



COVID-19, Social Capital and Volunteering

Policy Overview

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Summary

The community response to COVID-19 is worth learning from

The community response to COVID-19 has led policymakers and practitioners to ask how to build upon this outpouring of goodwill and better prepare for any next wave of voluntary action. Supporting volunteering and participation is viewed as particularly important in the context of evidence showing changes in how people get involved – and helping organisations to prepare for – and data suggesting that there is a longer-term, albeit shallow, decline in levels of volunteering.

Since late 2021, the International Public Policy Observatory (IPPO) has been looking at what can be done to help policymakers respond to the pandemic. We have undertaken a systematic review of the literature, stakeholder workshops, and a review of the policy landscape and have sought to address several questions. These include what incentivises people to get involved, including helping organisations deliver public services; how important is volunteering infrastructure, particularly at the local level; what is the importance of flexibility; and how do broader relationships between government and civil society frame or shape volunteering?

Future policy and practice: themes for action

Alongside our systematic review, we propose five themes where opportunities for policy and practice might strengthen volunteering in the UK. Example policies in the appendix illustrate our themes. They are:

- **Leadership and development of volunteering strategy.** Recommendations include the need for governments to develop a clear strategy and purpose for volunteering, encourage and support better coordination of volunteers and between volunteer-involving agencies, prepare for the role of volunteers in emergencies and encourage the creation of high-quality, distinct volunteering roles.
- **Thinking differently about volunteering: inclusive, flexible opportunities.** Recommendations include creating more accessible and inclusive opportunities, supporting policies that help people to find the time to volunteer and enabling organisations to focus on the wellbeing of volunteers. More flexible funding for volunteer-involving organisations will likely lead to more flexible volunteering opportunities.
- **Strengthening support and infrastructure for volunteering.** Recommendations include committing resources to support volunteers and volunteer management, a greater focus on providing a good quality volunteer experience, and modernising management by investing in digital, such as passport schemes
- **Recognising and celebrating the value of volunteering.** Not taking volunteers for granted is a clear message from the pandemic. Recommendations include setting procedures to record and recognise the value of volunteering and ensuring that leaders thank and celebrate volunteers.
- **Better coordination and dialogue between organisations in the volunteering ecosystem.** Some of the most important learning from the pandemic is the critical role of volunteer coordination. Recommendations include engagement and support for local infrastructure, mapping needs and assets in local communities, and taking approaches that build levels of trust in and among local communities.

Mobilising communities: learning from different approaches across the UK

Different parts of the UK take different approaches to volunteering. Mobilising and managing volunteers and support for volunteer-involving organisations range from enabling or hands-off approaches to strategic policy frameworks linking volunteering outcomes to national policy. Common themes emerged from the pandemic emerged, not least the importance of emergency funding – and a desire to not return to pre-pandemic levels of bureaucracy.

Conclusion: community engagement made a difference

Perhaps the most important learning from the pandemic is to centre the role of communities in any future response. Our review suggests that options go beyond simply creating the conditions for volunteering and participation: policymakers have a range of options for more actively nurturing, at times mobilising and shaping, and then providing support and infrastructure for volunteering and participation. Preparedness is also vital: the most effective action emerged from communities that already had relationships with communities and infrastructure.

Part 1 – Background

The community response to the COVID-19 pandemic has put volunteering and participation into the spotlight. When the pandemic struck, many people wanted to help and support others. Almost 400,000 volunteered for the NHS Volunteer Responders programme, completing 1.3 million tasks.¹ Local news media reported thousands of volunteers sewing scrubs for healthcare workers.² Others helped in their neighbourhoods, providing food, car journeys to hospitals or making visits to ease the loneliness of people isolated on their own in lockdowns. Social media played a crucial role with an explosion of local WhatsApp and other groups to coordinate the emergence of an estimated 4,300 mutual aid groups.³ Aside from individual acts of kindness and support, the pandemic highlighted the role of volunteering as a mechanism for building communities.

The community response to COVID-19 has led policymakers and practitioners to ask how to build upon this outpouring of goodwill and better prepare for the next wave of voluntary action. From the start, it was clear that the strength of mutual support and social capital would make a big difference – and that it was likely to be very unevenly distributed.⁴ This overview reviews some of the policy steps that governments took at every level – and draws on some of the lessons that may be relevant to future crises. For example:

- What incentivises people to engage with volunteering? How can people be supported to do more?
- The surge of volunteering proved a challenge for many public services – so how can public services be better prepared to make the most of the public’s desire to help out – whether in hospitals or schools?
- Our evidence shows the importance of local infrastructure to match volunteers and needs and support people to get involved. So how can local infrastructure be better supported so that the enthusiasm for and access to volunteering can be sustained?
- Sensible measures to assess volunteers often became a significant barrier when the crisis was intense – so how can red tape and bureaucracy be eased during periods of crisis?
- Evidence not just in the UK but globally shows that the quality of relationships between local government and civil society makes a big difference – so what can be done to make these relationships more trusting and reciprocal?

Why do we need to strengthen support for volunteering?

Volunteering and participation – or [social action](#) – are integral to welfare provision in the UK. Often under the radar, volunteering plays a substantial role alongside the state. Some now argue that getting more people involved in their communities, more often and in more places, will solve problems including inequality, loneliness and low levels of public trust. Others have pointed to a slow decline in volunteering rates, worsened by a post-pandemic slump.⁵ Policymakers are often keen to increase the *quantity* of volunteering and participation, while practitioners focus more on improving the *quality* and *impact* of volunteering.⁶ Many argue that a better-resourced infrastructure will help volunteers make a bigger difference – or, at the very least, prepare volunteer-involving organisations for future mobilisation.⁷

Strengthening support for volunteering and participation will be critical to both aims in a changing landscape. The pandemic accelerated broader structural and cultural changes in volunteering for which not all organisations are prepared. How people choose to give their time is changing: more episodic, less committed, informal, task-based, and digital. Finally, many argue that how we engage volunteers has to change, particularly the need to be more inclusive. If organisations, including statutory bodies, want to involve volunteers in the future, policymakers need to consider effective practice for engaging volunteers.

IPPO

Since late 2021, the International Public Policy Observatory (IPPO) has been looking at what can be done to help policymakers. We have since sought to synthesise and share evidence about what works in responding to the pandemic. We published a first overview late that year and have followed up with a systematic review published now, alongside a series of roundtables and discussions linking people across the UK. Here we provide an overview of the policy landscape, including examples from all parts of the UK, to complement the systematic review provided by EPPI.

