



Volunteering in Local Government

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1. Executive Summary

This report brings together examples of volunteering in local government in the UK and beyond. The examples are drawn from a variety of sources including research reports, articles and council websites. The aim is to demonstrate how volunteering can contribute to existing and enhanced service delivery and ultimately improved outcomes for communities.

The review highlighted that volunteering in local government has evolved in line with the changing policy context. As councils are increasingly focussing on community engagement and participation, they have also begun to take a more strategic approach to volunteer involvement in service delivery. This is evident by the increasing number of councils who are adopting models of social action such as [Cities of Service](#) and the [Enabling State](#). These models demonstrate how councils can achieve a shift from delivering services to empower communities to do more for themselves.

The research also revealed how volunteers are increasingly involved in service delivery and that the level of involvement varies significantly between services. Health and Social Care has seen a rapid increase in volunteer involvement in recent years. One model that has been widely adopted by councils particularly in England, but also in Scotland, is the '[Shared Lives](#)' scheme which offers an alternative to residential care by inviting vulnerable adults to stay with volunteers in the community.

[Library services](#) have been more traditionally associated with volunteer delivery and continue to develop to extend the traditional roles of volunteers to address wider social problems as part of their service offer. An example is the [Opportunities Room](#) in Dundee, where volunteers provide Universal Credit support and IT training in the central library. Other examples include the [Youth Innovation Network](#) which allows young volunteers to deliver their own events.

There are also a range of examples of volunteers involved in [Sport and Leisure Services](#). [GoodGyms](#) is an innovative model that combines physical activity with prevention of social isolation. Volunteers go for an organised run to visit an older adult in the community for a chat and sometimes to solve a practical problem in the area. This model does not only reduce social isolation and help people stay healthy, it also has the potential to differentiate sport and leisure services from mainstream gyms.

[Park Services](#) also has a long tradition of volunteer involvement, however the involvement has been upscaled in recent years. Communities are often involved in decisions regarding

priority spending in parks and help with the upkeep of public spaces. There are also examples of volunteering programmes such as the [Corporate Volunteer Scheme in Darlington](#) and the [ParkWork](#) programme in Bristol that allow unemployed people to gain valuable work experience in public parks.

The final section of this report covers examples of volunteer involvement in early years provision. This is particularly relevant considering the upcoming expansion of free entitlement to 1140 hours in 2020. Volunteers are often young adults looking for work experience, however there are also good examples of [parent volunteers](#) who are heavily involved in the provision and service design.

This report is structured around the main themes that have been discussed above and sets out a number of examples of volunteering in councils which will hopefully be of interest to other councils working with volunteers.

2. Introduction

The changing political and demographic climate is driving local authorities to transform the way that they deliver services. The Christie Commission and legislation such as the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 are shifting the focus from a state that is delivering services to a state that empowers communities to do things for themselves. A potential opportunity arises in this shift to upscale the involvement of volunteers in the delivery of existing and enhanced services.

The number of volunteers has remained relatively stable in Scotland over the last 10 years. The latest Scottish Household Survey, published in 2017, revealed that 27% of adults in Scotland offered their time to volunteering activities in the past year. Compared to other European countries a very low percentage of people report a lack of interest as the reason for non-participation in formal or informal voluntary activities (16%) while the biggest reason is time (28.6%).¹ This suggests that people do want to volunteer in their local communities if only the conditions and opportunities are right.

