

York City-wide Volunteering Strategy

2022 - 2027

In the Spring of 2022, representatives from local Charities, Voluntary Organisations, City of York Council, volunteers and prospective volunteers came together to discuss what was important to them when it came to volunteering. The results of these discussions and surveys have culminated in the co-production of a new, five year, city-wide volunteering strategy for York.

This strategy is owned by several organisations across York who involve volunteers. Each organisation has contributed to the action plan to explain how they will implement some of the areas of work; some pieces of work will need to be worked up with a range of partners and some will need additional resources to enable them to happen.

This volunteering strategy is purposefully short and succinct. (Additional information about the process, themes and responses can be found in Appendix A and the strategy should be read in conjunction with the detailed action plan.)

Many of the themes and issues are not new: we all want good quality volunteering opportunities and experiences, and good practice around volunteer involvement and this has not changed. However, what is paramount to us now is more collaboration between organisations involving volunteers; recognising that by working together we can achieve more and add value to the volunteering landscape in York. We also want to make volunteering as accessible as possible and include people from a wide range of diverse backgrounds.

Collaboration:

An intrinsic and fundamental theme running through this co-produced, city-wide strategy is that joint working would add value, make more impact and achieve things that couldn't be achieved if we were to work in isolation. Areas identified for further exploration are:

Training for volunteer managers and volunteers

A Quality Mark to help volunteers identify organisations that are operating good practice

Data collection and collation

Celebration events

Marketing and the promotion of volunteering

Sharing skills of volunteers

Sharing organisations' knowledge and skills

Reaching, recruiting and learning from volunteers from diverse communities

City priorities:

Discussions about the priorities and need in York were held and the most common issues highlighted were:

Poverty

Environment

Mental Health

Loneliness

Youth

Community Cohesion

Human Rights incl. Refugees & Asylum Seekers

There was agreement that:

1. Even if our individual organisations' aims focus on a specific cause that may differ from these priorities, we should consider them in the designing of our volunteering programmes, policies and procedures.

Definition of volunteering:

There are many ways to describe what volunteering is and a reluctance to define it for fear of leaving things out. However, we agreed that for the purpose of this strategy, volunteering is:

Making York a better place
by freely giving your time and skills
to help communities and causes beyond your friends and family

Whether we call it volunteering, giving or social action we know that when people help others, communities are stronger, more resilient and have higher levels of social capital, boosting our health and wellbeing.

What is not volunteering:

There was a wide range of opinion as to what does and does not constitute volunteering but some things we all agreed on are that volunteering should not be exploitative, unsafe or be for a profit making organisation. Volunteers should augment rather than replace public services. Volunteers have been widely used during the COVID pandemic for tasks which would normally be carried out through paid roles. This needs to be monitored and the integrity of volunteering being solely for not-for-profit organisations should be maintained.

Good practice:

It is essential that Volunteers are managed and supported properly to ensure they have a positive experience and they keep volunteering, if possible.

Best practice in Volunteer recruitment, support and management should be consistent across the city, and there was a desire for:

2. A Quality Mark for York which ensured basic things are in place so Volunteers can easily recognise where they will have a good quality volunteering experience.
3. A Volunteer Managers Forum, training for managers, and good practice guidance available from a centralised place.

Equality, diversity and inclusivity:

Volunteering should be inviting, welcoming and accessible to all. There should be a range of volunteering opportunities that cater for different skills sets, interests and time availability. Themes that came across very strongly are:

4. We should reach out to underrepresented communities whether this be disabled people, people from diverse cultural communities, young people, older people, people experiencing mental health ill health, etc.
5. We should seek to recruit Volunteers from these communities who can act as ambassadors, learning from them about what would encourage and support people to volunteer and what barriers we need to remove that prevent them from volunteering.
6. We should hold resources including guidance and training that are developed by these diverse communities to help us all to involve more volunteers from a variety of backgrounds.
7. We should simplify bureaucratic recruitment processes to remove barriers which are off-putting and deter people from becoming Volunteers.
8. All organisations involving volunteers should all have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

9. We should encourage Supported Volunteering where necessary to give additional support to people as and when necessary.