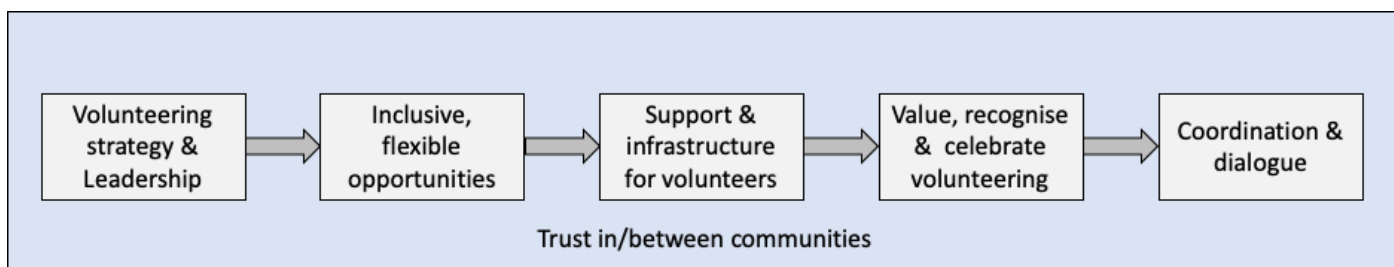
Part 2 - Policy and practice options for governments

Introduction

Government policies to support and enable volunteering are longstanding across many jurisdictions.⁸ Policymakers have frequently sought to influence volunteering by covering areas including recruitment and retention, roles and responsibilities, management and support, and recognition and reward.⁹ Reasons cited include improved delivery of public services, community cohesion and volunteering as a public health intervention.¹⁰ This has, at times, been an instrumental approach, with critics arguing that too often, governments see volunteering as “a panacea for whatever society’s current ills happen to be”.¹¹

In recent years there has been a steady growth of evidence showing the positive impacts of volunteering on public service outcomes and for the volunteers themselves. Evidence suggests that volunteers can gain skills and experience and benefit from improvements in wellbeing and relationships. Based on our review, we have set out five thematic areas for action:

- Leadership and development of volunteering strategy
- Thinking differently about volunteering: inclusive, flexible opportunities
- Strengthening support and infrastructure for volunteering
- Recognising and celebrating the value of volunteering
- Better coordination and dialogue between organisations in the volunteering ecosystem



Our review further suggests that these areas for action need to be underpinned by broader policies that support trust in and between communities.

1. Show leadership: make a strategic commitment to involving volunteers

Policymakers should develop a clear strategy and purpose for volunteering. Governments need a strategic approach to mobilise, lead and manage volunteers. This starts with national policies that state why volunteering is important and what can be achieved – such as the Scottish government’s national outcomes framework¹² or NHS England’s guide to recruiting and managing volunteers.¹³ Intent should include, but not be limited to, public service delivery. For public sector volunteering, policymakers might wish to explore confidence-building measures such as workforce charters in [England](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#).

These national frameworks set an important context for regional or local approaches that can implement policy intentions.¹⁴ Initiatives such as [Cities of Service](#) illustrate how place-based leadership can work. The City of Richmond’s volunteering strategy shows how volunteering policy can be implemented locally via an action plan, which has been called for in Scotland.^{15 16} Public service areas such as police or fire and rescue might usefully learn from programmes such as [HelpForce](#), which aims to transform the role of volunteering in health and social care.

Encourage and support better coordination of volunteers and between volunteer-involving agencies. Visible senior leadership responsible for volunteering is essential. This requires clarity about how and why volunteer engagement is integral to delivering mission and outcomes and who is responsible for volunteering. NCVO has suggested the creation of [volunteering champions](#) in the public sector.

Prepare for the role of volunteers in emergencies. Communicating the role of the community in emergency preparedness is also necessary. For example, Ready Scotland’s [Playing your part](#) and the UK Cabinet Office’s guidance on [Preparing for emergencies](#) provide guidance on the role of volunteers. There

may, however, be a role for policy in going further: some have argued that the voluntary sector's involvement in Local Resilience Forums (and resilience planning more generally) is variable and may require strengthening.^{17 18} For national governments, there may be scope to move beyond simply enabling volunteering to take a more active role in coordination alongside volunteering agencies. Examples included support for the [Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership](#).

Policymakers can encourage the creation of high-quality volunteering opportunities that are distinct from paid roles. A clear rationale for volunteers can create a strong role identity.¹⁹ There are continuing tensions between unions and employers around issues such as job substitution, while others have expressed concern that volunteering opportunities can be exploitative – tensions that can arise from poorly designed roles. Policymakers must ensure that volunteering roles are distinctive from paid work and emphasise that volunteering is not simply unpaid labour. Good opportunities are clear about how volunteers work alongside paid staff and how volunteering is mutually beneficial.²⁰ Options include the creation of charters such as #iwill's six principles for high-quality youth social action are a good guide²¹, or Canada's [Code for Volunteer Involvement](#). Many organisations highlight the need to empower volunteers and treat them equivalent to paid staff.

2. Thinking differently about volunteering: inclusive, flexible opportunities

People want to get involved, so make it easier for them to find the right opportunity. Making it easier for people to find suitable volunteering opportunities requires effective brokerage. Conversely, organisations can be supported to identify appropriate offers of help more effectively from those that typically arise in a crisis, as exemplified by Volunteering Matters' [CharityConnect](#) service. In recent years brokerage has focused on the role of national digital platforms such as [NHS Volunteer Responders](#), [Reach](#) or [Do-It](#). However, volunteering bodies have highlighted the importance of local infrastructure, such as [Team London](#). It has been argued that infrastructure is more than brokerage and that more emphasis should be attributed to associated functions, such as supported volunteering, particularly if widening access is a policy purpose.²²

Help to create conditions that make volunteering more accessible and inclusive. Policies that support people to volunteer recognise that opportunities are often limited by the environment, not the characteristics of the individual – exemplified by the social model of disability. Policy proposals worth exploring include the creation of [access to volunteering funds](#), similar to the [Access To Work](#) scheme, to pay for practical support such as training or transport or workplace adjustments. Other suggestions include a role for volunteering in the [National Disability Strategy](#) and training for volunteer-involving organisations on the social model of disability.²³

Remove barriers to volunteering. With the increase in informal volunteering, a message from the pandemic is to minimise policy or practice that adds to the formality of volunteering.²⁴ In Northern Ireland, there is a specific call to retain lower levels of bureaucracy from the pandemic period.²⁵

Other proposals include more flexibility around [volunteer expenses](#), including remuneration. These have included recommendations in the Holliday Review of Full Time Social Action and incentive schemes, including [council tax discounts](#) and [free concert tickets](#).²⁶ Amid current concerns around the cost of living, including fuel costs for volunteer drivers, there are [calls to raise the amounts that can be paid to volunteers](#). Any policy change in this area inevitably moving beyond reasonable expenses needs to consider the unintended risks of creating contractual relationships. These, in effect, turn volunteers into paid staff.

