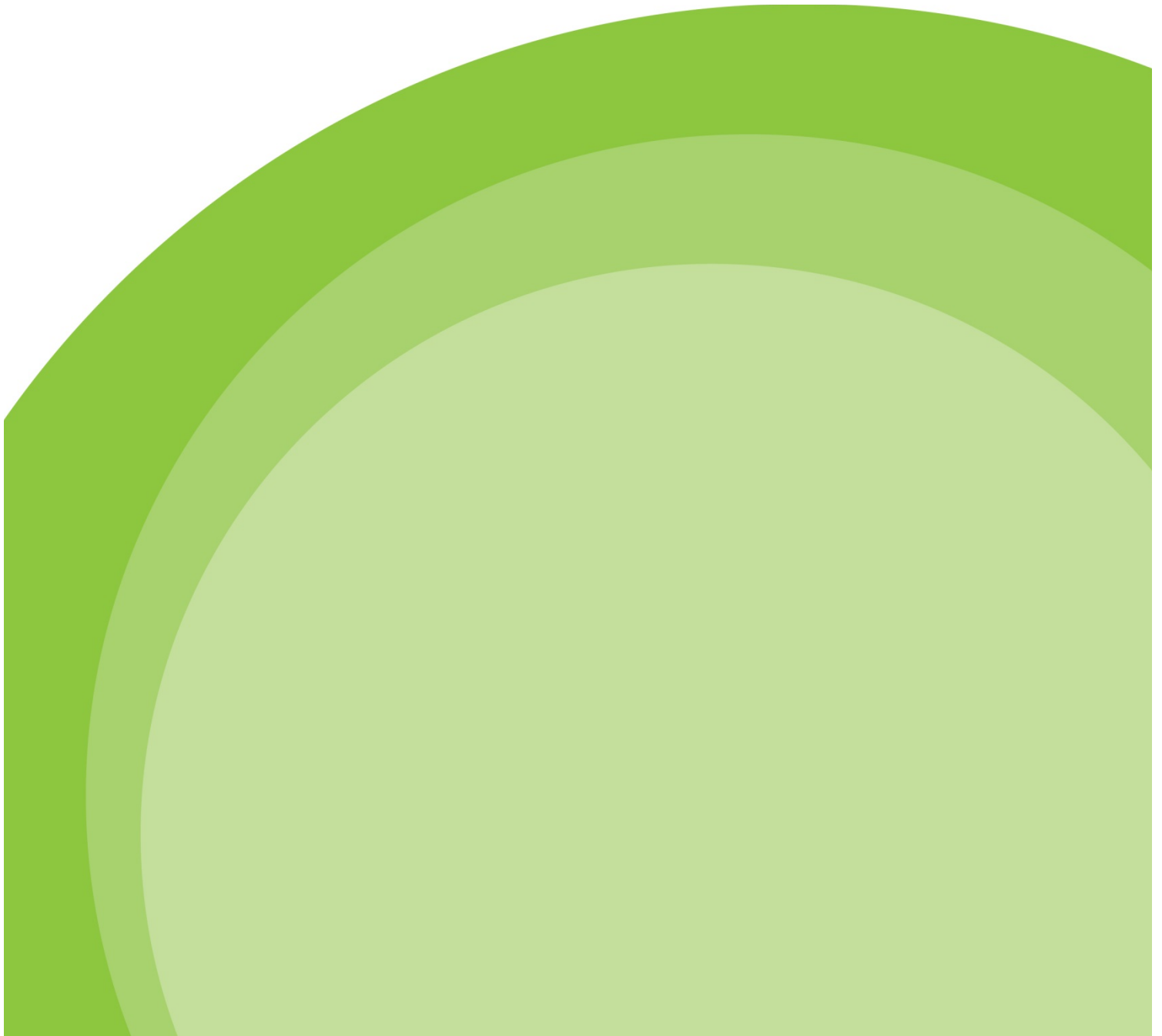


Volunteering in Central Bedfordshire

A volunteering portfolio



Introduction

This portfolio of Volunteering in Central Bedfordshire has been developed by Central Bedfordshire Council to bring together in one place all of the information relating to the support for volunteering taking place across the council - politically, with our partners and in our local communities.

It covers:

- Why we need volunteering in Central Bedfordshire
- Local and national strategic and political context
- Types of volunteering
- The outcomes and measures the council and partners are working to
- Current position – including a scoping exercise of what CBC is already doing to support and encourage volunteering
- Challenges and opportunities
- What more needs to be done

Finally following some high level desk top research, Appendix A details possible barriers to volunteering and Appendix B looks at the challenges that need to be overcome. Appendix C addresses research on how best to approach measuring the impact of volunteering.

Why do we need Volunteering in Central Bedfordshire?

Volunteering is an integral part of social action, by enabling people to take part in unpaid activity which will be of wider benefit not only to themselves but to their local communities and the greater civil society as a whole.

Social action is when people come together to help improve their lives and solve the problems that are important in their communities, which in turn builds social capital, the main aspects of which include citizenship and 'neighbourliness'. It can include volunteering, the giving of money, community action or simple neighbourly acts. Through the passion and skill of residents, social action can empower communities, help people in need, and complement public services.

Focusing on how to do more with less has become a priority for all public bodies across the country. Whilst not replacing roles and functions carried out by paid employees and public bodies, volunteers provide a valuable source of support to many of our residents.

Research has shown that higher levels of social capital are associated with better health, higher educational achievement, better employment outcomes, lower crime rates, and can improve people's confidence and skills. In other words, those with extensive networks are more likely to be 'housed, healthy, hired and happy'.

Local and national strategic context

The principles of supporting and promoting volunteering and social action underpin key council strategies, and are key priorities in the Five Year Plan.

Furthermore, there is a move nationally to encourage wider participation in volunteering, to increase social action and build social capital.

