved in the project were able to gain new skills along with recognised qualifications, as well as having the opportunity to make new friends and to volunteer at local, regional and national one-off events. Not only that, but the volunteering scheme provided a boost to the local community by widening the range of sport and physical activity opportunities offered.

**The Royal Association for Disability Rights (Radar) is Britain’s largest disability rights campaigning network, with a membership of 800 organisations and individual campaigners. It is a pan-disability organisation led by people with lived experience of disability or health conditions.**

### Reflections on Opportunities for Volunteering

“The Royal Association for Disability Rights (Radar) has been an Opportunities for Volunteering National Agent for many years; indeed, I myself ran a Radar member organisation that, ten years ago, was in receipt of OfV funding!

“The legacy of the OfV scheme is immense; from our projects alone, the output achieved through OfV funding is amazing. Over the years, our involvement has enabled:

- Thousands of disabled people to actively volunteer and become more involved in society
- Thousands more disabled people to use services enhanced by OfV funding
- Hundreds of volunteers to use their placements as a stepping stone to paid employment

- Exposure of flaws in the ‘system’ that can create barriers to volunteering – for example, the slow passage of CRB checks means volunteers often give up

- Start-up funding for projects that continue to grow to this day.

“The funding provided by OfV has traditionally led to a growth in local services and, in many cases, capacity built our member organisations, enabling them to secure more funding and attract more volunteers.

“Volunteering for many disabled people is a stepping stone to paid employment. Many volunteers on our projects have taken this step and continue to do so. Given the poverty and employment gap faced by many disabled people, this has to be one of OfV’s greatest achievements.

*“The legacy of the OfV scheme is immense”*

“OfV will be sadly missed – its success should be broadcast widely.”

**Personal reflection from Mark Shrimpton, Deputy CEO, Radar**



Emma Holloway at her desk in the Radar offices in Ripley, Derbyshire

### Project case study

#### Go to the People, Derbyshire

**The Go to the People Project, funded by Radar, has made an important contribution to supporting local people with mental health issues.**

People with mental health issues are often marginalised by society and sometimes by other disabled people and organisations. However, through the Go to the People Project, many people were able to get involved with Disability Derbyshire and take part in experiences and activities to improve their self-confidence.

Becoming part of an inclusive organisation gave them the confidence and skills to become involved in their own communities and enabled them to recognise the special qualities they have to offer. As one volunteer said, 'I have really enjoyed the Go to the People project, meeting new people and being a mentor has given me confidence.'

People who came into contact with the project also benefited from increased understanding of mental health issues – and many reconsidered their own preconceptions and discriminatory views.



**Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) is the UK's leading charity offering information, support and advice to almost two million people with sight loss.**

### Reflections on Opportunities for Volunteering

“Looking back over the many projects that OfV has supported, what comes through very strongly is the emphasis on reaching out to people who would otherwise be isolated - whether its because they're experiencing sight loss in later life, or where they live - and who are often not in a position to make the most of what is on offer to them.

“Local societies have been ideally placed to identify the people in their communities who are most at risk of isolation, and they've found all sorts of imaginative ways to support them to access other services, to stay healthy and keep their independence.

“Volunteer befrienders, mobile resource units, drivers and guides have been able to give practical and emotional support to blind and partially sighted people - giving them back their confidence, helping them to access services, and drawing them back into the community.

“Another important strand in the projects has been the opportunities given to blind and partially sighted people themselves to volunteer. People coming to terms with sight loss tell us that it can really help to speak to someone who understands what they're going through. But having blind and partially sighted volunteers is also a great way to break down the barriers, showing that people with disabilities have a lot to offer back to the community - as well as being service users, they are able to be service providers too.”

