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England's new volunteering programme will turn young people's passions into community action, says charity

v, the youth volunteering charity today (**Thursday 22 November**) unveils an innovative new national programme to get half a million more young people positively involved in their communities.

More than £75 million is being invested over three years by v in the new programme, called **vinvolved**, which will be officially launched at a youth-led event at the Roundhouse, London, attended by the Minister for the Cabinet Office Ed Miliband and Phil Hope, Minister for the Third Sector.

vinvolved has been designed by and for young people to make volunteering a compelling choice for all 16-25 year olds in England by tapping into their passions and concerns. The charity aims to change the image of volunteering and make it a 'must-have' part of young people's lives.

Terry Ryall, v Chief Executive, believes involving young people at every level of the programme is the key to its success: "This is a programme for youth action and engagement that has been driven by young people's desire to get positively involved in their communities. vinvolved will literally change the face of volunteering in England and safeguard its future by giving a new generation of young people opportunities to put their passions into action to meet real community needs."

vinvolved will fund a massive expansion in youth volunteering in every part of the country, starting in April 2008. For the first time ever, there will be teams of young ambassadors championing volunteering at a local level and advising a network of people and projects focused on engaging young volunteers. It will put in place:

- Youth Action Teams - a network of youth ambassadors to champion volunteering at a local level and inspire their peers to volunteer.
- vinvolved teams - a network of youth experts on the ground who will encourage more community organisations to open their doors to young volunteers.
- vinvolved projects - a diverse range of innovative projects that tap into young people's passions, cares and concerns.

- vpassport - a personal online tool for young people to record their volunteering experiences and skills gained.
- A national and local annual awards celebration to recognise young volunteers' achievements, starting in 2009.

The programme will be supported by v's youth website, vinspired.com – a portal signposting young people to volunteering opportunities – and the charity's ongoing awareness raising marketing campaign.

Terry Ryall, v's Chief Executive adds: "Young people are at the heart of this new programme which aims to put them at the centre of our communities. Instead of seeing them as a problem to be fixed, we are giving them the chance to become a positive force for change."

Mary O'Brien, a member of v's youth advisory board, aged 18, says she hopes the programme will help change negative stereotypes: "Young people are often tarred with a negative image but 47% of us already help out in our communities – and we do it for free! This new programme will get even more of us involved and show what a positive difference we can make."

Research shows that young people are concerned about community issues - but don't know how to act on them and many feel they have nothing of value to offer. However, they say they would get involved if given the right kind of opportunities and information. The vinvolved programme will overcome these barriers and fund a diverse range of innovative local projects offering young people opportunities to use their passions for sport, music, media and other interests to tackle concerns such as crime, homelessness and the environment.

The programme will also train, support and build capacity with potential to reach 6,000 grassroots organisations in the voluntary sector.

Ed Miliband, Cabinet Minister responsible for volunteering, says: "v offers incredibly exciting opportunities for young people to turn their natural enthusiasm and passion to activities that will not only enhance their skills and experience, but benefit their communities and our wider society.

"Today marks an important step forward as v awards funding to a host of diverse projects and organisations, and take us ever closer to our aim of a million more young people volunteering in England."

Phil Hope, Minister for the Third Sector, says: "Not only will vinvolved enable young people to pursue their instincts to help others, we are also tremendously excited about its plans to train and support 6,000 organisations across England to enable them to better involve young people in their work."

The new programme has received support from sector organisations including Fiona Blacke, Chief Executive of the National Youth Agency, who says: “I firmly believe that the new national volunteering programme will transform the youth volunteering landscape in England and pave the way for a new generation of young volunteers. I particularly welcome v’s decision to expand the youth volunteering workforce, which recognises the vital role that youth work professionals play in facilitating and supporting young people and enabling them to take action on issues that matter to them.”

The volunteering opportunities will be available from April 2008. For more information visit www.wearev.com or the young people’s portal www.vinspired.com

Ends

Media enquiries: contact v PR manager Petra Coveney on 020 7960 7016 or 07824 562282 or email Petra.coveney@wearev.com

Notes to Editor

- v is the youth volunteering charity launched in May 2006 whose mission is to inspire a new generation of young volunteers in England aged 16-25. v is supported by the Office of the Third Sector in the Cabinet Office.
- The charity was set up to implement the recommendations of the Russell Commission outlining a new national framework for youth action and engagement, following a nationwide consultation which included 6000 young people.
- v is led by the cares, interests, passions and beliefs of young people. A Youth Advisory Board made up of twenty young people called v20 is involved in all aspects of the charity’s work. Four members of v20 sit on v’s Board of Trustees.
- v works with and builds upon the current voluntary sector infrastructure, funds the creation of volunteering opportunities through grants rounds and implements programmes to create awareness and positive understanding of volunteering for young people. For more information on v, visit www.wearev.com
- The new programme will fund 107 vinvolved teams of experts, at least 107 Youth Action Teams and 152 projects run by small and large organisations.
- vinvolved builds on the previous government-funded Millennium Volunteers programme and v’s work to date with more than 200 voluntary sector organisations. It has commissioned 205,000 volunteering opportunities so far. The new programme gives voice to the 6,000 young people surveyed by the Russell Commission who said there needed to be a step change in the quantity, quality and diversity of volunteering opportunities to make it easier for young people to volunteer.