Increased involvement of volunteers in public services is raising questions as to what roles they should undertake and how these roles differ from roles undertaken by paid staff. However, there is strong evidence suggesting that future challenges such as increasing life expectancy and mobilisation requires collaboration across organisations, sectors and communities. Complex issues cannot be solved by any one service or organisation but will likely be the result of the contribution of many different actors.²

In this complex climate the boundaries between public, private and the voluntary sector are blurring. At a local level, there is a unique opportunity for councils to work together with social enterprises and the voluntary sector to improve outcomes for communities. This is an opportunity that many local authorities are already harvesting with evident benefits for both services and volunteers considering the many positive outcomes associated with volunteering such as increased social trust and advanced social inclusion.³

The aim of this report is to bring together learning and insights from such volunteering projects. Based on desk based research this report brings together good practice and innovative examples from local government and beyond. It is not written as a

1 http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_scp21&lang=en

2 <https://www.lgiu.org.uk/briefing/local-authorities-the-catalyst-for-bottom-up-systems-change/>

3 <https://www.unv.org/sites/default/files/2015%20State%20of%20the%20World%27s%20Volunteerism%20Report%20-%20Transforming%20Governance.pdf>

comprehensive guide but rather as a signposting document that brings together information from a range of sources. We hope that this will encourage and enable the reader to see the value that volunteering can bring to local government and ultimately the communities that we are all part of.

3. Council-wide Approaches to Volunteering

There are many examples of volunteer programmes within local government that are built on models of social action. Social action is about people coming together to help improve and solve important problems in their communities.⁴ This report includes a summary of two models of social action that have been adopted by local authorities in the UK and beyond. For additional guidance, the Scottish Government has developed a [toolkit](#) in partnership with New Economics that includes more resources and case studies.

Cities of Service

What: A model of social action with the core aim to mobilise volunteers to complement and enhance statutory service delivery.

Where: America & UK

Who: Barnsley Borough Council, Bristol City Council, Kirklees Council, Plymouth City Council, Portsmouth City Council, Swindon Borough Council and Telford and Wrekin Council.

THE CITIES OF SERVICE MODEL CONTAINS FOUR CONSISTENT CHARACTERISTICS:

1. Strong leadership within the city/local authority.
2. A clear set of objectives linked to priorities within the city/local authority.
3. A feasible set of actions that can be practically carried out by volunteers that responded to the identified priority.
4. A keen focus on impact relating to the objective rather than just volunteer numbers.

Cities of Service was founded in 2009 by the Mayor of New York with the aim to increase the involvement of volunteers in statutory services. Cities of service now involves more than 215 cities in the United States. The model was introduced in the UK in 2013 and involves seven councils from across England. Cities of service has prompted councils to rethink the role of social action when designing services. Together the seven authorities have mobilised nearly 10,000 volunteers and assisted 18,500 people directly. The seven councils that have adopted the model also report that the status of volunteering has significantly improved in the council as a result of the approach.

Key Activities

- A key principle of the model is that successful models are shared and adopted by other organisations. Every successful project is published as a blueprint and several of the British projects were adapted from American blueprint models.
- A chief service officer is employed to oversee the programme and to facilitate

⁴ <https://www.britishcouncil.org/active-citizens/what-we-do/social-action-projects/what>

partnership working between the council and the voluntary sector. The councils report that the role of a senior leader within the council that coordinates the programme sends a powerful message to staff and partners regarding the value of volunteers.

- Each area starts by asking ‘What are the most pressing needs facing our council, that volunteers and public servants could work together to address?’
- Priority areas are selected differently but it is important that they are based on data and engagement with residents, senior public servants, elected members and local partners including police, local health services and the voluntary and community sectors.
- Once priority areas have been selected, impact volunteering initiatives are identified. The initiatives are broadly categorised into four areas including; food and fuel, ageing, education and neighbourhoods.

Case studies

Kirklees Council—Community Partnership Programme

The Cities of Service model helped Kirklees Council to transform their volunteer involvement from sporadic involvement to delivering sustained impact. Council staff now think of how they can involve volunteers at the planning stage of a service and where volunteers can be involved to deliver the biggest impact. The community partnership programme is based on the three main objectives of the Council’s vision for a new Council: enabling people to do more for themselves and each other; keeping vulnerable people safe and helping them to stay in control of their lives; and focussing resources on what only the Council can do.