### Project case study

#### Gym Buddies – Health in Focus, Birmingham

**Focus Birmingham launched ‘Gym Buddies – Health in Focus’ in April 2009 with the aim of enabling people with a visual impairment to improve their health through exercise and diet. The project was developed in response to a lack of support for people with a visual impairment to get out and visit places where they could exercise.**

Through the Gym Buddies project, Focus recruited and trained over 40 volunteers to buddy up with people who have sight impairments to enable them to access methods of taking exercise and improving their health. This happened in a variety of ways; some volunteers took their ‘buddies’ to the local gym, others encouraged them to attend exercise classes, some joined them cycling on a tandem bike, while others simply offered support by going for regular walks.

Strong links were also forged with the Birmingham City Council leisure team to set up a number of sight loss awareness training courses for Council leisure staff.

The project also delivered events to raise awareness of healthy eating and exercise options for people with sight impairments. In January 2010, Birmingham City Football Club hosted an event at St. Andrews football ground. Over 100 people enjoyed tai chi and seated aerobics taster sessions as well as hearing from a Birmingham City Sports Scientist. The day resulted in over 20 people taking up a gym buddy volunteer and many more deciding to get out and be active.





Student volunteer Sara Dobson with 'Gym Buddy' Valerie Griffiths

**Scope is a charity that supports disabled people and their families. Its vision is a world where disabled people have the same opportunities as everyone else.**

### Reflections on Opportunities for Volunteering

“Scope has been proud to be a National Agent since OfV began in 1982. Over this period of time there have been changes, but we are pleased that the fundamental purpose of the scheme – to promote volunteering opportunities in health and social care – remains.

“Through the scheme, the Department of Health has been able to reach small, local projects via the National Agents. OfV has also demonstrated how larger organisations are able to share their expertise and provide training and support on good practice in the management of volunteers.

“Over the years we have visited many OfV-funded projects, and service users often tell us that support or advice from volunteers has been invaluable. The volunteer working with them often has empathy and a personal understanding of the issue or problem that a member of staff might not have.

*“Service users tell us that support or advice from volunteers has been invaluable”*

“Service users also report that knowing that a volunteer is unpaid makes that relationship even more valuable. Not only that, but the volunteers have been able to benefit themselves. Two comments in particular have shown us just how big an impact the scheme’s funding has had:

*‘Before I started volunteering, I had little confidence and felt unable to make choices. I now feel empowered, a strong independent woman. I feel that the centre is able to offer the support that I need to carry out my role but they also enable me to make decisions and give advice when I feel confident to do so.’*

*‘I am partially deaf, and when I came to the service I didn’t speak to anyone and had no confidence. Since being involved with the project my skills in design and art have been recognised. The manager has arranged for me to go into a local school and arrange for the children to take part in various creative workshops. I would eventually like to set up my own business.’*

“Experiences like this remind us just what an important contribution the OfV scheme has made over the past 30 years.”



## Project case study

### Holton Lee, Dorset

**Holton Lee is a unique charity dedicated to promoting opportunities for disabled people, tucked away in 350 acres of stunning Dorset rural estate. Thanks to funding from Scope, it has been able to increase the number of volunteers it involves.**

Holton Lee offers accommodation and grounds that are completely accessible and guests are encouraged to wander. It runs arts workshops for disabled people and has a rolling arts exhibition programme which promotes disabled artists' work. There is an extensive vegetable garden with homegrown fruit and vegetables to feed guests staying at Holton Lee, with excess produce being sold locally.

Holton Lee offers around 20 different volunteering roles, from accompanying guests around the estate to manuring the vegetable beds and everything in between. Counting both those doing day to day work and those making plans and decisions behind the scenes, the charity has around 100 volunteers at any one time. As a charity dedicated to promoting opportunities for disabled people, it devised targets to increase the number of disabled volunteers working with the organisation through the OfV funding period.



Volunteers Richard Colenutt, Ron Butler and Leslie Golding get to work digging in the Holton Lee vegetable patch

**The Children's Society wants to create a world where all children and young people are respected, valued and heard. It works hard to transform the lives of over 44,000 children and young people in England each year.**

### Reflections on Opportunities for Volunteering

“The scheme has made a significant contribution to developing volunteering within The Children's Society. This in turn has opened up opportunities for us to support a diverse range of individuals to

*“The charity now has a strong, diverse and enthusiastic volunteer base”*

volunteer, who may not have previously had these opportunities. The charity now has a strong, diverse and enthusiastic volunteer base that is making a difference to the lives of hundreds of children, young people and families across England.

