



Leeds Conference

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Volunteering – current issues in England



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Significance: high involvement

- ❑ “formal volunteering” through organisations:
 - 40% once or more in past 12 months
 - 25% once a month or more

 - ❑ “informal” – not through organisations:
 - 54% once or more in past 12 months
 - 29% once a month or more
- (England: Citizenship Survey 2009-10)

Significance: position in society

- helping run public and community services and activities... social care ... schools ... sport ... arts ... health ... clubs ... advice ... advocacy ... police ... libraries ... trustees ...clearing snow ... checking on neighbours
- benefits to volunteers ... skills/ employability ... re-inventing self ...fulfilment
- community cohesion ... social capital ... citizenship

Building on history

*from mid-19th century... to Blair and Brown
Labour government 1997-2010*

Governments/ social policy:

- more awareness
- more expenditure
- more expectations

Now: “Big Society”

Cameron Conservative government May 2010+

- “Not Big Government”
- bottom-up + “rights” (to run services)
- neighbourhood/ social action
- “volunteering” <> “community organising”
- + cuts in public spending
 - national and local government

Big questions

- what effect of cuts in public spending?
 - on infrastructure
 - on services ...
- will volunteers take place of paid staff?
 - damage to services
 - damage to volunteering movement
 - job substitution <> rallying to help
- opportunities and/ or alienation?

And life-stages:

- younger people, 16+ / 18+:
 - will citizenship programmes lead to lifelong habits of volunteering?

- older people, 50+ / 60-65+ / 75+
 - will changes in retirement age (earlier and later) impact on supply of volunteers?

And economic recession:

- huge increases in inquiries about volunteering
 - have unemployed people found the right opportunities for them?
 - are they overloading volunteering support systems?
- pressures on family housekeeping
 - do people have time to volunteer?
- expectations of government
 - is government being realistic?

And technology:

- apps on the smart-phone
- social networking sites
- micro-volunteering
 - changes in accessing place and time
 - “instant volunteering” ... here! ... now! ...?
 - opportunities for self-actualising?
 - problems of managing quality of experience?
 - *different people looking for different things*

And ... keep volunteering!

- most volunteers have volunteered before ...
or are volunteering other places
- we want them to volunteer again!
- volunteers are like a natural resource we
share ... “recycling”!
- how do we look after the volunteers who are
with us now?

Volunteering England

- ❑ charity
- ❑ national development agency
- ❑ strategic partner – Office for Civil Society
- ❑ membership organisation – 1700 members
 - 300+ local volunteer centres
- ❑ informing and improving policy and practice
- ❑ representing volunteering
- www.volunteering.org.uk
- research: www.ivr.org.uk