Each year the Council provides small to medium grants to around 130 social action projects. The investment totalled £1.5 million in 2015/16 and was co-funded by the Council and two local clinical commissioning groups. Around half of the projects are user-led and have no paid staff. In 2012/16 a social prescribing initiative helped over 600 people find out about, or access, community activities for the first time. Over 70% of these people had high level needs. Overall, the community partnership programme supported 6,245 people each week and being sign-posted to community activities meant that some people did not require any formal social care support. Over the last five years the number of people using adult social services fell by 50% in Kirklees.

Bristol City Council—Reducing Loneliness for Older People

The Cities of Service model was adapted by Bristol Council to improve outcomes for young people and reduce loneliness and social isolation for older people. These priorities were linked to the vision and corporate strategy for the city. Cities of service served as a model to build collaboration and coordinate volunteering within the local authority and partner organisations. A particular focus was put on recruiting people over 50 to volunteer to support the city's priorities while at the same time improving their own wellbeing.



A project that was already ongoing in Bristol but that was able to upscale due to the adaption of the Cities of Service model was the 'Bristol Reading Partners' programme. The programme paired 110 volunteers with 210 primary school children to improve their reading skills. Over half of the students improved their reading skills by six months or more in the 10 to 12-week period of support. The programme is currently being extended to help more children across the city.

More Information and Case Studies

[Cities of Service Official Website](#)

[Nesta – Cities of service UK](#)

The Enabling State

What: The Enabling State proposes a fundamental shift from a welfare state to a state that empowers individuals and communities to take action.

Where: UK

Who: Across a wide number of local authorities and social enterprises in the UK.

The Enabling State model was developed by Carnegie UK in 2012 in response to the increased austerity experienced by local authorities. The aim was to shift the approach to social problems from a welfare system to a state that facilitates and empowers individuals and communities to take action. Carnegie UK works with charities, local government and devolved governments across the UK. The diagrams below demonstrate this shift.

Figure 2: Key characteristics of the shift from a welfare to an enabling state



Figure 1: Inverting the pyramid



Key Activities

- [The Better Way Network](#) was set up to enable social activists to share ideas, knowledge and inspiration with others.
- Carnegie developed an eight step route map (diagram below) to an enabling state which provides a guiding set of principles by which this shift can be accelerated whilst mitigating against some of the risks.
- In 2015 the enabling state challenge was launched with an open call for submissions from projects resonating from the enabling state model.



Case studies

Worcestershire County Council—Partnership Between Community Catalysts and the Council

Worcestershire County Council adapted the Enabling State model to develop a micro-enterprise project in partnership between community catalysts, the Council and local people. The aim



was to help local people to support other local people. Examples include enterprises that support older and disabled people to socialise, learn skills, keep fit or get a break from caring responsibilities. The programme has so far nurtured 68 community micro-enterprises and created 98 jobs and 175 volunteering opportunities.

Durham County Council—Volunteers Managing a Community Centre

In 2013 a group of local people requested to take on a community centre in Durham on a 30-year lease. At the time the community centre was only used by 6 people a week. The group worked with a range of partners including Durham Community Action, East Durham Area Action Partnership, East Durham Trust, East Durham Homes and other community centres to bring new life to the community hub. As a result the centre now has 150 people using it weekly.



Cartrefi Cymru – Volunteers Delivering Social Care Services

Cartrefi Cymru is a not-for-profit organisation established by a group of parents in Wales in 1989. In 2017 the organisation became a multi-stakeholder co-op with a constitutional commitment to share power and building community. The charity aims to support people in Wales that are living with disabilities, autism, and challenging behaviour and allows older people to live their lives at home and in their community. The scheme offers floating support services that were traditionally delivered by care plans. The model empowers the client to choose the type of support that will benefit them the most rather than a set care plan.



While the organisation has paid staff, volunteers also play a large part in delivering services. In addition to more traditional volunteer roles such as delivering group activities in community centres and one to one befriending support volunteers also manage a multi-sensory garden and a run a community interest company. The community interest company aims to establish working opportunities for vulnerable adults in the community. Volunteers support the company in care roles as well as customer service roles.

