

**SUNDERLAND PARTNERSHIP VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN**

**LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME:**

**Report of the Executive Director of City Services**

**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: SP1, SP2, SP3, SP4 and SP5**

**CORPORATE PRIORITIES: CIO2, CIO4**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a draft Sunderland Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan and to receive feedback from Members as part of the consultative process.
- 1.2 The report outlines the development period of the strategy which was designed to encourage ownership and collaboration and development of the Strategy by organisations of the Sunderland Partnership and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), along with the formal consultation period mechanisms.

**2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The Sunderland Community Development Plan (agreed by Sunderland Partnership and Cabinet in April 2008) highlighted the importance of volunteering in Sunderland and its supporting role in the delivery of the Sunderland Strategy.
- 2.2 Following from the Community Development Plan (2008) the Sunderland Compact Volunteering Code of Practice was agreed by Cabinet and organisations of the Sunderland Partnership in June 2009. The Code of Practice sets out the key principles and undertakings for both the organisations of the Sunderland Partnership and VCS organisations in Sunderland on how to work together to improve and increase volunteering. This will support the implementation of the strategy.
- 2.3 On 12 May 2010 the Sunderland Partnership Delivery and Improvement Board agreed to support the development of a Sunderland Partnership Volunteering Strategy and engage in its development. The development period for the Strategy and associated action plan began on 12 May and ran until 6 August 2010.
- 2.4 The formal consultation period began on 9 August and closed on 17 September 2010. The need for a 12 week formal consultation period, as detailed in the Sunderland Compact Involvement and Consultation Code of Practice, was negated given the extensive and lengthy involvement of the VCS in the development of the Strategy.

## 2.5 **Development Period**

Presentations and developmental workshops on the Volunteering Strategy were held with both VCS organisations and statutory sector partners at various events including:

- Sunderland Partnership Delivery and Improvement Board
- Sunderland Volunteering Forum
- Sunderland Community Network VCS Assembly
- Inclusive Communities Thematic Group
- Dissemination via infrastructure organisations' membership lists, requesting comments and suggestions

## 2.6 **Formal Consultation Period**

The formal consultation period began on the 9 August 2010, and the draft Sunderland Volunteering Strategy was sent to:

- Sunderland Partnership Board
- Sunderland Partnership Delivery and Improvement Board
- Sunderland Partnership Inclusive Communities Thematic Group
- Involvement and Consultation Group – SCC and Sunderland Partnership
- Compact Implementation Group
- Sunderland Community Network
- Sunderland CVS e-group
- Sunderland Volunteer Centre and Forum members
- Corporate Communities Group – SCC
- Citizenship and Volunteering Group
- Five Area Committees

## 3.0 **DRAFT SUNDERLAND VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY**

3.1 The final draft Volunteering Strategy establishes a set of agreed commitments for the organisations of the Sunderland Partnership to ensure adequate and effective support for volunteering activity in Sunderland, which is key to achieving a prosperous and inclusive city.

3.2 The Volunteering Strategy will impact upon volunteering in Sunderland through achievement of the following outcomes:

- Increasing the number of people volunteering in the City (whether through formal or informal volunteering) by working with partners to identify opportunities for volunteer involvement
- Recognising and celebrating volunteers for their role in delivering services and improving the lives of people in the City
- Developing ways of supporting volunteers to increase their confidence, learning, skills and employability prospects
- Increasing the number of organisations with Employer-Supported Volunteering schemes
- Improving the management of volunteers and the delivery of volunteering programmes in the City

Delivery of the Volunteering Strategy Action Plan will ensure that a greater number and range of organisations register or update volunteering opportunities with the Sunderland Volunteer Centre and that more organisations make the best use of volunteers, which will have a positive impact on the services and activities they provide within communities. A high profile media campaign will promote and encourage volunteering, leading to an increase the number of people taking up volunteering activities across Sunderland.

By supporting volunteering in Sunderland, the Strategy will:

- Build inclusive and cohesive communities
  - Volunteering increases social interaction, builds respect, and helps residents develop a sense of belonging and ownership over local services.
- Support residents to take a more active role in their communities
  - for example, volunteers identifying and addressing local issues and concerns, delivering neighbourhood services in line with Local Area Plan priorities and Attractive and Inclusive City aims (e.g. bulb planting in the Coalfield area)
  - Volunteering provides a pathway into greater community involvement and ownership, supporting the 'right to buy', mutuals and cooperatives – e.g. residents volunteering with a community group that becomes a mutual or a cooperative may wish to purchase shares in the organisation or could be inspired to take over management of a state-provided service.
- Strengthen democracy and support active citizenship
  - Volunteering provides residents with an opportunity to influence decision making at a local level – e.g. school governors, management committees, Area VCS Networks.
- Support delivery of invaluable local services
  - Volunteers are involved in the delivery of a wide range of services, including victim and witness support schemes, support services within hospitals, transport services for hospital patients and housebound people, youth work, community cafes, credit unions, adult literacy, etc.
- Support the VCS in Sunderland
  - for example, voluntary management committees, support to local charities
- Bring benefits to individual volunteers
  - Volunteering provides a route into employment, education or training; provides a chance to make friends and reduce isolation; increases self esteem and confidence; and develops softer skills, such as teamwork and communication.
- Bring benefits to service users
  - Volunteers make services more personal and provide peer support and social interaction.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The Sunderland Volunteering Strategy will provide a valuable basis for VCS organisations and organisations of the Sunderland Partnership to work together to increase volunteering activity for the benefit of residents, their communities and the City.

It is an ambitious strategy which establishes a long-term commitment and approach to ensuring that volunteering activity is well supported using a collaborative approach.

Consequently, the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee is presented with a draft of the Sunderland Volunteering Strategy for comment and amendment with the aim of producing a final version based on recommendations from the Committee.

## **5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 That the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee provides comments on the draft strategy and that any agreed amendments are made.
- 5.2 That the final draft Volunteering Strategy is presented to the Sunderland Partnership Delivery and Improvement Board on 12 January 2011, Sunderland Partnership Board on the 18 January 2011 and to Sunderland City Council Cabinet on the 2 February 2011.

## **6.0 APPENDICES**

- 1 - Sunderland Volunteering Strategy

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