Support policies that help people to find the time to volunteer. Employers are seen to play an important role via [employer-supported volunteering](#). Policy proposals include mandating the right to ask for up to three days of paid volunteering leave for those working in large organisations or the public sector.²⁷ A related policy idea is to place volunteering as a trustee on the same legal footing as jury service or acting as a school governor. This creates a statutory duty to time off work.²⁸ This narrower proposal would be limited to an estimated 700,000 trustees.²⁹ Finally, ongoing concerns around access to volunteering by those claiming UC/JSA highlight challenges around the consistency of policy implementation. The CSJ,

therefore, proposes an alternative ‘asset-based’ approach that enables work coaches to instruct claimants to volunteer for at least ten hours per week – although previous experience suggests that there is a risk this is perceived as forced volunteering.^{30 31}

Enable adaptive organisations and flexibility around volunteering opportunities. Proposals that can help to create more flexible volunteering opportunities that fit how people want to get involved are seen by organisations as essential. Several reviews highlight the ‘get things done’ environment created by the pandemic – and a desire to retain this culture.^{32 33} Organisations, including The Scouts, are thinking differently about inclusive volunteering by testing ideas such as role sharing, rotas and keeping in touch.³⁴

Provide funding flexibility. All the UK national reviews of pandemic volunteering highlighted the importance of emergency funding in building capacity to deal with volunteers. Policies that can help volunteer-involving organisations to adapt more quickly and respond to changing circumstances are likely to help, such as flexible funding arrangements. Much can arguably be learned by the pivot of many UK trusts and foundations to unrestricted grant funding during COVID-19, including funding for organisation core costs rather than specific projects.^{35 36} For statutory bodies, the learning from COVID-era funding might be a rebalancing away from contract funding towards grants for activities that aim to build social capital.³⁷

Support the wellbeing of volunteers. There is substantial evidence that volunteering can contribute to wellbeing.³⁸ However, organisations must first create safe, welcoming environments where everyone can volunteer. During the pandemic, worries about health were an often-cited reason for stopping volunteering – concerns included problems of burnout and organisations expecting too much of volunteers.³⁹ Support from peers and managers was found to help.^{40 41} The creation of digital or remote volunteering has enabled organisations such as the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to retain volunteers by allowing people to volunteer safely from home.⁴²

3. Invest in volunteer management and support

Commit resources to support volunteers and volunteer management. Investment in the capacity of organisations to engage and manage volunteers is widely perceived to be critical, with concerns that volunteers are too often seen as a free (i.e. cost-free) resource. This includes investment in activities such as training or accreditation and administrative support.^{43 44} Volunteer Scotland has argued that crucial learning from the pandemic includes the need for investment in volunteer management and the rapid sharing of up-to-date information from government.⁴⁵ Volunteer Edinburgh’s [Volunteer Wiki](#) was highlighted as good practice.

Invest in providing a good quality volunteer experience. Amid considerable interest in volunteer recruitment, some argue that more attention should focus on retention and addressing the factors related to how people start or stop volunteering.⁴⁶ With some evidence that volunteering stops when it becomes less enjoyable (and evidence that volunteering is becoming less enjoyable), this highlights the importance of good support and infrastructure so that volunteers stay and gain more experience – potentially leading them to take on new opportunities.^{47 48}

Modernise management and create new opportunities by investing in digital. Although there is evidence that more people are seeking to volunteer digitally, many organisations argue for the need to widen technology in engaging and managing volunteers and adapting to new challenges.^{49 50} This includes recruitment platforms, passport schemes, and impact reporting.⁵¹ Digital volunteering opportunities such as befriending can meet interest in task-based opportunities. Still, it has been argued that these can be exclusionary or too transactional, undermining the benefits of getting involved.^{52 53}

Consider volunteer passport schemes. Proposals for a national volunteer passport scheme proposed by the Kruger review have been argued as a way to build upon the volunteer response to the pandemic. Still, different views remain of what a passport scheme might involve and whether a national scheme is needed.⁵⁴ Many local schemes currently operate and may provide an alternative model or, at the very least, the building blocks for a national scheme.⁵⁵ A scoping exercise for a volunteer passport covering Swansea

and Neath Port Talbot area highlighted that schemes are rarely a one size fits all solution, with different understandings and expectations of any scheme. [Don't just say thank you](#)

Put in place procedures to record and recognise the value of volunteering. Volunteer reward, recognition and celebration are embedded in many strategies to strengthen volunteering. Volunteering benefits people, organisations and broader society – but this isn't always captured in how organisations report impact or how leaders celebrate success. Policymakers should consider whether existing approaches capture the value of volunteering, particularly at the local scale. Proposals from the Kruger Review and several think tanks include better measurement of volunteering and civil society at the national level (such as the production of satellite national accounts) and a requirement for local authorities to measure participation at the local level.^{56 57}

Organisations should put processes in place to track and assess the impact of volunteers. Policymakers may want to think about the role of regulators and funders in understanding how organisations involve volunteers, such as CQC, in health and social care.⁵⁸

Ensure that leaders thank and celebrate volunteers: organisations need to ensure that volunteers are meaningfully thanked for their role, while many argue that more can be done to celebrate volunteering. Recognition that volunteers are more than unpaid labour, and a real connection with the community, helps volunteers feel supported.⁵⁹ Many propose to celebrate volunteers through the honours system better. It is unclear what could be added to what is already a comprehensive system or the [Points of Light](#) scheme operated by the UK government.⁶⁰ Other suggestions include a dedicated bank holiday to recognise volunteers and the inclusion of volunteering in recommendations by the [UK Commission on COVID Commemoration](#).

Don't take volunteers for granted: one of the themes to emerge from the pandemic was not to take the role of communities for granted. There is substantial evidence of burnout post-pandemic. Learning from other emergency responses suggests we must be realistic about sustaining community involvement.

4. Coordination is more important than mobilisation

Resource local volunteering infrastructure: At the local level, the pandemic saw renewed recognition and support for the coordinating role of local infrastructure bodies for volunteering and the voluntary sector. These are critical in developing local volunteering that is close to users, which might help broaden those involved in volunteering.⁶¹ Local infrastructure is uniquely knowledgeable but often feels ignored compared to national, top-down initiatives (about which there is still unresolved tension). Volunteer Scotland has argued that key learning from the pandemic is the need for specific funding for local volunteering infrastructure – not just volunteer-involving organisations.⁶²

Coordination is critical: policies that support and encourage coordination have been found to be necessary, whether formal or informal. Coordination helped to reduce confusion and duplication of effort. Examples include the [Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership](#), the [COVID-19 Community Champion Scheme](#) and the creation of the [National Emergencies Trust](#) in 2017.

Understand need and provision in local communities. Volunteer Scotland has argued that better coordination between central and local bodies will result from the clearer demarcation of roles and responsibilities around volunteering. Evaluation of the response to the pandemic in Wales has highlighted the importance of building solid relationships between statutory and community organisations to withstand future shocks better.⁶³ Proposals here include mapping community needs, assets and support so local leaders clearly understand where they can draw support. Examples include the [London Civic Strength Index](#) and the [Coop Community Wellbeing Index](#).