Promotion of volunteering:

This is another area where collaboration between organisations would be beneficial. The most popular suggestions to take forward are:

10. A city-wide campaign promoting volunteering, its benefits and its impact.

11. Cross-sector collaboration with shared hashtags and consistent messages across multiple organisations' promotions.

12. An up-to-date, easily accessible list or portal of all volunteering opportunities.

13. Adverts around volunteering for specific causes or to address city-wide priorities.

14. Volunteer Recruitment Fairs.

15. City-wide Action Days that encourage people to try out volunteering.

16. Better networking with employers to encourage employees to volunteer.

Recognition and celebration:

Recognising the contribution made by Volunteers is essential, this can be a simple 'thank you', birthday card, a certificate or larger celebration event. This is another area where collaboration or a consistent approach would be beneficial. Some ideas to take forward are:

17. A city-wide recognition event / big party.

18. Certificates/award ceremonies.

19. Discounts from local businesses for Volunteers.

20. Helping volunteers recognise the skills they've learnt.

21. Valuing the input of Volunteers by having representation on charity boards, or the mechanism to feed in to the organisation's strategy.

Sharing skills:

There was an appetite to explore how Volunteers' skills could be shared across the city. In theory this sounds simple but in practice this can be challenging for many organisations who need Volunteers for specific tasks. This could only be achieved by working together collaboratively and could be an area to explore and trial. It was suggested:

22. Explore Volunteers potentially volunteering across different organisations that have a shared cause, or are in need of the same skills, or are doing similar activities, for example, administration roles or marshalling.

Evaluation and monitoring:

This is another area for potential collaboration whilst recognising that organisations will need to do their own monitoring for their own funders. However, it was agreed that there was a need to collect some data centrally to demonstrate the breadth and impact of volunteering. Some suggestions to explore further are:

23. Centralised Collection of volunteering data.

24. A common survey for all Volunteers.

25. A platform/resources to make data collection easier.

26. Considering our Volunteer programmes' impact on the City's priorities.

Action Plan

Actors	Action	Target Time Frame	Are Additional Resources Required?	Strategy Aim			
York City-wide Volunteering Strategy Working Group	Working Group to meet quarterly to collaborate on advancing and achieving the actions within this strategy and action plan.	2023+	No*	Entire Strategy			
All organisations involving Volunteers	<p>Pledge: Organisations pledge to contribute to the York City-wide Volunteering Strategy in the following ways:</p>	2022 - 2027	No	<p>1. Even if our individual organisations' aims focus on a specific cause that may differ from these priorities, we should consider them in the designing of our volunteering programmes, policies and procedures.</p>			
	<p>1. To consider the city's priorities (as outlined in the York City-wide Volunteering Strategy) in the designing of our volunteering programmes, policies and procedures, even if our organisation's aim focuses on a specific cause that may differ from these priorities.</p>		No				
	<p>a) Examples of this may be:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="724 1167 1584 1850"> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="724 1167 952 1325">Poverty</td> <td data-bbox="952 1167 1584 1325">Having an Expenses Policy and ensuring volunteers are informed and reminded of what they can claim</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="724 1325 952 1503">Environment</td> <td data-bbox="952 1325 1584 1503">How can we make our Volunteer Programmes more environmentally friendly?</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="724 1503 952 1850">Mental Health</td> <td data-bbox="952 1503 1584 1850">The very act of volunteering has been shown to improve mental health, but what can we do better support the mental health of our Volunteers? How can we reduce stigma around mental health in our volunteer programmes? etc.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Poverty		Having an Expenses Policy and ensuring volunteers are informed and reminded of what they can claim	Environment	How can we make our Volunteer Programmes more environmentally friendly?
Poverty	Having an Expenses Policy and ensuring volunteers are informed and reminded of what they can claim						
Environment	How can we make our Volunteer Programmes more environmentally friendly?						
Mental Health	The very act of volunteering has been shown to improve mental health, but what can we do better support the mental health of our Volunteers? How can we reduce stigma around mental health in our volunteer programmes? etc.						

York CVS

Loneliness	The very act of volunteering has been shown to reduce loneliness, but what other ways could we reduce loneliness? Volunteer socials? More knowledge of their teams? etc.			
Youth	Young people are the next generation of Volunteers. What can we do to include them earlier so they can enjoy the benefits that Volunteering brings too?	No*		3. A Volunteer Managers Forum, training for managers, and good practice guidance available from a centralised place.
Community Cohesion	How can our volunteering programmes improve community cohesion? How can we increase diversity? Can our programmes foster more community pride? Etc.	No*		
Human Rights incl. Refugees & Asylum Seekers	Having an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and ensuring our Volunteers know about it. What volunteer roles could people get involved with at different levels of English proficiency?	No*		7. We should simplify bureaucratic recruitment processes to remove barriers which are off-putting and deter people from becoming Volunteers.
2. To contribute to a centralised repository of good practice resources.		No*		3. A Volunteer Managers Forum, training for managers, and good practice guidance available from a centralised place.
a) York CVS to host this centralised repository.				
3. To strive to simplify bureaucratic recruitment processes to remove barriers which are off-putting and deter people from becoming Volunteers.				
a) To share resources to the sector via York CVS and good practice via York's Volunteer Management Forum.				