More Information and Case Studies

[Report: Carnegie UK—The Enabling State](#)

[Report: What do Citizens Want](#)

4. Health and Social Care Services

Health and social care services have seen a rapid increase in the number of volunteers involved in service delivery.⁵ Volunteers are involved in proactive work such as befriending services and mentoring roles as well as direct care provision such as inviting vulnerable people into their homes. In addition to supporting service delivery, involving volunteers in health and social care services can improve people's experience of care, build stronger relationships between services and communities and contribute to reduced health inequalities. This report includes a few different examples to highlight the wide variety of services that have benefited from volunteer involvement.

Buurtzorg – A model of neighbourhood care

What: Buurtzorg is built on an asset based approach where people rely less on formal care and more on the range of support available within communities.



Where: The model is active in 24 countries, including Scotland.

Who: Scottish Borders Council, Aberdeen City Council, Angus Council, Moray Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council.

The Buurtzorg model was founded in Holland 10 years ago by a team of four nurses who felt that there was a need for a more holistic approach to care. The idea was to enable people with care needs to live independently with much less formal care support. There are now around 900 teams in the Netherlands that are supported by no more than 50 administrators and trainers. In contrast to the stressful job environment that is often reported by nurses, Buurtzorg has been rated the best employer in the Netherlands.⁶

Key Activities

- Nurses act as health coaches for the individual and their family and much less time is spent on administration.

⁵ https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_file/volunteering-in-health-and-social-care-kingsfund-mar13.pdf

⁶ <https://www.buurtzorg.com/about-us/buurtzorgmodel/>

- The golden rule is that the nurse must spend 61% of their time with the people they support.
- The nurses are encouraged to sign-post patients to support outside of formal care when appropriate to reduce the reliance on formal care. This often involves services supported by volunteers such as befriending or involvement of community groups.
- An evaluation in 2012 by KPMG found that although the Buurtzorg model might contribute to a higher hourly cost for care, it was of higher quality and better appreciated by those in receipt. Only half as much care was typically required and a potential cost saving of 40% has been estimated.

Scotland

- The Buurtzorg model has been adopted by local authorities in Scotland.
- Healthcare Improvement Scotland has been commissioned by Scottish Government to link and engage with early adopters of the model.
- One of the most advanced pilots is run by a Scottish home care charity called Cornerstone.
- Other localities that are piloting the model include Aberdeen, Angus, Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders.
- In 2016 Scottish Borders held three events in the community with open invitations to the population and staff to introduce the model. The Coldstream area was selected as the first to trial the model.

Adult Social Care—The Shared Lives Scheme

What: Volunteers provide an alternative to residential care by inviting adults in care to live in their homes.

Where: UK

Who: A range of local authorities in England and in Scotland including East Lothian Council, South Lanarkshire Council, Fife Council, Perth and Kinross Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Moray Council.



The Shared Lives scheme is a radical approach to traditional residential care models. The aim is to provide care that goes further than just meeting basic needs by encouraging volunteers to welcome adults who need support into their homes and communities. The volunteers receive a weekly payment for the care they provide, however this is considerably lower than the costs involved in residential care. There are currently 150 schemes across the UK. The support needs range from people with learning disabilities to mental health issues. The five-year project has been funded by the Big Lottery Fund and the Centre of Social Action Innovation Fund. Over the first three years of the project the scheme grew by 27 percent. The scheme is now involving more than 9,000 volunteers and more than 13,000 vulnerable adults across the UK.