Trust people and organisations: volunteering is often ad hoc and informal, rooted in trust and reciprocity. Efforts to build trust and reciprocity at the community level, such as through events or community development, may encourage voluntary action.^{64 65} Similarly, empowering volunteers and giving people a sense of agency strengthens motivation and commitment.^{66 67 68}

Conclusion: invest in the wider social infrastructure that is the basis for community life

A common call to action in recent reports is for policymakers to invest in the social infrastructure that is the warp and weft of communities. Village halls, playing fields, libraries, day centres, community clubs and similar amenities often provide a basis for people coming together and fostering trust and reciprocity. The Bennett Institute argued that good quality, well-maintained places are critical to social participation, highlighting a link between levels of engagement and deprivation.⁶⁹ Proposals include a more rigorous assessment of the role of social infrastructure in shaping outcomes such as social capital, and creating funds targeted at developing and maintaining social infrastructure. The latter includes proposals from the [Community Wealth Fund Alliance](#) to invest dormant assets in social infrastructure in the most deprived areas of the UK.⁷⁰

Part 3 - What were the key policies, funding announcements and interventions from across the UK during the pandemic?

Throughout the review process, IPPO has been mapping the key policies, funding announcements and interventions regarding social capital through the lens of volunteering across the UK nations. This section presents a high-level summary. Whilst it is not an exhaustive review of all the available information about social capital and volunteering during this period, it seeks to provide an overview of the policy landscapes across the UK.

England – summary

Volunteering strategy and leadership: the civil society strategy

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced major shifts to how we live, with a renewed importance of social capital to pandemic recovery strategies – from levels of trust to the role of civil society. Volunteering is no exception, with the scale, patterns and nature of volunteering changing during the different phases of the pandemic.

This partly reflects a hands-off government policy approach that has created an enabling environment and culture for social action (rather than just volunteering).^{71 72} It has focused on encouraging people to undertake social action, mainly promoting youth social action through programmes such as NCS. Its approach has often been to test new ideas or thinking, such as through the Centre for Social Action.⁷³

Thinking differently about volunteering: NHS Volunteer Responders

When the first UK-wide lockdown was announced in March 2020, this period was marked by unprecedented interest in volunteering. NHSVR was launched in April 2020 as part of the national response to COVID-19. It was delivered by the Royal Voluntary Service via the GoodSAM app and was one of several national and local initiatives to respond to those in need of volunteers and the desire to volunteer. Half a million people applied to the NHS Volunteer Responders Scheme (NHSVR) just two days after the first UK-wide lockdown was announced. Six days later, recruitment for the scheme was paused when applications reached three-quarters of a million.

The role of NHSVR has dominated much of the post-pandemic narrative about the role of volunteers. Although many aspects of the initiative were successful, and the speed and scale of mobilisation impressive, some subsequent more sceptical evaluations suggest that a different approach is needed in the future. This includes emphasising local infrastructure and volunteering based on longer-term relationships rather than short-term tasks.^{74 75}

Strengthened support: advice and support on volunteering safely

Locally, infrastructure groups, including Volunteer Centres and Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) saw an increase and a flurry of activity, including the rapid growth of mutual aid groups. The latter were often established to respond to the need for support and the desire for people to volunteer. To better support the growth of these groups, guidance was issued nationally through the Charity Commission and NHS England, as well as locally through local infrastructure organisations and local authorities. Mutual Aid Groups also developed their own support networks.⁷⁶

This period was marked by ‘high volunteer enthusiasm’, with volunteering being both sporadic and formal in nature. This reflected the state of flux the nation was in with many unknowns, including how the pandemic would impact people and how volunteering would support them with their needs whilst subject to public health measures and packages of support. By the Summer of 2020, fewer mutual aid groups were being set up, and volunteering activity slowed down. However, this could, in part, be because mutual aid groups formalised advertising volunteering opportunities. For example, the NHSVR was expanded to support frontline health and social care staff at hospitals needing resources and capacity to continue delivering critical care during the pandemic.

Better coordination, strengthened support: the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership

A second important initiative during the pandemic was support for the [Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership](#) (VCSEP), which substantially expanded its work. Co-chaired by the British Red Cross and NAVCA, the umbrella body for local voluntary sector infrastructure organisations, the VCSEP played a significant role in mobilising and coordinating national and local organisations. This activity was partly funded by central government, with the VCSEP re-granting funds to local infrastructure to help them adapt to the new circumstances of the pandemic.⁷⁷ This included the National Volunteering Coordination Cell, led by Volunteering Matters. This monitored volunteer capacity across the charity sector to help match supply and demand. It provided a single point of contact for government and statutory agencies for large-scale national requests for volunteer help.

Strengthened support: emergency COVID-19 financial support

During this period, the UK announced a £750m package of support to ensure the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector could continue their work during the COVID-19 outbreak. This included £200m for the Coronavirus Community Support Fund and an additional £150m from dormant bank and building society accounts. Subsequent evaluation suggests that this was important in building the sector's capacity to adapt to the challenge of the pandemic in terms of new services or increased volunteer mobilisation and management.⁷⁸

At a local level, examples included the London Community Response, a single application gateway coordinated by London Funders.⁷⁹ This approach typified the agile policy-making and funding responses that many argue were an example of how COVID-19 disrupted existing practices.

Better coordination: vaccine volunteers

In 2021, more than 100,000 people donated around two million hours to help with the vaccine rollout. Towards the end of 2020, volunteering shifted again in line with the UK moving into the broader response phase of the pandemic with volunteering guidance adjusting to reflect how people could volunteer safely and effectively with the introductions of local lockdowns. In December 2020, volunteering peaked again with the Government and NHS announcing their ambition to recruit volunteers in their tens of thousands to meet the scale and demand of the vaccine rollout in line with the list of nine priority groups.

The NHS, Royal Voluntary Service and St John Ambulance all worked together to recruit volunteers on a national scale and those recruited locally to boost the capacity to deliver the vaccine rollout. It should not be underestimated how local volunteering organisations played a key role in supporting the vaccine rollout, including recruiting and placing volunteers alongside national organisations such as the NHS. Since the vaccine rollout and the easing of public health measures, the number of volunteers has reduced, with them asked to either step back or signposted to other volunteering opportunities.

Volunteering leadership and strategy: post-pandemic proposals

In September 2020, Prime Minister Boris Johnson commissioned Danny Kruger MP to develop proposals to maximise the role of volunteers, community groups, faith groups, charities and social enterprises to contribute actively to the government's levelling up agenda. In this report were 20 recommendations, based on the evidence submitted to Danny Kruger MP, that created a framework for how government might reframe its relationship with local communities. The framework is not legally binding, and none of the recommendations, despite their limitations, are yet to be endorsed by the government.