One of the barriers that had previously prevented people getting involved in volunteer activities like clearing snow from public paths for example was the fear of litigation should an accident occur. In February 2015 the Social Action, Responsibility and Heroism (SARAH) Bill gave volunteers, community groups and 'good deed doers' legal reassurance that courts will take account of the fact that they were acting to help society if something goes wrong and they end up having to defend themselves against being sued. In June 2015 the Cabinet Office also published a discussion paper on Social Action.

Five Year Plan – Creating Stronger Communities

Locally, a key outcome in the councils emerging Five Year Plan is for our towns and villages to be sustainable, resilient places where:

- People are supported to help themselves and others;
- People of all ages will be encouraged to volunteer; and
- Residents, community organisations and town and parish councils will have opportunities to do more in and for their communities.

The 'Creating Stronger Communities' strand of the Five Year plan focuses specifically on building stronger and more resilient communities.

One of the strands of the Five Year Plan is 'Creating Stronger Communities', where the council commits to the following:

- We will work to build stronger local communities, providing a greater sense of place and participation in local affairs and services. This will help create greater resilience and reduce social isolation.
- People will be supported to help themselves and others. Residents of all ages and organisations, such as Town and Parish Councils will have opportunities to do more – on either a voluntary or a paid basis.
- We are particularly keen to draw on the skills of our older residents to support their community and build social infrastructure, promoting social inclusion.
- Community spirit will be high and the skills of residents will have grown.

The emerging CBC Stronger Communities Strategy will ensure a whole council approach aimed at maximising the contribution of all service areas and steering their impact to ensure community resilience and greater social capital. There is much already in place upon which we can build.

Community Engagement Strategy

Central Bedfordshire has a well established Community Engagement Strategy that sets out 5 key principles for community engagement:

- Supporting local people to engage, inform and influence decisions to help shape their communities
- Enabling ward councillors to be leaders in and for their communities
- Enhancing the role of town and parish councils
- Enabling more services to be delivered locally
- Enabling employers to thrive and play an active role in their communities

The strategy was first developed in 2010 and was refreshed and signed off by Council – and its partners via the Board of Central Bedfordshire Together – in June 2013. It is supported by 34 policy statements and has been developed as an online resource. This facilitates regular updates and the Strategy has over 70 web links to further information to enable communities to engage, inform and influence decisions. Finally, the Strategy has been identified as good practice by the ACCE Localism sub group, and we have shared our expertise with several other councils.

Volunteering Strategy

Volunteering is key to communities doing more for themselves. The current Volunteering Strategy 2011-2016 was developed by partners via Central Bedfordshire Together. Volunteers of all ages add great value to the delivery of many local services (delivered by the public, voluntary and community sectors), which many vulnerable people are dependent upon.

It is vital through the strategy to give direction to supporting the demand for and supply of volunteers in areas such as health, social care, the environment, sport, the arts, education and learning, housing, youth work, community development, community transport and the provision of information and advice services, whilst also nurturing the genuine altruistic motivation that many volunteers possess. Anyone who wants to volunteer should be able to do so easily, and find their volunteering experience a rewarding and fulfilling one.

This demonstrates a major driver for encouraging stronger and resilient communities and reinforces the need for a whole council approach.

Types of volunteering

Volunteering is the giving of unpaid help and a commitment of time and energy by individuals for the benefit of society, the community or the

environment. All types of volunteering are supported and promoted by the council.

- **Formal volunteering** is defined as giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations. For example, Brownie, Guide and Scout leaders are all volunteers.
- **Informal volunteering** is defined as giving unpaid help as an individual to someone who is not a relative. This might be clearing snow from a neighbour's pathway, or walking an elderly person's dog while they recover from an illness and are unable to do it themselves.
- **Micro-volunteering** is defined as giving unpaid help (either as an individual or as part of a group) online via an internet-connected device (including smartphones), or offline in small increments of time, usually to benefit a non-profit, charitable or non-governmental organisation.

For [example](#), an individual taking part in micro-volunteering could give 30 minutes to an hour to source disaster relief information online for a disaster relief charity. This could include tasks like assisting in research, collecting, maintaining and tweeting helpful information and resources about first aid, hospitals, shelters and other critical needs before, during and after a disaster.

Measures

Corporately, the two Central Bedfordshire Volunteer Centres are grant funded to demonstrably deliver towards the following outcomes:

- Increase the number of people volunteering
- Increase the amount of volunteering individuals do

This grant funding is explained in more detail in the 'Current Position' section.

Further measures that the council are currently developing include:

- A Town and Parish satisfaction survey
- Development of a volunteering measure
- Measurement of the number of hours per week residents provide unpaid voluntary help to groups, clubs and voluntary organisations
- Attendance at partnership / other local engagement fora

What the council is already doing to support and encourage volunteering

A number of different service areas across the council are already engaging with volunteers, and service delivery is enhanced by their participation.

It is vital to work both across the council and collaboratively with partners so that all parts of the organisation are on the same page in understanding what the desired outcomes are, and to have a 'can do' approach to make them happen. We have captured a few examples of volunteer support and engagement across the Council, these are listed below.

Grant funding support

The council provides grant funding to a number of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) infrastructure organisations, whose performance is also aligned with the council's key priorities, some of which are mentioned above. Our Terms and Conditions of Grant with our VCS partners were recently redesigned to enhance volunteering, which in turn helps create stronger and resilient communities.

- VCS organisations such as Community Action Bedfordshire (CA), and Community and Voluntary Service (CVS) are grant funded to provide Volunteer Centre Services that recruit and place Central Bedfordshire residents into volunteering opportunities. Both Volunteer Centres provide a coordinated approach to ensure the same experience across Central Bedfordshire. This helps fulfil the demand for and supply of volunteers in areas such as health, social care, the environment, sport, the arts, education and learning, housing, youth work, community development, community transport and the provision of information and advice services.