“We have seen a marked increase in children, young people and their family's knowledge and confidence to access services and activities that will improve their health and wellbeing. Their resilience, self-esteem and understanding have also been significantly increased, enabling them to play more active roles in their communities and live happier and healthier lives.

“The money has also enabled volunteers to increase their confidence and skills, to access opportunities for personal and professional development and to develop their local knowledge. The support of many of our volunteers provides more diverse skills and abilities to complement our delivery of services alongside our staff team. For example, our disabled service users have particularly benefited from a volunteer's support who was around their own age and who had similar interests.

“Young disabled service users enjoyed support from young volunteers

*“Volunteering has changed the way The Children's Society provides many of its services”*

because they felt the same as other young people out in the community. They were perceived as being out with a friend as opposed to being out with a carer. Volunteers offering their support in this way have enabled disabled young

people to take part in mainstream leisure activities rather than specialist disability groups.

“Volunteering has changed the way The Children's Society provides many of its services. This is because our experience of volunteering has been extremely positive and will therefore provide a lasting legacy into the future.”



## Project case study

### Refugee Project, Blackburn

**Funded by The Children's Society, this project provided support to refugees and asylum seekers and helped them to feel part of the local community.**

The project encompassed a variety of popular activities, many of which it has been able to sustain even after the OfV funding period. For example, after three years of funding, over 90 volunteers were still attending weekly Asylum Drop-in sessions run by the project. The sessions offer snacks, play activities for the children, table tennis, board games, craft and chat for the young people and adults. At the same time, attendees can access individual support and a Listening Service or obtain help with filling in forms or making telephone calls in English.

The project also ran an English Club, in addition to a variety of events, play schemes, parties and trips out, attended by over 2,000 refugees and asylum seekers over three years. Volunteers were able to support the project not just by delivering these activities, but also by collecting donations of food, clothing, household items, baby items and toys to distribute to destitute and needy refugees and asylum seekers.

The feedback from service users has been overwhelmingly positive, with one commenting that 'we feel really cared about and safe.'

The volunteers were trained and helped to work with emotive issues and often challenged others to think again about asylum and not to believe all the media stories about the issue. They were powerful volunteers on the side of the children and families – a credit to the volunteering vocation.



Volunteer Julie Harrison helping to run a weekly mother and baby drop in session



## UK Council on Deafness

**UK Council on Deafness works with and for deaf organisations in the UK by providing information, advice and support and by representing the views of the sector to government and policy makers.**

### Reflections on Opportunities for Volunteering

“Opportunities for deaf (and other disabled people) to volunteer are often few and far between, so the very fact that UK Council on Deafness has focused primarily on offering grants to organisations connected with deafness has been very important.

“Deaf people, particularly those who have British Sign Language as their first language, rarely consider volunteering, and the OfV scheme over the years has opened doors to them. It has also

*“The OfV scheme has opened doors”* acted as a pathway to deaf people getting employment; over the years, a number of Project Co-ordinators have ended up being employed, and in some cases become CEO of their organisations, having held other positions there first.

“As most of the organisations we have been able to support over the years have been small and emerging organisations, they would not have been able to recruit volunteers or involve service users to the extent they have been able to do so without the funding. Many projects that have been ‘pump primed’ by the OfV scheme are still ongoing, particularly several advocacy projects.

*“The scheme has played a key role in laying the foundations for some excellent projects”*

“The scheme has played a key role in laying the foundations for some excellent projects that would not have got off the ground without the initial funding.”