York CVS	4. To have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.		No*	8. All organisations involving volunteers should all have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
	a) To share this as a resource for the whole VCSE sector.		No*	3. A Volunteer Managers Forum, training for managers, and good practice guidance available from a centralised place.
	i. York CVS EDI Working Group are sharing their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion continued learning as resources for the sector.		No	
	5. To work with any potential Supported Volunteering Service established as part of this strategy to explore giving additional support to people to engage in volunteering within your organisation, where possible.		No	9. We should encourage Supported Volunteering where necessary to give additional support to people as and when necessary.
	6. To contribute content to city-wide campaigns promoting volunteering, its benefits, and its impacts, as part of this strategy.		No*	10. A city-wide campaign promoting volunteering, its benefits, and its impact.
	7. To participate in shared volunteering promotional campaigns, messages and hashtags to establish consistent messages across the sector.		No*	11. Cross-sector collaboration with shared hashtags and consistent messages across multiple organisations' promotions. 13. Adverts around volunteering for specific causes or to address city-wide priorities.
	a) To participate in events, mailing lists, discussions, etc where these will be agreed e.g. the York Volunteer Management Forum as hosted by York CVS.		No*	
	8. To work towards valuing the input of Volunteers by exploring representation on boards, or the mechanism to feed in to the organisation's strategy.		No*	21. Valuing the input of Volunteers by having representation on charity boards, or the mechanism to feed in to the organisation's strategy.
	9. To contribute to centralised collection of volunteering data e.g. respond to a biennial volunteering survey, etc.		No*	23. Centralised Collection of volunteering data.

Good Practice				
York CVS	Expand the York CVS Health Check self-assessment (as a Quality Mark equivalent) to include quality of volunteering experience. Resource potentially needed to administer to ensure quality.	2024	Resource potentially needed to administer	2. A Quality Mark for York which ensured basic things are in place so Volunteers can easily recognise where they will have a good quality volunteering experience.

			this to ensure quality.	
York CVS	Volunteer Managers Forum and training for managers is in place and can be signed up to on York CVS' website .	2022+	No*	3. A Volunteer Managers Forum, training for managers, and good practice guidance available from a centralised place.
	Good Practice guidance is accessible from York Volunteers as outlined on York CVS' website .		No*	

Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity				
York CVS	Seek funding for a Community Engagement lead to reach out to and engage with underrepresented communities, whether this be disabled people, people from diverse cultural communities, young people, older people, people experiencing mental health ill health, etc.	2023-2024	Yes	4. We should reach out to underrepresented communities, whether this be disabled people, people from diverse cultural communities, young people, older people, people experiencing mental health ill health, etc.
	This role, or similar, to recruit and manage Volunteer Ambassadors within these underrepresented communities.	2023-2024	Yes	5. We should seek to recruit Volunteers from these communities who can act as ambassadors, learning from them about what would encourage and support people to volunteer and what barriers we need to remove that prevent them from volunteering.
Organisations focussed on specific communities	Offer training/resources developed by underrepresented communities to help us all to involve more volunteers from a variety of backgrounds to the rest of the sector.	2023-2024	Potentially	6. We should hold resources including guidance and training that are developed by these diverse communities to help us all to involve more volunteers from a variety of backgrounds.
	To contribute to a centralised repository of good practice resources.	2022+	No*	3. A Volunteer Managers Forum, training for managers, and good practice guidance available from a centralised place.
	York CVS	York CVS to host this centralised repository.	2022-2023	