By exploring systems and processes to match the skills and passions of potential volunteers with local volunteering opportunities, anyone who wants to volunteer should be able to do so easily and find their volunteering experience a rewarding and fulfilling one. Both Volunteer Centres are also currently improving their mechanisms to track enquiries, to ensure the majority of people are successfully matched with a volunteering opportunity.

To help support and promote this activity, the council [website](#) provides links to the Volunteer Centre's 'website'.

- Bedfordshire Rural Communities (BRCC) receives grant funding to help local communities deliver local services. For example, they help community enablers and active citizens who volunteer (such as Village Agents and Community Connectors) add value and contribute to building local resilience by helping people to access support as and when they need it; particularly in our most deprived communities.

BRCC, CA and CVS receive a combined grant of £238k per annum, over a three year commission.

- The three Central Bedfordshire Citizen's Advice (CAs) receive a combined grant of £235k per annum to provide welfare, debt and housing advice to local residents. They also receive an additional

combined grant of £40k to help deal with the impact of welfare reform on Central Bedfordshire residents. Although the CAs do have paid staff, the majority of their 'workforce' is made up of volunteers. At the end of 2015/16, there were 128 volunteers working across the three CA offices in Central Bedfordshire.

Based on Office of National Statistics (ONS) ([Table 2.5a \(full time\) ONS 2014 Provisional Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings](#)) figures, the local annual value of the hours these volunteers have contributed to the Central Bedfordshire economy was just under £897k in 2015/16 (see Appendix D).

Area	£ 'value'
Mid Beds Citizen's Advice	£346,617
Dunstable Citizen's Advice	£269,347
Leighton Linlode Citizen's Advice	£280,048
Local Annual Value	£896,012

All of these infrastructure organisations, plus numerous smaller VCS groups across Central Bedfordshire help sustain the delivery of many local services (delivered by the public, voluntary and community sectors), which many vulnerable people are dependent on.

CBC Members

There is significant political support within the council for supporting and promoting volunteering and social action.

The Executive and Deputy Executive Members for Stronger Communities actively promote and monitor all forms of volunteering in Central Bedfordshire, and have carried out a CBC Members Volunteering Survey to gauge the volunteering activity of all CBC Members.

33 CBC Members took part in the survey. 45% of CBC Members volunteer every week, 90% reported that they volunteer to benefit their local community and 52% actively recruit residents to volunteer.

60% said that they volunteered at events, and 60% said they volunteered on committees.

29% said that talking to people / personal recommendation was the best way for residents to get involved in volunteering in their areas.

This also helps to meet the priority of enabling Ward Councillors to be leaders in and for their communities, contained in the Community Engagement Strategy.

CBC Volunteering Policy

The council has developed a Volunteering Policy which puts in place a framework and policy for how the council hosts and manages its own volunteers, including some information for Volunteer Support Managers.

Cheering Volunteering

The [Cheering Volunteering](#) Awards and Celebration event is held annually in June as part of Volunteers Month to promote volunteering and raise the profile of volunteering in Central Bedfordshire.

It is organised by the council working in partnership with the Volunteer Centres as part of Central Bedfordshire Together, to say thank you to those who give their time to help others.

Held at the Grove Theatre in Dunstable, it is funded entirely by sponsorship from local businesses and organisations. People are invited to submit nominations in six categories, and each category has a winner and two highly commended runners up.

In 2017 the Inspiring Volunteering grant scheme was introduced to run alongside Cheering Volunteering. 14 projects were supported helping to kickstart new volunteering activity and increase volunteering.

Volunteers Week / Month

CBC is one of several councils that participated in Volunteer Month throughout June in the past two years. It builds on the national Volunteer Week initiative held annually in June, in which local volunteering organisations and opportunities are showcased throughout the month.

Armed Forces Covenant (AFC)

We have a robust and well established AFC in Central Bedfordshire that fosters links between the Armed Forces and civilian communities. This can be built on to encourage more volunteers from the armed forces community. This could include not only serving personnel and Reservists, but also their partners and families.

Initial discussions have taken place concerning an Armed Forces Volunteer project for serving personnel and their families in Central Bedfordshire, which could potentially seek funding from the national Covenant Grant scheme.

Community level / sector specific activity

Clean for the Queen 2016 / Great British Spring Clean 2017

The national Clean for the Queen campaign saw individuals, voluntary groups, councils, businesses and schools take part in a country-wide litter

clean up in honour of Her Majesty the Queen's 90th birthday in March 2016.

There were 28 CftQ events across Central Bedfordshire over the official weekend, and the council's contractor Biffa reported that for the events they supported in collecting litter picked up by the volunteers involved, they collected over 2260kgs of rubbish.

Biffa wore hi-visibility jackets with both their logo and the CftQ logo on whilst out and about collecting rubbish from events, and the council acted as a central collection point for the CftQ rubbish sacks in the weeks leading up to the event.

Following the council's involvement in this campaign, one local resident offered to volunteer his time on a more regular basis to pick litter in his local town. The council has worked with the town and the resident to ensure he is supplied with the correct equipment, and that he has a suitable location to leave collected litter for the council's contractors to then collect.

The council also supported the Great British Spring Clean 2017 in the same vein. 51 litter picking events were held across Central Bedfordshire, with Town and Parish Councils holding 38 of these. The council provided litter picking 'packs' containing litter pickers, gloves, hi viz tabards and rubbish sacks to all Town and Parish Councils taking part, to enable them to carry out their own volunteer led litter picks as and when they deem it necessary in the future.

Inter Faith Week

Held between 13-20 November, Inter Faith Week is a national event to strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels, increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, celebrate and build on the contribution their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society and to increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs. Many faith groups rely heavily on volunteers.