Northern Ireland – a summary

Strengthened support: emergency funding

During the pandemic, a COVID-19 Charities Fund was created by the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland to provide financial support. In its first phase, it was delivered by the National Lottery Community Fund. In December 2020, a second funding phase was announced, administered by Community Finance Ireland.

A £7m COVID Social Enterprise Fund was opened in September 2020 to assist social enterprises affected by the pandemic. This was to help organisations to manage cash flows. Grants of up to £75,000 were available.

Scotland – a summary

Volunteering strategy and leadership: the civil society strategy

The approach to volunteering by the Scottish government is shaped by its national outcomes framework for volunteering.⁸⁰ This sets out a series of volunteering principles (such as flexibility and support) and outcomes (such as volunteering is valued, supported and enabled), which are then linked to the government's broader outcomes framework.

National and local leaders relied on the flexibility and agility of volunteer-involving organisations as key collaborators in service delivery. These helped to ensure needs were met for those shielding, the elderly, children and young people who were not physically in school, and for communities already struggling with poverty and insecurity. These volunteer-involving organisations range from voluntary sector organisations with existing volunteer programmes to mutual aid groups. In the latter, individuals volunteered through informal groups, often organised via social media platforms. Individuals also volunteered informally to help those outside of their families to support their local community.

Thinking differently about volunteering: Scotland Cares

Much like that in England, an extensive volunteering campaign was begun in the early months of the crisis called Scotland Cares. The campaign was put in place by the Scottish government in partnership with NHS Scotland, Volunteer Scotland and the British Red Cross. The intention was to ensure that a large pool of volunteers could be identified to be called upon to support the COVID response at community level as needed. Scotland Cares encouraged potential volunteers to sign up with either the British Red Cross or Volunteer Scotland, both organisations with extensive experience of supporting volunteering. Through the campaign, there were more than 60,000 sign-ups of potential volunteers with Volunteer Scotland (35,262) and the British Red Cross (25,172).

Volunteer Scotland and the Scottish Government undertook research to understand volunteering during the crisis. They found that many organisations with existing formal volunteering opportunities could not continue in the same way. Instead, community support was met with volunteers within new mutual aid organisations and through informal volunteering on an individual level. The view of respondents in that research, therefore, found that the number of people who signed up for Scotland Cares outstripped the number of formal placements available; instead, many of those individuals seeking to volunteer were connected to non-formal organisations.

Better coordination, strengthened support: working with Third Sector Interfaces

As with other nations, the voluntary sector and community social action during COVID-19 played an outsized role in helping communities cope with the crisis in Scotland. One of the essential structural features of the Scottish third sector are Third Sector Interfaces, which have been in place since 2011. Third Sector Interfaces provide a single point of contact for support and advice for the third sector in local areas, and there is one in every local authority in Scotland. They are member organisations, often CVS organisations. During the COVID-19 crisis, they were key partners for local authorities in designing new emergency response systems and helplines. They helped coordinate some of the activities to connect those in need with assistance from various other community-based organisations or volunteers.

Strengthened support: Communities Funding

In March 2020, the Scottish government announced an investment of £350 million in Communities Funding. This funding would be invested in a range of ways; through the direct allocation of funds to local authorities and existing third sector organisations funded by the government and the creation of new funds open for applications. This included the Wellbeing Fund, Third Sector Resilience Fund and Supporting Communities Fund. This funding went to organisations of all sizes and capacities.

Wales – a summary

Voluntary sector and volunteering leadership and strategy: the Third Sector Scheme

In Wales, there is a unique link between the third sector and the Welsh Government: Third Sector Scheme. Section 74 of the Government of Wales Act (2006) mandates that such a scheme should be created, setting out how Ministers will assist voluntary organisations (including financially) and consult them on issues affecting them. As part of its obligation to involve the sector in decisions affecting them, the Third Sector Partnership Council (TSPC) has been created. It is chaired by the Minister responsible for the Third Sector Scheme and attended by representatives of third sector networks and the Wales Council Voluntary Action (WCVA). In terms of financial support, Welsh Government funds Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW), a partnership comprising the WCVA and the 19 County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) across Wales. It also provides additional smaller grants for the sector.

This pre-existing relationship between sector representatives and local and Welsh Government officials was drawn on heavily during the COVID-19 pandemic when experts were able to help shape policy decisions and take ownership of the support they could then provide within their organisations. During this time, a concerted effort was made to reduce bureaucracy to facilitate swift action, which was widely appreciated by those working in the sector and volunteers.

Strengthened support: emergency funding

Significantly, Ministers prioritised the sector for funding, giving it a total of £41.79 million between 2020 and 2021, which was its second package of financial support (after health). This meant that CVCs could respond to the sudden surge in both need and volunteers looking for placements. As elsewhere in the UK, there was often a mismatch between the supply of volunteers and the demand for their services. This was acknowledged as a potential dampener for would-be volunteers. However, this was addressed by some CVCs. Mantell Gwynedd worked in innovative ways to reach further into communities in need, including by partnering with a housing association to identify vulnerable tenants who would benefit from support.

While mutual aid groups sometimes 'flew under the radar' of these formalised systems, it has been recognised that these examples probably represent resilient communities with high levels of social capital. These were enabled by key individuals such as highly engaged local councillors who could match up those delivering services (such as local butchers offering deliveries or pharmacies distributing prescriptions) with those who needed them. Other community-embedded actors, such as those working in Communities First areas, were also instrumental in brokering volunteer support for vulnerable residents.

Part 4: Conclusions and future tasks

Volunteering is changing – how we engage and involve people also needs to change

Evidence from the long-running Community Life Survey suggests that volunteering is experiencing a slow decline over the long term.⁸¹ Alongside a shift from formal to informal volunteering and broader shifts in how people choose to get involved, there is a consensus that how we engage and involve volunteers needs to change. The pandemic offered both an acceleration and a reset: an acceleration of some existing trends, including people stopping volunteering, but also a reset regarding new people and approaches and, of course, a widespread community mobilisation. The challenge for policy and practice is how to respond, particularly as many initiatives to shift the volunteering dial have had mixed success.^{82 83} A starting point for many policymakers will therefore be whether or not they wish to develop policy in this area and why.

Volunteering policy, practice and strategy have many common elements

This brief review of the policy and practice landscape has highlighted many similarities in approach. Several governments have set out why volunteering is important and how engagement can contribute to society, not just public services. Governments have also worked with volunteer agencies to establish volunteering principles. And in some cases, these have been linked to national policies or outcomes. These do not always translate into action, however. For those who want to see this agenda move forward, there is a need for political leadership.