Key Activities

- The Shared Lives Schemes are either directly run by local authorities or by charities and social enterprises.
- A carer is matched for compatibility with an older or disabled person.
- The Shared Lives Plus Scheme offers partner councils support, resources, training, insurance and ongoing support to carers.
- Suitability and safety is continually assessed carrying out Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS) checks, ensuring the property meets fire, electrical and gas safety regulations.
- Shared Lives carers receive a weekly payment for the care they provide (typically between £250-£400).
- Along with a new programme in partnership with NHS England to develop the shared lives in the health sector, the programme is now supported through the Accelerating ideas pilot to scale the model across the UK, with a focus on expanding outside of England.
- The model can potentially save local authorities around £26,000 per person compared to residential care.

More information: [Shared Lives Official Website](#)

Volunteers in Children's Social Care Services

What: Volunteers free up time for social workers to spend with vulnerable children and young people.

Where: UK

Who: Hampshire County Council and Isle of Wight Council

In 2015 Hampshire County Council and the Isle of Wight was awarded almost £4 million from the Department of Education Innovation Fund to reform children's social work. The aim was to significantly reduce bureaucracy, improve outcomes for children in need of care and protection and reduce spiralling demand for children's social services in longer term. The focus was to make better use of volunteers to support social workers to increase the time spent with vulnerable children and young people.



Key Activities

- Set up a network of volunteers to work with children and families in their communities.
- Volunteers take on roles such as mentors to young people, providing support to excluded children or children in care and helping support parents with parenting skills.
- Volunteers can give as little as an hour or two per week, or more if interested, providing on-going family support.
- Volunteer opportunities are advertised through an online platform and include roles such as youth offending team volunteer, missing children return interviews volunteer, mentoring, advice and advocacy-exclusion from school and family support.

More information: [Volunteering opportunities - children and families Hampshire County Council](#)

Community Led Support

What: Community Led Support is based on the fundamental principle that people should harness and share the resources available in their community outside of paid or statutory services.

Where: UK

Who: East Renfrewshire Council, South Ayrshire Council and Scottish Borders Council.



Community Led Support is designed and driven by practitioners, local partners and members of the community. The aim is to bring people and organisations together to deliver more holistic support to citizens that would traditionally be delivered by statutory services. Part of this is a more proactive approach where people receive good advice and

information that helps to avoid crises. The National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) offers a programme of Community Led Support and they have so far worked with East Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire and Scottish Border Councils

Key Activities

Community Hubs

- Community hubs are set up in the heart of communities and make use of village and community halls and libraries in welcoming and accessible environments.
- The community hubs are developed in partnership with community groups, the voluntary sector and councils and often involve local people volunteering to offer a friendly 'meet and greet'.
- People come to the community hubs on a drop-in basis and if they need a longer conversation they are booked in for an appointment.
- Volunteers offer a range of support and information with social workers being present one afternoon a week.
- Community hubs are given a local identity such as 'What Matters' in Scottish Borders and 'Talking Points' in East Renfrewshire.
- A majority of people can go away with support in place after this conversation without having to contact formal statutory services.
- A national evaluation report found that community led support leads to better experiences and outcomes for local people, earlier access and greater efficiency, reduced waiting lists and improved staff engagement and morale.

More information: [Ndti Official Website](#)

Social Prescribing

What: Social prescribing enables primary care services to refer patients to non-statutory services such as walking groups or volunteering.

Where: UK

Social prescribing is a means of enabling primary care services to refer patients with social, emotional or practical needs to a range of non-clinical services and statutory services provided by councils, housing associations or the NHS. The prescriptions can include referrals to everything from arts to volunteering activities. Social prescribing can also put people in contact with services that can provide help and advice with issues such as debt, benefits and housing. A 'prescription' normally covers between eight to 12 weeks.

Forrest of Dean District Council

Forrest of Dean District Council introduced a social prescription hub to help people to access services and activities to improve their health and well-being. The District Council and Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group worked together with voluntary sector organisations for almost two years offering patients at several GP practices a social prescription. This allowed care staff to refer patients with social, emotional or practical needs to the hub coordinator. The project has enabled work with over 235 people who have challenging issues. The individuals have been matched with local resources such as volunteer befrienders, community choirs, social groups, community support, walking groups and debt advice services.