The council is helping to promote Inter Faith Week in Central Bedfordshire by coordinating and promoting a week of partnership activity from a diverse range of faith and non-faith groups across the area. It is hoped that this will also help promote the valuable contribution that local faith and non-faith groups make in terms of building social capital in Central Bedfordshire, e.g. foodbanks and Credit Unions.

Reserves Day

As part of the council's commitment to our AFC, we also support the national Reserves Day campaign on 8 September by promotion through both council and partnership communication channels.

Reserves Day celebrates Reservists in the workplace or local community and

demonstrates how businesses and organisations support them on a daily basis.

There are 27,560 trained voluntary Reservists now in service in the British Armed Forces, and their dual military and civilian role requires dedication, professionalism and commitment, and support from employers.

The council also supports targeted campaigns to recruit more volunteers to particular sectors e.g. Advice Services (Citizen's Advice volunteers) and Community Safety initiatives (Speed, Neighbourhood and Street Watch schemes).

Volunteer Display Boards

New in 2017 is the installation two permanent / fixed display boards to showcase local volunteer organisations and their volunteers. An organization can display for up to 4 weeks after submitting an application through the website.

Timebanking

Timebanking is a way for people to help others and be rewarded for it – in time. Members earn a 'time credit' for every hour they give to another member of the timebank. They can then exchange this time credit for any other member's time.

It enables people, organisations and public services to be brought together in timebanking 'marketplaces', where skills, support and physical assets can be exchanged in a fair and impartial manner.

People who otherwise may never have met can come together and form connections and friendships, helping to build a stronger sense of community. Skills and resources are utilised to the full, for the complete benefit of that community.

Whilst helping to promote timebanking to residents, the council also provides funding through the business and regeneration directorate to manage Business Timebanks.

Business and Regeneration

Business Timebanking is funded by the Business and Regeneration directorate to help people who may be either starting up in business or just want some help and advice to take their business to the next stage.

Solicitors, accountants, business coaches, marketing agencies and intellectual property experts are just some of the specialised areas signed up to offer 1-2 hours of completely free advice and assistance.

Libraries

The Library Service has been working with volunteers for many years, particularly in the delivery of Housebound Services.

The service also supports young people as volunteers and work experience candidates. Volunteering numbers fluctuate, but over the last few years are as follows:

Year	Number	Hours
2015-16	250	3,219
2014-15	432	4,081.5
2013-14	178	2,748
2012-13	123	2,414

The Library Service has a Volunteer Development Officer to help increase its capacity to work with volunteers in our libraries and theatres.

The service has its own volunteer policy and role descriptions for volunteers, which were produced in partnership with the Volunteer Centre.

Some of the library volunteer roles available include:

- [Activities Volunteer](#)
- [Children's Activities Volunteer](#)
- [Children's Activities \(Pre-School\) Volunteer](#)
- [Computer Helper Volunteer](#)
- [Craft Preparation Volunteer](#)
- [Family History Helper Volunteer](#)
- [Good Afternoon Volunteer](#)
- [Helping Hand Volunteer](#)
- [Helping Hand Volunteer with IT](#)
- [Out and About Publicity Volunteer](#)
- [Shelving and Support Volunteer](#)
- [Theatre Volunteer \(Publicity\)](#)

Library volunteers are not normally DBS checked unless they are housebound volunteers, as they work in a library under the supervision of library staff.

The service supports volunteers who may have health issues and want to find a way of returning to work.

Countryside

The Countryside Team engage with approximately 250 volunteers, who volunteer across a range of countryside sites, Rights of Way (RoW) and other green spaces throughout Central Bedfordshire.

Their roles include acting as site wardens, litter picking, site management, running volunteer tasks, using a range of tools and equipment, working with

local people and schools/education, leading walks and other events, applying for funding, and holding regular committee meetings.

The Countryside Team continues to support and promote both P3 and 'Friends' groups on our countryside sites and RoW.

The Team plan to engage more with 'non-traditional' and other less able users of our countryside sites in the future, for example younger people, Black & Ethnic Minority communities, and the physical and mentally disabled.

Youth Support

The Youth Support service commissions a mix of short, medium and long term volunteering opportunities for at least 200 young people, which are accredited using the V-Inspired award framework.

Outcomes include developing skills and attributes to enable young people to grow in confidence and become work ready.

Children's Centres

Flitwick Children's Centre has 2 volunteers that support the centre every week for two hours a week running a 'Bumpstart' group. This group supports new mums prenatally and postnatally with their babies up to 6 months old, is a support network, and provides social interaction for these mums to be and first time mums.

Flitwick has an admin volunteer, who carries out some filing and supporting with answering the telephone, and 2 other volunteers that help and support our families within our specific sessions, Chatterbots and Cranfield university on an occasional basis.

Biggleswade Children's Centre has a volunteer who assists with crèches and helping with Stay and Play sessions. Two more volunteers will also start helping out in the near future.

Sandy Children's Centre has a volunteer that assists on a monthly basis at to set up, chat with parents and children, and help tidy away afterwards at their 'Dad and Me' group for children under 5 and their male carers.

They are currently advertising a new volunteer programme and are putting together a new volunteer pack.

Houghton Regis Children's Centre has between four and six volunteers at any one time. Their roles include early years worker, breastfeeding buddy and administration assistant. They volunteer where the group they are supporting is taking place, near their workplace or home, or at their children's school.

The Centre is continuously recruiting for volunteers with posters up at all

times and regular Facebook posts. They generally have a recruitment drive in January (to catch peoples New Year resolutions) and then again in June (around national Volunteer Week).

Stotfold and District Children's Centre has an average of four active volunteers a year. The volunteers help to run the Dad's and Tot's group and the Twins group, and some support the centre staff with running different groups.

The centre also has two work experience students who volunteered following their placements.