Healthy Living project, Liverpool: Deaf volunteers Stephanie Bray, Eddie Siner and Amy Walsh help to run the youth club



**Volunteering England is an independent charity and membership organisation, committed to supporting, enabling and celebrating volunteering in all its diversity. Its work links policy, research, innovation, good practice and programme management in the involvement of volunteers.**

### Reflections on Opportunities for Volunteering

“In the beginning, the Consortium on Opportunities for Volunteering was set up specifically to administer the OfV General Fund to cater for applicants who did not come under the other National Agents’ areas of benefit. Therefore, although our funding remit was wide we gave special consideration to projects benefiting women, LGBT, rural and BME communities. Although the Consortium merged with The National Centre for Volunteering and Volunteer Development England to become Volunteering England in 2004, the original ideas for the OfV scheme have remained.

“Our aim has been to provide funding for volunteer involving projects in health and social care to groups at risk of exclusion across England. The legacy of our funding will be that through supporting small, local community groups in this way, important voluntary work can be managed according to the principles of good practice in volunteer management. We are proud to know that our work will have a lasting and positive effect on society.

*“We are proud to know that our work will have a lasting and positive effect on society”*

“We have funded hundreds of projects which have not only provided a measurable benefit to their local communities, but have also enabled volunteers and service users to experience positive changes to their own lives through impacts such as increased self confidence, social skills and improved mental health.

“Over the 30 years of this scheme the recruitment of volunteers has been paramount to its success; they are an invaluable resource but do not come ‘for free.’ No organisation or project is able to use the much needed services of a volunteer without paid staff, formal structures and systems being in place to ensure that any volunteer-driven service is effective. Volunteers know they are valued through support, training and the provision of out of pocket expenses.

*“Volunteers know they are valued”*

OfV funding has enabled hundreds of organisations to provide new and varied volunteering opportunities, attracting new volunteers from different communities – and through administering OfV we have been able to bring these diverse groups together.

“Through working on the scheme, Volunteering England has built up good relationships with and knowledge of this vibrant sector. Volunteers are providing their services in organisations which value their contributions and they can, perhaps for the first time, take advantage of opportunities to go onto further education and paid employment.”



### Project case study

#### Lawrence Weston Community Farm, Bristol

**This project, funded by Volunteering England, was located on a volunteer-led community Garden Centre and had a positive effect on the health and wellbeing of visitors, service users and volunteers by improving mental and physical health.**

The OfV funding enabled plans to get underway for new and exciting developments at the farm. These included increasing production of locally produced meat, vegetables, herbs and honey, providing more training opportunities, the launch of a website and developing plans for a Community Café.

The OfV funding meant that Lawrence Weston could work towards its primary aim - to meet the needs of the local community and those who live in North Bristol.



Green fingered volunteer Peter Thomas planting out seedlings in the greenhouse at Lawrence Weston Farm, Bristol



*Social action for health and well-being: building co-operative communities*, published on 17 October 2011, sets out a collaborative vision and aspirations for volunteering and social action. It was developed following extensive consultation with representatives of volunteer involving organisations in health, public health and social care. Evidence gathering reinforced what we already knew about the tremendous contribution that volunteers already make: increasing the quality and diversity of services; helping to address health inequalities; and at the same time, benefiting themselves.

The vision is divided into four principle themes:

- Leadership - building community activity and service provision around people's strengths
- Partnership - working together to build community capacity
- Commissioning - for better outcomes and increased social value
- Volunteer support - creating volunteering experiences that are open to all.

The government's role is a facilitative and enabling one, working in partnership with the relevant sectors to encourage and promote ownership and co-production of solutions. The vision presents ten next steps which will recognise the continued need for central commitment. For example, in developing the evidence base and the means for sharing best practice, encouraging dialogue and debate on key issues, and where appropriate supporting individual voluntary organisations.

The vision will form part of concerted programme to promote wider social action including approaches such as Change4Life. The vision also complements wider government aspirations to make volunteering and wider social action both easier and more attractive, part of a package of action presented in the Cabinet Office's Giving White Paper published in May 2011.