Building better practice

A familiar rallying cry from those involved in engaging or involving volunteers is that volunteer management is a Cinderella service, starved of resources compared to higher profile resource-generating activities such as fundraising. If it is indeed the case that people still want to get involved in their communities – and the pandemic provides strong evidence for that – it emphasises the importance of building a stronger, more resilient volunteering infrastructure that can engage with how people want to volunteer in the 21st century. It is far from clear that this infrastructure is in place.

Learning from what works – rather than policy innovation – is now needed

Our review suggests similar challenges around volunteering in the UK and beyond. The policy and practice prescriptions also bear many similarities, although it is less clear that these have always been adopted or tested by governments or volunteer-involving organisations. Therefore, rather than suggest new policy ideas or novel interventions, we conclude that we need a more concerted effort to identify what works in this space. We also think there is space for more systematic, long-term approaches to developing volunteer infrastructure, with practical and proportionate approaches to evaluation, such as in Barking & Dagenham.⁸⁴

Community engagement made a difference

A recently published paper concluded that the critical learning for public health globally is the need to involve communities in any response:

Finally, and most importantly, communities should be actively engaged in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. A crucial lesson from the EVD crisis was the power of community involvement for an effective response. A significant portion of the flattening of the EVD epidemic curve was attributed to crucial behavioral changes at the community level rather than international efforts such as those of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response, which intervened later (Martín et al., 2016). In the same vein, the spread of COVID-19 could also be slowed and eventually halted through interventions that empower community leaders and members to be at the forefront of contact tracing, quarantine and social distancing, and educational campaigns. Not only would community engagement help to stop the pandemic, but it could also prevent social resistance and retaliation, which can hamper mitigation efforts and further worsen the scale of the pandemic.
(Bhandari et al, 2022)⁸⁵

Perhaps the most important learning from the pandemic is to centre the role of communities in any future response. Our policy review suggests that options go beyond simply creating the conditions for volunteering and participation, though these are too important to ignore. Instead, it suggests that policymakers have a range of options for more actively nurturing, at times mobilising and shaping, and then providing support and infrastructure for volunteering and participation. Our reflection is also that

preparedness is critical: the most effective action emerged from communities that already had relationships and infrastructure in place.

Appendix: Examples of Policies and Practice to Support Volunteering and Participation

Name of Proposal/ Intervention and source	Supporting information	Description of intervention	Commentary
Leadership and development of volunteering strategy			
DCMS (2018) Civil Society Strategy	<p>England policy on volunteering and community action</p> <p>Example proposal: 3,500 people will be trained in community organising through a national network of Social Action Hubs and partnerships with public and social sector organisations.</p>	<p>Highlights the importance of contributing over the life course. It has a series of missions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a connected, resources society (including the role of volunteers in disaster response) 2. People in charge (including a role for community organisers) 3. Opportunities for young people (such as NCS) 	<p>There is no detailed action plan to implement the strategy.</p>
Welsh Government: Volunteering Policy: Supporting Communities, Changing Lives (2015)	<p>Welsh government volunteering policy</p>	<p>Aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve access to volunteering for people of all ages and from all parts of society 2. Encourage the more effective involvement of volunteers, including through appropriate training 3. Raise the status and improve the image of volunteering 	<p>In addition to practical interventions such as grant funds, this highlights the convening power of government to get other organisations to engage and support volunteers</p>
Scottish Government: Volunteering for All: national framework (2019)	<p>Scottish government volunteering policy and outcomes framework</p>	<p>The volunteering outcomes proposed by the framework are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Volunteering and participation are valued, supported and enabled from the earliest possible age and throughout life. 2. Volunteering in all its forms is integrated and recognised in our lives through national and local policy. 3. There is an environment and culture which celebrates volunteers and volunteering and all of its benefits. 	<p>The government is currently collaborating with volunteering bodies to develop an action plan.</p>

Name of Proposal/ Intervention and source	Supporting information	Description of intervention	Commentary
		<p>4. The places and spaces where we volunteer are developed, supported and sustained.</p> <p>5. There are diverse, quality and inclusive opportunities for everyone to get involved and stay involved.</p>	
Volunteer Now – Pathway for Volunteering	<p>Learning from the pandemic in Northern Ireland from the lead agency for volunteering</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical support for Volunteer-Involving Organisations (VIOs) to rebuild • Comprehensive plan for spontaneous volunteering to be developed • Need for relevant and strong public policy which enables and supports volunteering • Create an environment which nurtures volunteering • Review of the volunteering strategy • Plan for welcoming back existing volunteers • Create interesting roles and opportunities for new volunteers • Effective integration of a range of digital communication platforms • Reduced bureaucracy in response to more informal approaches to volunteering that have emerged through the pandemic 	
Sustaining community-led action is key to recovery from the pandemic, Public Health Wales.	<p>Create an enabling environment</p>	<p>Public Health Wales published a report highlighting the importance of 3 elements to enable and sustain community-led action in Wales. These were: understanding community assets and place factors integration of community-led action into the wider system enabling the conditions that drive health equity</p>	
West Glamorgan Regional Partnership (WGRP)	<p>WGRP was awarded a Welsh Government Coronavirus Recovery Grant for Volunteering. This provided an opportunity to explore the potential viability of a Volunteer Passport Scheme across Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. Many debates</p>	<p>This volunteer passport scheme was designed to be a level of introduction between two parties. This scheme encourages organisations to break down their volunteer offer by reviewing appropriate volunteering opportunities for this passport scheme and provide badges or certificates to those who complete the scheme. Timelines also need to be considered, as it may take 6-12 months to establish a credible passport scheme. Not all volunteers and volunteering</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that introducing a volunteer passport is not a single way of solving issues regarding the recruitment and retention of volunteers. This scheme would not suit every volunteering organisation and opportunity, and even with relevant badges and certificates</p>

Name of Proposal/ Intervention and source	Supporting information	Description of intervention	Commentary
	took place around the pros and cons of introducing a passport scheme.	opportunities would like to be part of the scheme, so an opportunity-out feature is recommended.	recognising the relevant training completed, organisations may want the volunteer to complete similar training again.
UKOnward – Building a Social Stimulus	Think tank report	Post-COVID recommendations to stimulate volunteering, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognising volunteers in the honours system and localising NHS Volunteer Responders 	
CSJ - COMMUNITY CAPITAL How purposeful participation empowers humans to flourish	Think tank report	Proposals include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Universal Credit claimant commitment; measure local social capital; Boost community asset ownership; Trust and invest in communities 	
Union/Volunteering Infrastructure charters WCVA-TUC-Document-Web-English-F2.pdf	Clarify the relationship between paid workers and volunteers.	The Wales Council for Voluntary Action and the Trade Union Congress have worked together on a charter to ensure that, for example, volunteers aren't used to replace paid workers (particularly, for example, when workers are on strike). Volunteering Scotland has a similar charter with the STUC. HelpForce has a charter with the health unions. A revised charter in England is being negotiated.	There remain tensions around volunteers and paid staff , particularly around issues of job substitution (or the more nuanced job displacement)
NCVO – a manifesto for volunteering (2017)	Proposals for government to support volunteering from national infrastructure organisation. Practical interventions included setting targets for the involvement of volunteers in public services and legislating for time off work.	The roles for government identified were: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Make it easier and more rewarding for people to volunteer Make it easier for volunteers to support our public services Make it easier for people to build their skills and get a good job through volunteering 	
Thinking differently about volunteering: inclusive, flexible opportunities			
Developing digital skills and digital volunteering opportunities via Digital	Published in October 2020, 281 heritage organisations across the UK came together	The report highlights how employees, trustees and volunteers have different barriers, motivations and needs when it comes to digital. A digital strategy and a	This report's findings helped develop the Digital Skills for Heritage Initiative , designed to