Over the past four years, eight people who volunteered at the centre went on to gain employment or move on to further studies. One volunteer became employed by the centre as an administrator.

The volunteers work with in Arlesey and Stotfold, either at the Children's Centre or in Arlesey Youth Centre, which is hired out for groups.

Dunstable South Children's Centre has two volunteers who both volunteer for seven hours per week.

Both volunteers assist the Early Years Service practitioners with the sessions and crèche, interact with the children, help with the planning plus observe and record. Both are single young mothers from the local area who used the centre themselves while pregnant. The centre plans to recruit more volunteers in the near future.

Stop Smoking Service

There are two volunteers engaged in supporting the Stop Smoking Service with group interventions and health promotion; mostly in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis areas.

There are future plans to broaden opportunities for volunteers in the Stop Smoking Service.

Social Care

Adult Learning Disabilities & Mental Health team

The Adult Disabilities and Mental Health team currently has:

- 2 volunteers at Silsoe Horticultural Centre who support with the maintenance development of the site and support with customer sessions. Both are experienced horticulturists and one is a gold medal winner at the Gardeners World Live show at the NEC.
- The team has received volunteering applications from a further 2 volunteers, both of whom also have horticultural qualifications.

- 1 volunteer at the Townsend Centre (LD) Houghton Regis. This is an ex-driver who supports with community activities when needed. The volunteer cannot currently drive the CBC fleet buses, although this is something that is being addressed.
- 1 volunteer at Allison House Older Peoples Care Home in Sandy. This is a husband of a staff member who supports maintaining the gardens.
- 2 volunteers at Ampthill Day Service (OP) who help with the general running of the centre, primarily being involved with the sessions for the older people.
- Planned for the future - looking to set up a volunteer project for Allison House and Abbotsbury (Biggleswade) in the coming months.

Housing Services team

Housing Services currently engage with 7 volunteers at Priory View in Dunstable, a residential housing scheme designed with communal space, for use by everyone.

The volunteers facilitate activities with the residents and wider community and provide reception support. There are plans to engage volunteers in a befriending service and library buddies schemes in the future.

Housing / Housing Associations

There are fifteen regular and a number of occasional volunteers engaged with our Housing Service; mainly based in Dunstable, but also in Houghton Regis, Leighton Buzzard, plus some villages e.g. Studham and Hockliffe.

The fifteen regular volunteers are committee members, so they regularly attend and contribute to discussions or participate in procurement interview panels, inspecting void properties, or arranging events like lunch clubs for other residents.

The service plans to continue to offer these volunteering opportunities in the future, and also to provide other opportunities that help improve the service to Housing customers, such as mystery shopping.

Volunteer Community Watch Schemes

There are 150 Street Watch and Speed Watch schemes with a total of over 4,000 volunteer members in Bedfordshire.

Community **Speed Watch** is a scheme to help people reduce traffic speeding through their neighbourhood. Excessive speed through neighbourhoods is one of the most common issues raised with Councillors and has an impact not only on road safety but on the quality of life for those residents that endure it.

The scheme enables volunteers to work within their community to raise awareness of the dangers of speeding and to help control the problem locally. Community Speed Watch can be set up in any ward, village or parish governed by 20/30/40 miles per hour speed limit.

Community Speed Watch seeks to promote safer driving in our local communities by educating rather than prosecuting individuals. Data collected by Community Speed Watch groups will be passed to Bedfordshire Police who may undertake speed checks and result in drivers being prosecuted.

Community Speed Watch requires a group of at least two trained volunteers to operate. Once registered, volunteers are offered a training course run by Bedfordshire Police that covers the use of the equipment, training in conflict resolution and an option for basic first aid.

The volunteers will then run the session noting the date, time, colour, make, model and registration number of any vehicles exceeding the speed limit. The results will then be forwarded to the Police who will then arrange for the registered keeper of the vehicle to be written to, informing them that the vehicle was detected exceeding the speed limit, giving the location, date and time. Persistent speeders will receive a second letter but on the third occasion they can expect further action to be taken by the police.

There are 575 SpeedWatch volunteers in Central Bedfordshire alone.

Street Watch volunteers help promote good citizenship and support a better neighbourhood by patrolling their own streets. They provide visible reassurance and appropriately engage in local issues that matter most to individual communities.

The purpose of Street Watch is to:

- prevent crime by increasing visibility and maintaining a caring and cohesive community.
- assist the police by promoting effective communication and the prompt reporting of activity.
- increase feelings of safety by promoting a sense of security and community spirit.

By being proactive, Street Watch supports vulnerable members of the community and vulnerable areas, making sure that people take pride in their communities.

Volunteers are asked to commit 2 hours every month to patrol, at timings of their choosing.

The presence and activities of Street Watch volunteers has a significant and positive impact on quality of life issues within communities. Street Watch members liaise with local police to encourage positive information sharing

and partnership working.

There are ten StreetWatch schemes operating in Central Bedfordshire, in Ampthill, Maulden, Barton Le Clay, Biggleswade, Shefford, Clifton, Caddington, Marston Moretaine, Houghton Regis and Harlington. StreetWatch volunteers are trained to take part in ongoing police operations such as Operation Cocoon, Fidelity, Beneke and Salcoats.

Emergency Planning

Bedfordshire CERT is a Community Emergency Response Team. CERT members are volunteers from a town, village or other local area, trained and willing to respond to an emergency and to provide support to increase resilience during emergency incidents such as fires, flooding, disease outbreak, major transport disruption or a loss of utilities.

There are currently approx. 400 volunteers involved in Bedfordshire CERT, and a comprehensive [information pack](#) has been developed for volunteers.

Education

The education service currently engages with 33 volunteers who make up independent education appeals panels in Central Bedfordshire.