York CVS	To seek funding to provide a Supported Volunteering Service for those who need additional support to access Volunteering.	2022-2024	Yes	9. We should encourage Supported Volunteering where necessary to give additional support to people as and when necessary.
----------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------	-----	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Promotion of Volunteering:				
York CVS	Additional funding to be sought for a campaign lead and campaigning funds.	2023-2024	Yes	10. A city-wide campaign promoting volunteering, its benefits, and its impact.
All organisations involving Volunteers	To contribute content to city-wide campaigns promoting volunteering, its benefits, and its impacts, as part of this strategy.	2022-2027	No	
York CVS	An up-to-date, easily accessible list or portal of all volunteering opportunities is provided by York Volunteers on the York CVS website .	2022	No*	12. An up-to-date, easily accessible list or portal of all volunteering opportunities.
York CVS	York Volunteers to hold at least 1 Recruitment Fair a year. Jan 17 th 2023 will be the next Recruitment Fair. It will be bookable via the York CVS website .	2023+	Potentially	14. Volunteer Recruitment Fairs.
		2023	No*	
University of York and York St John's University	Universities to hold at least 1 Recruitment Fair a year.	2023+	No	
York CVS to organise with support from City of York Council and York Cares. Other Volunteer-involving organisations to participate and promote	Organise City-wide Action Days that encourage people to try out volunteering.	2024-2025	Potentially	15. City-wide Action Days that encourage people to try out volunteering.

Run by York Cares and hosted by York CVS	Training for the local VCSE sector around developing Corporate Volunteering offers / making current roles more accessible to corporate volunteers / etc.	2023-2024	No	16. Better networking with employers to encourage employees to volunteer.
York City-wide Volunteering Strategy Working Group	Identify an organisation to develop increased pro-bono offers and specialist skill shares from Corporate Volunteers for the VCSE sector to access.	2023-2024	Potentially	
Co-organised by York Cares and York CVS	Explore the trial of a Fair or Networking event for local businesses to meet local VCSE organisations that may be interested in supporting (either through Volunteering or Fundraising).	2023-2025	Potentially	

Recognition and celebration:				
All organisations involving Volunteers	Volunteers Week (Jun 1 st - 7 th annually) to be recognised and celebrated.	2022+	No	17. A city-wide recognition event / big party.
York CVS with support from the City of York Council, North Yorkshire Police, etc.	A city-wide recognition event / big party to be held.	2023-2024	Yes	
City of York Council in collaboration with York Press and involvement of York CVS	Hold Community Pride Awards.	2023+	No	18. Certificates/award ceremonies.
University of York and York St John's University	Hold awards ceremonies involving Volunteers.	2023+	No	
York Cares	Promote idea of discounts from local business for Volunteers to local businesses.	2023+	No	19. Discounts from local businesses for Volunteers.
York CVS	Investigate the potential of developing a local scheme of discounts from local business for Volunteers.	2023-2026	Yes	

York CVS	Investigating different ways to achieve helping volunteers recognise the skills they've learnt, collaboratively across the sector.	2023-2025	Potentially	20. Helping volunteers recognise the skills they've learnt.
	Develop and deliver training for the local VCSE Sector on how to have volunteers represented on charity boards, or the mechanism to feed in to the organisation's strategy.		Potentially	21. Valuing the input of Volunteers by having representation on charity boards, or the mechanism to feed in to the organisation's strategy.
York CVS	Training on 'Growing Your Trustee Board' to include this.	2023	No*	
York CVS and National Railway Museum	More specific training.	2023-2024	Potentially	

Sharing Skills:				
York CVS	Investigate the potential of Volunteers volunteering across different organisations that have a shared cause, or are in need of the same skills, or are doing similar activities, for example: healthcare roles, befriending, marshalling, etc.	2023-2027	Yes	22. Volunteers volunteering across different organisations that have a shared cause, or are in need of the same skills, or are doing similar activities, for example: healthcare roles, befriending, marshalling, etc.
	Gather further evidence of interest from those interested in volunteering, those already volunteering and organisations involving Volunteers.			
	Gather further evidence from organisations to investigate the most efficient methods of sharing Volunteers or accessing a shared Volunteer pool, etc.			
	Explore current opportunities to trial methods.			

Evaluation and monitoring:				
York CVS as organisers and other Volunteer involving organisations to participate	A Biennial Volunteering Survey to collect city-wide volunteering data centrally.	2023-2024+	Potentially	23. Centralised Collection of volunteering data. 24. A common survey for all Volunteers.
	Capture Volunteer programmes' impacts on the City's Priorities.		No*	26. Considering our Volunteer programmes' impacts on the City's priorities.

York CVS	Investigating different ways to achieve data collection across the sector.	2023-2025	Yes	25. A platform/resources to make data collection easier.
----------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------	-----	----------------------------------------------------------

*assuming a funded Volunteer Centre is in place

Photo of York Minster by [Jeremy Stewardson](#) on [Unsplash](#)