Name of Proposal/ Intervention and source	Supporting information	Description of intervention	Commentary
Attitudes and Skills for Heritage (DASH) survey report from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, p.g. 8.	<p>to complete the DASH survey. During the pandemic and the subsequent public health measures, the role of digital became apparent, especially concerning the digital skills of volunteers and the provision of digital volunteering opportunities.</p>	<p>skills audit could help identify untapped digital skills and new volunteering opportunities that focus on digital.</p>	<p>raise digital skills and confidence across the sector. The Heritage Fund has already published training and resources. This includes an offer for making a digital strategy and designing digital services. The next phase of this work focuses on using digital to increase enterprise resilience.</p>
West Glamorgan Regional Partnership (WGRP)	<p>WGRP was awarded a Welsh Government Coronavirus Recovery Grant for Volunteering. This provided an opportunity to explore the potential viability of a Volunteer Passport Scheme across Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. Many debates took place around the pros and cons of introducing a passport scheme.</p>	<p>This volunteer passport scheme was designed to be a level of introduction between two parties. This scheme encourages organisations to break down their volunteer offer by reviewing appropriate volunteering opportunities for this passport scheme and provide badges or certificates to those who successfully complete the scheme. Timelines also need to be considered, as it may take 6-12 months to establish a credible passport scheme. Not all volunteers and volunteering opportunities would like to be part of the scheme, so an opportunity-out feature is recommended.</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that introducing a volunteer passport is not a single way of solving issues regarding the recruitment and retention of volunteers. This scheme would not suit every volunteering organisation and opportunity, and even with relevant badges and certificates recognising the relevant training completed, organisations may want the volunteer to complete similar training again.</p>
A National Volunteer reserve, Danny Kruger MP report into 'Levelling UP Communities.' p.g. 30	<p>This report outlined that a volunteer passport scheme should help to build a national volunteer reserve.</p>	<p>Once volunteers have received their passport, they log their skill set and availability for volunteering. This helps to scale up volunteering in emergencies and scale down when a large mobilisation of volunteers is no longer necessary. Organisations such as the British Red Cross have a part to play in this initiative, including the database of volunteers and deploying them. In times of emergencies, those registered on the database would be eligible for 'emergency volunteer leave' and be placed on a statutory footing, with an annual declaration by Government departments of the people and capabilities needed during business as usual and in the event of an emergency, similar to workings of the armed forces reservists. Those</p>	<p>This work should complement what is already happening in the national and regional space, including the VCS Emergency Partnership. The report also mentioned how the relationship between the Reserve and Government should be overseen by a formal Whitehall system to ensure early warning and good management.</p>

Name of Proposal/ Intervention and source	Supporting information	Description of intervention	Commentary
		registered on the database can also sign up for non-emergency opportunities to volunteer, e.g. environmental and conversation projects across the country.	
Mobilising Voluntary Action in Wales Learning from volunteering activity to support post-COVID-19 recovery September 2021 Briefing Paper.	Providing an income (e.g. furlough) to working-age people.	It's been widely noted that working-age people volunteered during the pandemic (and stopped doing so after) because they were temporarily provided with an income without the need to work (or at least full-time).	This potentially challenges ideas about what volunteering is – i.e. time freely given
	'Being asked to volunteer.'	Evidence suggests that volunteers rarely usually volunteer unless invited to do so (although the pandemic was a notable exception). This also includes incentivising young people with credits, for example (or schemes such as Duke of Edinburgh), since if people start this way, they often come into and out of volunteering throughout the life course. This might also include workplace schemes to provide hours for workers to volunteer in.	
Wales CRGV report 21st feb.pdf	The report provides an evaluation of some of Wales' Coronavirus Recovery Grant for Volunteering (CRGV) projects, some of which have been used to develop tools for the sector, such as a means for organisations to assess and meet their volunteering needs.	Provide funding for small grants to develop knowledge of where expertise, skills, assets and resources are available and can be connected.	
2015 Conservative manifesto – workplace entitlement to 3 days paid volunteering leave	Encourage and support ESV.	Employer-supported volunteering – i.e. being able to volunteer during working hours. CIPD is excellent on ESV and very supportive.	Never implemented. There are examples of guidance on employer-supported volunteering – e.g. this from Barking & Dagenham
Statutory time off work for trustee roles	A scheme similar to the regulations around jury service and time off work	Several organisations have proposed that time off for trustee roles is akin to jury service or similar duties. This	

Name of Proposal/ Intervention and source	Supporting information	Description of intervention	Commentary
		is already quite a long list – adding may therefore be possible.	
Incentives to volunteer – for example, discounts on council tax or concert tickets	Various schemes to reward people for giving time	There have been many ideas for using incentives. This might need some thinking about how to make HMRC regulations around incentives or the repayment of reasonable expenses more flexible (e.g. tube season tickets).	There is extensive literature on the use of incentives.
Holliday Review of full-time social action	Various proposals: ministerial group; relax DWP rules; encourage best practice on expenses; more evidence enhanced NCS role as broker; more significant role for Careers and Enterprise Company	The report argued that social action often isn't inclusive and was trying to encourage more use of rewards/payment – but this is fraught with difficulty. Also said that <i>“Many organisations argue that quality of social action is more important than quantity”</i>	Government responded, but there isn't much sense that anything happened.
Volunteering for refugees and asylum seekers, those on UC or JSA		The argument is that although volunteering is allowed, the interpretation of Home Office policy is too restrictive. Similarly, some volunteer centres argue that JCPs discourage people from volunteering despite rules identifying this as a meaningful activity.	
Strengthening support and infrastructure for volunteering			
The Nudge Community, Plymouth, UK.	Nudge Community Builders has been set up by local people who have been volunteering and leading Stonehouse Action in Plymouth for many years. They grow and build on local knowledge and experience to make a difference locally.	The Nudge Community bought the Millennium building on Union Street in partnership with Eat Work Art in September 2020. This building has been empty for 15 years, and the Nudge Community put together a manifesto to outline its vision for the venue, including its contribution to the local economy.	
Townscapes: The Value of Social Infrastructure	The Bennett Institute at Cambridge University published this report on the value of social infrastructure as	Essentially the report argues that funding social infrastructure by top-slicing various levelling up funds will support the growth of community engagement and improve local resilience, esp in more deprived localities.	