Each panel is made up of three people who are independent of the Local Education Authority. The panel hears admissions appeals against Council decisions not to admit a child to a particular school, exclusion reviews against decisions by schools not to reinstate pupils who have been excluded, and appeals for children to receive free school transport.

Volunteer panel members come from all backgrounds, including people with no involvement in the delivery of education as well as people with teaching experience or who have been employed by a school or have experience of being a school governor.

Training is provided for new panel members, and support is available from a Clerk at all hearings who provides legal and procedural advice.

Challenges / opportunities

The Residents' Survey in September 2014 revealed that 62% of residents had not given voluntary help in the last 12 months, suggesting there is a large untapped resource of volunteer labour.

There are 58,360 people aged 55-75 in Central Bedfordshire. Whilst volunteering isn't, and should not be, restricted to this demographic it is none the less a vast reservoir of talent, skills and experience. We need to find a way of appealing to this group, particularly those who are retired or semi retired and may, therefore, have more time to commit.

The Volunteer Centres received 1,008 enquiries in 2014/15 – which is encouraging – both Centres have recently invested in the Connect system to improve the conversion of enquiry to actual placement.

We need to understand the barriers to volunteering. We know, for example, that insurance has and continues to be a constraint on volunteering. CBC was the first authority in the country to overcome insurance as a barrier to gritting on some parts of the highway. Whilst most insurance companies would not cover this activity, our dialogue with senior staff from a large insurance provider enabled a solution to be developed and three of our parish councils now have a delegation agreement to grit non priority roads. This model has since been adopted in many places across the country.

What more needs to be done?

Activity	Further Action	Resources required	Outcomes
Volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map the use of volunteers across CBC services including CBC Members and staff. Identify what works well in terms of recruitment, retention and recognition. Identify future need and opportunities to use volunteers. 	Within existing resources	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice in the use of volunteers, wherever it is found (other local authorities, community groups etc.) Identify the barriers to volunteering and how they can be overcome. 	Within existing resources	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a promotion / communication campaign targeting particular population groups (e.g. early retirees, young people, geographical communities, communities of interest) focussing on the benefits of volunteering – to individuals and communities. 	VCS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and develop a co ordinated approach by the Volunteer Centres to ensure the same experience across Central Bedfordshire. Explore systems and processes to match the skills and passions of potential volunteers with local volunteering opportunities. Improve mechanisms to track enquiries to ensure the majority are successfully matched with a volunteering opportunity. 	Within existing resources – CBC Members to shadow Volunteer Centres	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a ‘bank’ of volunteers who can support multiple projects, matching skills to need to fill gaps (interim volunteers). 	TBC	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and refresh the Volunteering Strategy to ensure it reflects the latest policy, best practice and local aspirations. 	TBC	

Activity	Further Action	Resources required	Outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an Armed Forces Volunteer project – seek funding from the national Covenant Grant. 	MOD	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a local ‘community impact bond’ for parishes/community groups to bid into. Projects could range from £250 – 2,500 (for example) that stimulate and sustain volunteers to tackle a local issue e.g. clean up an area, repair and re-paint a community facility, set up a youth club etc. Criteria to be developed, but projects must have the support of local Ward Members and be sustainable beyond the timescale of the specific funded activity. 	TBC	Clearing and cleaning up an area, or painting a children’s play area are not so much about the specific task, but as a mechanism to build community. Bringing people together and taking pride in their town/village promotes a sense of belonging and helps to nurture strong and resilient communities.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve engagement with faith communities to build social capital e.g. Inter Faith Week / Celebration of Faith and Belief 	Within existing resources	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate people in our most deprived communities helping themselves by exploring where community connectors could add value and contribute to building local resilience. 	VCS	

Appendix A

Barriers to volunteering

In order to increase the number of people that volunteer, it's important to understand the barriers that are preventing them from getting involved. The NCVO paper 'Helping Out - A National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving' explores the barriers to volunteering by surveying at the experience of people who have never volunteered or who have stopped volunteering. Of the 2,156 people that took part in the survey:

- One-fifth (21%) of the sample said they had never volunteered. A further 19% were not currently volunteering but had done so in the past.
- Time, or more specifically a lack of spare time, was the most commonly cited reason for not volunteering (or not volunteering regularly), reported by eight in ten respondents. Other significant reasons for not volunteering included being put off by bureaucracy (49%) and being worried about risk and liability (47%).
- Young people were most likely to be put off by a lack of spare time and not knowing how to get involved.
- Men were more likely than women to cite concerns about not having the right skills or being out of pocket as reasons for not getting involved, while women were more likely than men to cite concerns about threats to safety.
- Black and Asian people were particularly likely to cite being worried about not fitting in as a reason for not volunteering.

Those respondents who had not been formal volunteers in the last year, but who would have liked to help, were asked what stopped them doing so. They were presented with a list of potential barriers to volunteering and were asked to identify which, if any, were relevant to them.

Table 8.7 Reasons for not volunteering <i>Base: All respondents who were not formal volunteers in the last year, but would like to start to help. Don't know / refusal responses excluded</i>	Applies a lot %	Applies a little %	Does not apply at all %	Base (unweighted)
Not enough spare time	60	23	18	638
Put off by bureaucracy	17	32	51	632
Worried about risk / liability	16	31	53	635
Don't know how to find out about getting involved	12	27	61	636
Not got the right skills / experience	6	33	61	635
Wouldn't be able to stop once got involved	7	29	64	632
Worried about threat to safety	8	19	73	636
Worried I might end up out of pocket	6	19	75	637
Worried I wouldn't fit in with other people involved	4	20	77	638
Illness or disability	13	9	78	638
Feel I am too old	8	11	80	638
Family / partner wouldn't want me to	5	15	80	638
Worried about losing benefits	3	4	93	633

Appendix B

How barriers could be overcome

An appreciation of these issues is vital when developing future steps to overcome them, particularly the data that says 21% of those asked who said that nothing would make it easier for them to get involved. Considering these barriers, how can we overcome them and make volunteering more attractive so that more people want to get involved?