Key Activities

- When a GP practice nurse or other members of practice staff see a patient who they think might benefit from a social prescription they fill out a form that is sent electronically to the social referral facilitator.
- Two additional officers have been employed and the service will be extended to all GP surgeries across the district. This has been funded through the Prime Minister's Challenge Fund.
- Residents can now access social prescriptions through their GP, but also through staff in the integrated care teams across the district.

More information: [LGA report with case studies on social prescribing](#)

More Information and Toolkits

[Volunteer Management Toolkit for the Care Sector Including Sample Forms](#)

[Volunteering in Care Homes Toolkit](#)

5. Sport and Leisure Services

Sport and leisure services are important for health and wellbeing and are strongly linked to successful communities.⁷ Volunteers already play a large role in these services in the UK. It is estimated that sport volunteers make up a quarter of all volunteers and of young people volunteering, 47% are in sport.⁸ This highlights the real drive and motivation for people to volunteer in sport and leisure centres.

GoodGyms

What: Combining physical activity with improving outcomes for the community.

Where: America and UK

Who: Across 39 areas in England and several areas in Scotland are currently at the proposal stage.



The concept of Goodgym was founded in 2011 by a community member who wanted to combine physical fitness with social action. Community runners are organised to do stop off runs to do physical tasks for the community and support isolated older people for a social visit. The older adults are called 'running coaches' and provide motivation and a cup of tea when the job has been completed. There is scope for councils to adopt the model to add value to their service and at the same time contribute to positive outcomes for the community.

Key Activities

- GoodGym members help older people with one-off practical tasks such as running to change a lightbulb or moving furniture or doing some gardening.
- Some members run regularly to see an isolated older person for a cup of tea and a chat to reduce social isolation.
- Older people are called coaches because they help to motivate the volunteers. Coach runs can be arranged around a schedule and do not have to take up more than 20

7 http://www.cloa.org.uk/images/stories/Print_version_-_The_role_of_culture_and_sport_in_improving_health_and_well-being.pdf

8 http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/central/2008/nr_080429_sport_overview.pdf

minutes of the volunteer's time but has a huge impact on the relationship between the volunteer and the coach.

- There are also organised group runs to complete a community activity like gardening or painting.

More information

[Goodgym Official Website](#)

[Case study: GoodGyms](#)

Young Volunteers in Sport and Leisure services

What: Volunteer scheme for young people in sport.

Who: Renfrewshire Council

Renfrewshire Council supports young people who volunteer to become qualified sports and activity leaders. As activity leaders, the volunteers deliver sport and activity clubs in primary and secondary schools, produce sport events, provide media coverage including newsletters, photography and promotional videos and finally volunteer at sport events.

The volunteering opportunities are part of a 'give to get' scheme for those aged between 11 and 25 who give up their time to volunteer in projects that support the community. Volunteers earn reward points on their Young Scot National Entitlement cards when they have reached a particular milestone based on the number of hours they have volunteered. The young volunteers have provided over 10,000 volunteer hours to their community in various roles.



Volunteer Managed Leisure Centre

What: Asset transfer of a leisure centre to a local charity managed by volunteers.

Who: Durham County Council

The Coxhoe Leisure Centre was at risk of closure. As a result, an action group was established to keep the leisure centre open. The action group registered as a charity and company limited by guarantee. The leisure centre was restructured into a community hub with activities to improve health, fitness and social wellbeing. As a result, staff jobs were secured, new part time posts were created and the



choice and range of exercise classes increased by 50%. Successful funding bids funded new equipment and improvements to the building. The number of volunteers trebled and membership doubled.