**Visit: [www.dh.gov.uk/health/2011/10/strategic-vision-for-volunteering/](http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2011/10/strategic-vision-for-volunteering/)**









**Launched in December 2009, the Department of Health's new Health and Social Care Volunteering Fund (HSCVF) builds on good practice from the Opportunities for Volunteering (OfV) scheme.**

The HSCVF combines grant funding and support to voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSE). It is designed to improve their potential in the health, public health and social care landscape by increasing their capacity, boosting their abilities and helping them to become more sustainable.

Since its launch, the HSCVF has supported local and national health, public health and social care volunteering projects. It has also provided brand new opportunities to national projects that want to carry out strategic and development activities to improve health and wellbeing. The managing partnership for the HSCVF is led by ECORYS and draws on expertise from leading national organisations which deliver a package of support: Attend, Community Service Volunteers (CSV) and PrimeTimers.

The HSCVF offers funding at a local and national level. The Local Grant Schemes give local VSCE organisations the chance to develop their work with local commissioners and increase their volunteer involvement in delivery. To help with this, the grant is delivered

alongside an integral support package that focuses on capacity building. The HSCVF National Grant Scheme supports national projects that are strategic and developmental in their approaches to volunteering in the health, public health and social care sector.

The HSCVF programme has been developed so that funded projects can:

- Contribute to Department of Health (DH) strategic aims and objectives
- Be better aligned with commissioning in health and social care
- Build the capacity, capability and sustainability of VSCE organisations in the health, public health and social care sector
- Provide an improved volunteer experience, especially supporting the DH's vision for volunteering (page 38).

Dozens of projects have already been able to benefit from the new fund, with further funding rounds planned for 2012.

**Visit: [www.volunteeringfund.com](http://www.volunteeringfund.com)**





Strawberries

Leeks  
Lettuce

Field  
Beans

LWCF





**2011 is the European Year of Volunteering (EYV 2011). Five themes are running across the year, with 'health and social care' being placed under the spotlight during November and December. With this in mind, the OfV National Agents felt it appropriate to hold a celebratory event in November to mark the legacy of 30 years of achievement by OfV-funded volunteering projects.**

EYV 2011 is an exciting opportunity for volunteer involving organisations across the EU to join together in a celebration of volunteering, and start a discussion on the importance of volunteering on a local, national and international level.

Volunteering organisations across England are working closely with the Office for Civil Society (the UK's National Coordinating Body for the Year) to make sure that the Year represents a real opportunity to promote volunteering.

The EU will use the Year to work towards four main objectives:

1. To create an enabling and facilitating environment for volunteering in the EU
2. To empower volunteer organisations and improve the quality of volunteering
3. To reward and recognise volunteering activities
4. To raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering.

### **Who will benefit and how?**

- The European Year of Volunteering 2011 will enable volunteers all over Europe to meet and learn about best practices in each European country
- Public authorities, volunteer organisations and businesses will learn more about volunteering and how to make it easier for people to contribute
- People who have never heard about volunteering will learn to appreciate what volunteers do and might become volunteers themselves one day.

**Visit: <http://europa.eu/volunteering/>**

**Email: [eyv2011@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:eyv2011@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk)**



## More reflections on Opportunities for Volunteering – from OfV volunteers

*“Before I started volunteering, I had little confidence and felt unable to make choices. I now feel empowered”*

*“It helped me a lot finding volunteering that I enjoy doing”*

*“I love being a volunteer; I feel good that I am able to help people through the same organisation that helped me and my children so much”*

*“Volunteering motivates me to get up in the morning”*

*“Volunteering and training helped me move on from my situation and leave it all behind me”*

*“Through volunteering this past year, I have achieved more than in the past nine years”*

*“My confidence has improved so much, and my self worth too”*

*“Before I started volunteering I had no friends and did hardly anything outside of my home. I am so much happier, and have made friends”*

*“I love [volunteering], it helps to keep me in a good mood and keep my spirits up”*

*“This has given purpose to my life”*