Barrier	Overcome by...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of time / spare time 	<p>While the lack of time is the most commonly cited reason for not volunteering, those who do volunteer often lead the busiest lives. They are more likely to be in work, have families and be involved with a myriad of different groups and organisations.</p> <p>Perhaps it is not shortage of time itself that is acting as a barrier, but the perception of not having enough time. Voluntary groups need to take some responsibility for this situation. The fear that if you volunteer you are going to be sucked in to a lifetime of service still lurks in the back of many people's minds, to the extent that saying 'no' is often seen as the best defence.</p> <p>Some organisations are now addressing this head on, looking to make it easier and less daunting for people to volunteer. For example, promoting micro-volunteering that people can access from their mobile devices and fit into an hour or so each day may be more palatable.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information • Worried about bureaucracy / liability / risk • Not fitting in 	<p>People are more likely to volunteer if they find the experience genuinely rewarding and enjoyable, so the employment methods used by infrastructure organisations that match suitable volunteers to opportunities need to ensure that this is the case.</p> <p>Volunteer opportunities should be matched to the strengths and needs of the population it will be serving and the activities the volunteers will be engaged in.</p> <p>Promotion / visibility</p> <p>In developing promotional activity, it's important to consider people's motivations for volunteering. People want to understand the volunteer roles and responsibilities, including the length of time they will be expected to participate.</p> <p>Promoting the benefits of volunteering is also important – ranging from benefits to society (making a difference, strengthening a community) to the volunteer's self interest (learning new skills, acquiring new knowledge, meeting new people). Including information on training and ongoing support the volunteers will receive may also help, particularly in terms of</p>

Barrier	Overcome by...
	<p>alleviating concerns around liability and risk. Visibility is crucial, particularly in terms of existing volunteers sharing their experiences. Visibility could also include broad outreach campaigns to raise awareness of voluntary organisations.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illness / disability / lack of skills 	<p>People who volunteer have better mental and physical health than those who do not volunteer. Volunteering has a positive effect on one's sense of purpose and autonomy, and increases a person's sense of happiness.¹</p> <p>By focusing more on promoting the benefits to people's overall health and wellbeing, more people may be encouraged to volunteer.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling too old 	<p>The Five Year Plan focuses specifically on the commitment to 'draw on the skills of our older residents to support their community and build social infrastructure, promoting social inclusion.'</p> <p>Some of the barriers to volunteering for older age groups have already been discussed above and it's important to identify ways to address some of these barriers and encourage older adults to volunteer. For example, they might be interested in volunteering because it will give them the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase their satisfaction with life by participating in an enjoyable and rewarding experience. • Increase their sense of connection to the community. • Feel productive. • Address a social issue in a way that is consistent with personal values. • Use their skills and share their experiences, interests and knowledge. • Learn new skills. • Learn more about youth. • Make new friends through the volunteer experience. • Leave a legacy for the younger generation. • Also identify ways to address logistical barriers such as transportation and the perceived expense of volunteering. Will volunteers be serving in a location that is easily accessible to their homes? Can the program provide any financial incentives to help cover the volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses?²

¹ Voluntary Action – South West Surrey

² Corporation for National and Community Service, '16 tips in recruiting adult volunteers' - Jason Scott, 2006

Barrier	Overcome by...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No incentive 	<p>Timebanking is a way for people to help others and be rewarded for it – in time. Members earn a ‘time credit’ for every hour they give to another member of the timebank. They can then exchange this time credit for any other member’s time.</p> <p>In July 2014, the Local Government Association (LGA) announced plans that council tax discounts should be given to the thousands of 'community heroes' who improve life in their areas by giving up their time to do things like help run local libraries, museums and leisure centres. Queries have been raised as to how much volunteering people would have to do before qualifying, and how this would be properly measured.</p> <p>Recognition</p> <p>Events like the council’s annual Cheering Volunteering awards and celebration event that recognises the fantastic work of all of the volunteers in Central Bedfordshire and thanks them for their voluntary activity should not be underestimated. Feedback from these events suggests that the volunteers welcome some recognition for all they do for their local voluntary groups and communities.</p> <p>It’s also important to recognise that a lot of volunteering is informal – the volunteer might not even see it as volunteering. Many people already help their elderly neighbours for instance or litter-pick their roads and parks without any incentive and without ever seeing this as volunteering. There should be a focus on helping to encourage this kind of behaviour and target this kind of informal support at specific local issues.</p>

Appendix C

Measuring the impact of volunteering - options

Methods of measurement

1. Satisfaction

Research suggests that determining levels of volunteer satisfaction is mostly done through surveys of volunteers on how they have benefited from the experience, what they have achieved and whether they will do it again.

[Project Re:action](#) was a joint project between national youth volunteering charity Youth Action Network, and the Centre for Social Action at De Montfort University. The project received a research grant over three years from the Big Lottery Fund.

The project aim was to find out more about the experience of young people who volunteer, the difference that full participation makes to the volunteering experience, the most successful ways of promoting participation within organisations and the wider benefits to and impact on the community of this type of activity.

Project Re:Action used survey methodology with 920 young people, aged 14 – 25, from across Youth Action Network's member organisations, representing age, ethnic and gender diversity. They also surveyed 40 youth workers. Qualitative fieldwork was carried out with seven Youth Action Network member organisations. This consisted of a total of 16 discussion groups with young people, two discussion groups with workers and eight discussion groups with community members.

The project conclusions highlighted some key recommendations; such as volunteering organisations should enable young people to set their own agendas for volunteering projects, that needs identified by young people which do not fit within government priorities or agendas should not be dismissed, and that organisations should continue to invest in structures and systems to enable young people to influence the decisions that affect them.