More information and case studies

[Sport England – Community Asset Transfer Toolkit](#)

[Sport England – Case studies](#)

6. Library Services

Many local authorities in England and Wales work in partnership with communities to deliver library services. In some cases, volunteers work alongside paid staff while in other cases libraries are completely community led. Local authorities in Scotland have increasingly started to take this same approach. The examples included in this report demonstrate how volunteers can complement and enhance core service delivery, but also bring in other services to address wider social problems. For additional resources the government has developed a community [libraries toolkit](#) and a comprehensive [report](#) that includes a range of additional case studies and good practice.

The Opportunities Room in Dundee Central Library

What: Volunteers running a community hub in the central library.

Who: Dundee City Council



Dundee library introduced a new space in the central library called the 'Opportunities Room'. The Opportunities Room is run by volunteers who offer customers a range of support including development of IT skills for online job-searching and welfare rights systems, access to computers and more recently support with Universal Credit applications. The space is also used by a range of external agencies including the Job Centre and welfare rights. The opportunities room has been successful in integrating different agencies and services as well as attracting new customers to the library, particularly digitally excluded citizens in Dundee.

Key Activities

- Dundee City Council appointed a Volunteer Coordinator to oversee the project.
- The Volunteer Coordinator has been funded through different organisations over time, but is now permanently funded by Leisure and Culture Dundee.
- Currently 28 volunteers are part of the volunteer pool and two volunteers are managing the hub at any one time.
- The opportunities room is now embedded in the core service.

More information: [Case Study: Dundee—Opportunities Room](#)

The Youth Innovation Network

What: Involving young volunteers in the design and delivery of library services.

Who: A range of councils across England.

The Youth Innovation Network was established in partnership with The Reading Agency, The Society of Chief Librarians and The Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians. The aim was to work with council library services to develop national volunteering opportunities for young people between 11-25 years old.



Southwark Council joined the initiative and has created opportunities for young people through their Summer Reading Challenge. This involves choosing books for the library to buy in and other services and activities. Since 2011, 250 young people have taken part in the programme. The Youth Innovation Network is an opportunity for young people to gain valuable work experience and meet new friends. Some children even run their own events in the libraries such as a Star Wars Day.

Key Activities

- Library staff are given the resources and training necessary to deliver volunteer programmes.
- Library staff are involved in the recruitment of young volunteers and a named member of staff looks after the volunteer.
- Library staff also organise recruitment mornings at libraries that are marketed to children through teachers and careers advisors.
- The main focus is on the skills that the young volunteers will gain.
- The volunteers complete a skills diary to showcase how they have developed during the experience.

More Information, Toolkits and Case Studies

[Government Community Libraries Toolkit](#)

[London Council Toolkit for Volunteering in Libraries](#)

[Report: Evidence on the use of volunteers in libraries and volunteer-run libraries](#)

7. Parks and Green Spaces

The environment has a huge impact on wellbeing, social networks and the prevention of antisocial behaviour and social isolation.⁹ It is therefore important that parks and greenspaces are maintained in the challenging financial climate.¹⁰ Volunteer involvement does not only offer an opportunity to realise budget savings, it can also be an opportunity to expand the role of these services to address wider social and environmental problems. The examples included in this report are just a few demonstrating the wide range of ways volunteers can be involved in maintaining parks and greenspaces.

ParkWork

The ParkWork project was established in 2015 with the aim to help unemployed people to gain work experience whilst maintaining public parks. The programme is run as a partnership between Bristol City Council, park action groups and volunteers. Bristol Parks Forum and Bristol City Council worked together to develop a strategy and a sustainable business model for the long-term involvement of volunteers.



The programme has so far delivered over £27,000 of improvement across parks in Bristol and 40% of the participants entered training for employment schemes as a result of the scheme. The Council has learned several lessons along the way. At the start the expectation was that volunteer costs would be covered by employment agencies, however the funding received did not cover the co-ordination, training and support. The Council has since been able to secure funding by illustrating the value of every £1 invested in the programme.