Name of Proposal/ Intervention and source	Supporting information	Description of intervention	Commentary
	sites that encourage and facilitate volunteering	E.g. “Local bodies should be supported in developing their own social infrastructure strategies and sharing best practice.”	
Participatory City – see the illustrated guide	Large-scale project attempting to build levels of community participation across Barking and Dagenham	This place-based approach attempts to involve the whole community in voluntary action, focusing on making volunteering an activity undertaken every day by everyone.	
The London Borough of Islington Volunteering and Capacity Building Review by Locality. Recommendations for capacity building support can be found on p.g 8.	The London Borough of Islington commissioned Locality to review and understand the current volunteering and capacity-building needs of voluntary and community organisations in Islington.	The report has recommendations divided into three sections: volunteering support, capacity building support and funding to feed into the next stage of the capacity building and volunteering strands VCS partnership grant programme (2021-24). For capacity building support, these include: Further in-depth mapping - is needed, both of the organisations that make up the sector and their support needs. Working towards adding to this knowledge and insight in ‘real time’ will help ensure support is agile and responsive to the sector over time (e.g. use of ‘my maps’ google to continuously map organisations). New support to help organisations develop hybrid delivery – the wider contextual challenges to the sector are likely to make partnership both attractive and necessary (as mergers potentially become more prevalent). Tailored one-to-one support to enable organisations to develop an evidence-based service and to demonstrate impact - this might involve tools around community representation and mapping. Organisations need support to help them identify and respond to new needs around mental health, unemployment and the digital divide and the tool to demonstrate they are tackling these issues. Maintaining online networking that has taken place over the COVID-19 period - increase opportunities for peer learning through roundtable sessions on topics such as maintaining volunteers following COVID, delivering a hybrid service model etc.	This research will inform the development and next stage of the capacity building and volunteering strands of the VCS partnership grant programme (2021-24), so an evaluation including case studies illustrating this work is not yet complete.

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		Peer learning can be utilised more – the research highlighted the vast knowledge, experience and skills within the sector that can be unlocked and shared in more horizontal (many to many) rather than vertical (one to many) ways.	
Recognising and celebrating the value of volunteering			
Getting good data from Civil Society, Danny Kruger MP report into 'Levelling UP Communities.' p.g. 19.	Creating data sets so government departments can better understand and map the clusters of civil society organisations against resources, including community assets and levels of deprivation etc.	This report recommends that those receiving public funds or tax relief should publish coherent and comparable data on their activities and outcomes. The rationale is centred on the idea that better data from public and private sources would lead to using data differently, in a way that was geared to understanding what intervention does or doesn't work. Good data will also help to list community assets and strengths against levels of deprivation over time.	Critique of this recommendation includes if other layers of government, including local authorities, would be able to access these databases to understand better their local and regional landscapes and how additional funding to address the digital divide for those organisations who do not have the resource and skill set to add in data regarding their organisation.
Better coordination and dialogue between organisations in the volunteering ecosystem			
HelpForce – volunteering in health and social care – report on volunteering and COVID	HelpForce is a programme to expand the role of volunteers in health and social care.	The report argues that during COVID, many statutory health organisations couldn't cope with people wanting to volunteer – learning is that volunteering support should be embedded in systems and processes and that there needs to be better cross-agency coordination.	HelpForce is a model that could be replicated in other public services such as policing and fire and rescue.
RVS - Volunteering, COVID & integrated care: Challenges & opportunities - a discussion paper (2021)	Based on interviews with system leaders, this sets out how to strengthen volunteering post-COVID	Four policy proposals: Develop the role of volunteers in integrated care systems Improve volunteer management Invest in volunteer support Establish new partnerships to benefit from national volunteering expertise	

Name of Proposal/ Intervention and source	Supporting information	Description of intervention	Commentary
Funding for an expansion of The Voluntary Sector Emergencies Partnership (VCSEP)		£4.8m additional funding for the VCSEP helped to fund the coordination of voluntary organisations and volunteering across England and additional capacity in local infrastructure organisations.	Evaluation indicates that the re-granting of funding to local infrastructure organisations enabled them to pivot and scale in response to requests to/for volunteering.
Third Sector Partnership Council.	Wales' Third Sector Partnership Council (and the Third Sector Scheme more broadly) means that representatives regularly meet with the Minister and can feed into policy decisions. This relationship of trust (and contacts, meeting arrangements etc.) was seen as helpful in shaping decisions about the pandemic and recovery.	Building relationships between government and third sector	There is no evaluation of this scheme and the council that accompanies it. Still, members speak very highly of the process, as well as of the civil servant who organises this and is responsible for running the scheme and building relationships.
Building an environment characterised by trust within/between communities			
Reconnections Social Impact Bond: reducing loneliness in Worcestershire	The Reconnections Social Impact Bond (SIB) aims to reduce loneliness and isolation for 3,000 people over 50 in Worcestershire. Reconnections is the first SIB in England aimed at reducing loneliness and social isolation. Worcestershire County Council (WCC) commissioned Reconnections with three co-commissioners from Clinical Commissioning Groups. Nesta is the main funder, and Age	Advantages of the SUB approach through the lens of funding the intervention through a SIB model (rather than through a traditional pay-for-service model) include: Both County Council and NHS budgets were being cut, and pressure was high to reduce funding on issues such as loneliness and isolation, which were seen as being outside of the core services. The SIB was seen as providing a good financial mechanism to plug the gap in short-term funding. The commissioner recognised the shift of risk away from themselves towards the investor and was attracted by the overall payment-for-results ethos: only once	The document links provide an in-depth review produced as part of the Commissioning Better Outcomes evaluation, where more detailed information can be found. Key issues highlighted include how the programme has simplified some of the more complex issues found in other health-related SIBs.

Name of Proposal/ Intervention and source	Supporting information	Description of intervention	Commentary
	<p>UK Herefordshire and Worcestershire is the main provider for the SIB.</p>	<p>outcomes have been achieved are payments released, meaning there is little danger of paying for an intervention which is not working. Again, this was particularly attractive in a period of financial pressure for the commissioners.</p> <p>There was a drive within Worcestershire County Council and the NHS to be more creative and innovative in the way they both finance and deliver services. A SIB was a good way to practically achieve this corporate goal.</p> <p>There was a general view that the SIB and payment-by-results approach encouraged all those developing the intervention to be much more robust regarding the outcomes expected by the programme and its financial plan.</p>	

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