Toolkits

Toolkits are available that detail best practice methodology in measuring the impact of volunteering.

A [Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit](#) (VIAT) can be purchased from the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) that can be used by anyone who involves volunteers in their organisation or coordinates their activities and helps organisations assess the difference that volunteering makes. The handbook has step by step guidance on how to assess the impact of volunteering, and provides a range of tools and templates in a free downloadable resource pack. NCVO also offer [training programmes](#) in how to use the toolkit to an organisation's best advantage. [Volunteer](#)

[Now](#) has delivered training on the VIAT to 54 groups since 2010, and has supported a number of organisations to produce impact reports.

One of these organisations was [Belfast City Council](#), who Volunteer Now supported to carry out an evaluation of volunteer involvement across Community Centres and Play Centres using the Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit.

Recommendations were then formed by considering the responses of the volunteers, staff and service users who have experience of volunteer services managed by Belfast City Council Community Centres / Play Centres. These included a review of Volunteer Management Practices, training of staff in volunteer management practices, recruitment of new volunteers and improving the relationship between staff and volunteers.

The [Volunteering for Stronger Communities](#) project was funded by The Big Lottery Fund (BIG), and measured the impact on individuals of them having contact with a Volunteer Centre and then engaging in some kind of volunteering.

The evaluation of the programme tracked the change for the individual in a number of areas, including employability, health and wellbeing.

Run in 15 Volunteer Centres projects across England, the core aim of the programme was to use volunteering to help communities to tackle the effects of the economic downturn and subsequent public spending reductions whilst building and strengthening the capacity of the volunteering infrastructure to provide more effective support to communities in future.

Project activity included:

- volunteer mentoring
- training voluntary volunteer coordinators
- working with volunteer involving organisations to develop new opportunities appropriate for people new to volunteering
- bite-sized introductory sessions about volunteering for hard to reach individuals
- workshops to develop employability.

After two years, the projects finished between October and December 2013.

The project was evaluated by an independent team from Sheffield Hallam University which concluded that there was a 'clear 'programme effect' with participants...indicating that VSC support made a difference to positive outcomes experienced.'

Volunteer Scotland have produced a publication called '[Measuring the impact of volunteering](#)', which helps determine what is meant by 'impact', what to think about before starting an evaluation, methods that can be used and resources that can help measure impact.

2. £ 'value' of volunteering

The three Citizen's Advice (CA) organisations in Central Bedfordshire use Office of National Statistics (ONS) hourly rate calculations to work out the £ value of their volunteers. In 2015/16, the total number of CA volunteer hours for the year was 54,704 and the total ONS £ values attributed to these numerous volunteer roles for the year was £896,012. This gives a £ value of £16.38 per hour for CA volunteers in 2015/16. (See Appendix D)

NB / In terms of publicising positive performance, the 'Impact and Evaluation' page on the [Volunteering Matters](#) website is a good example that could be considered on the council website.

Appendix D – Citizen’s Advice - £ value of volunteers 2015/16

			Mid Beds			Leighton Linlade			Dunstable		
Roles	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings Equivalent Roles	Local Hourly Rate	Hours per Week	Weeks per Year	Local Annual Value	Hours per Week	Weeks per Year	Local Annual Value	Hours per Week	Weeks per Year	Local Annual Value
Generalist Adviser	Associate professional and technical occupations	£17.31	132	52	£118,608	248	52	£222,884	71	52	£63,562
Caseworker	Professional occupations	£21.41	0	52	£0	0	52	£0	0	52	£0
Trainee Adviser	Administrative and secretarial occupations	£11.73	28	52	£17,173	65	52	£39,413	7	52	£4,504
Gateway Assessor	Associate professional and technical occupations	£17.31	141	52	£126,709	0	52	£0	199	52	£179,262
Other Advisory role	Associate professional and technical occupations	£17.31	13	52	£12,048	0	52	£0	0	52	£0
Advice Session Supervisor	Professional occupations	£21.41	0	52	£0	0	52	£0	0	52	£0
Manager reporting to trustee board	Managers and Senior Officials	£24.48	0	52	£0	0	52	£0	0	52	£0
Other manager	Professional occupations	£21.41	0	52	£0	0	52	£0	0	52	£0
Financial capability worker	Professional occupations	£21.41	6	52	£6,166	0	52	£0	0	52	£0

Social policy worker	Associate professional and technical occupations	£17.31	7	52	£6,647	0	52	£0	0	52	£0
Volunteer supervisor	Associate professional and technical occupations	£17.31	0	52	£0	0	52	£0	15	52	£13,294
Support function	Administrative and secretarial occupations	£11.73	69	52	£42,228	0	52	£0	32	52	£19,425
Trustee	Managers and Senior Officials	£24.48	13	52	£17,038	6	52	£7,050	0	52	£0
Guidance tutor	Associate professional and technical occupations	£17.31	0	52	£0	0	52	£0	0	52	£0
TOTAL			410	21,320	£346,617	318	16,536	£269,347	324	16,848	£280,048

Total hours per year – 54,704 Total value - £896,012 = £16.38 per hour

Key Contacts:

Service Area	Name	Contact
Business and Regeneration	Vicky Hlomuka	
Children's Centres	Lesley Talbot	
Community Safety	Jeanette Keyte	
Community Transport	Nick Coolan	
Countryside & Access	Steve Halton	
Education	Sue Barrow	
Emergency Planning	Mark Conway	
Finance / Insurance		
Housing	Brett Douglas / Lucy Tuttle	
Libraries	Nicola Avery / Nimat Jaffer	
Public Health	Martin Westerby	
Social Care	John King	
Stop Smoking Service	Rachael Holland	
Youth Support	Angela Perry	
Waste	Alexandra Foreman	



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