Darlington Park - Corporate Volunteers

The Darlington Rethinking Parks Programme was established to encourage local businesses to volunteer regularly in three local parks. The voluntary organisation Groundwork North East and the local corporate social responsibility umbrella



9 <http://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/research/Revaluating-Parks-and-Green-Spaces-Report.pdf>

10 https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/PDF/Contribute/PublicHealthandLandscape_CreatingHealthyPlaces_FINAL.pdf

group Darlington Cares worked together to make initial introductions with businesses. It was important to offer a programme that would be easy and appealing for businesses to engage with. This included addressing barriers faced by staff and targeting resources wisely. In the first year eight businesses signed up and to date 226 people have volunteered. Perhaps most importantly, long term relationships have been established with five businesses and the volunteer contribution has been calculated at around £18,000.

Key Activities

- Darlington Council identified a list of potential volunteer activities in parks to create an offer for volunteers.
- The Groundwork Team visited staff to raise awareness and to help people to sign up to the scheme.
- The Council communicated opportunities of the programme to local communities.
- The programme focused on activities that add maximum value such as replacing a path rather than painting a fence.
- The programme focused more on a smaller number of businesses working across a small number of sites so that they can make a sustained contribution to maintain the city's green spaces.
- The enrolling and coordination of volunteers was a relatively resource intensive exercise which was managed by the Darlington Rethinking Parks team.
- Groundwork North East and Darlington Council ran the activities in the parks. The Council provided volunteers with tools and food.
- At the end of the volunteer experience, volunteers completed a feedback form to inform improvements to the process.
- The Council focused on recruiting a diverse range of businesses to mitigate negative impact since business priorities can change quickly.

More information: [Darlington Rethinking Parks Case Study](#)

8. Early Years Services

A recent research report looking at the early years workforce in England revealed that the service is relying heavily on volunteers. For example, over 15 percent of people who deliver reception classes are volunteers. Many pre-school clubs are also set up and run by parents as volunteers, however once established these are often handed over to paid staff.¹¹ Although there are many positive aspects of involving volunteers in service delivery, the report also highlights that there has to be a careful consideration of the balance between volunteers and paid staff to secure that the provision is delivered by qualified staff.¹² The two examples included in this report aim to illustrate how this balance can be achieved successfully.

Grasshoppers In The Park

Grasshoppers In The Park is a parental co-production nursery located in London. The Grasshopper In The Park is one of just a handful of nurseries that have adopted the parental co-production model in the UK. Although parental co-production nurseries remain relatively rare in the UK, the model is applied in other countries including New Zealand and America. The involvement of parent volunteers enables the nursery to charge parents 15% less than the London average for childcare. The co-production model also has benefits for recruitment. The involvement of parents means that the nursery only had to recruit twice in the last 4 years and two men are currently working for the co-op. However, the majority of families are well educated and there is still a challenge to widen the access to the nursery to more deprived families.



Key Activities

- Grasshopper In The Park was set up by a group of parents and is run by an executive committee of parent directors.
- There are currently 30 families involved in the co-op.
- All parents are expected to contribute an hour or two every week to do work for the nursery and for this they receive a £40 discount on their fees.

11 <https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/innovation-in-childcare-14-07.pdf>

12 http://epi.team1support.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/EPI_-Early-Years-Workforce.pdf

- Parents can alternatively work one day a week for a discount of £120 on fees.
- Parents are involved in all decisions at the nursery and carry out a wide range of tasks including gardening, DIY, laundry and social events with and without children.
- For those parents that are in full time employment there is also an opportunity to carry out some work outside of office hours.

More information: [Grasshopper In The Park official website](#)

Maternity Champions

The Maternity Champions Programme provides community support for expectant and new parents through pregnancy, child birth and the transition into parenthood. The team of volunteers work together with midwives, health visitors, children’s centre staff and local authorities. The volunteers are on hand to guide and support new parents, giving advice on keeping healthy and reducing isolation by encouraging new parents to support each other.



More information: [Maternity Champions Official Website](#)

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May 2018