

# vpolicy

## A response from v to the Commission on the Future of Volunteering

July 30, 2007

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
About v	3
Background	4
Key recommendations	5
<b>1. The Relationship between Volunteering and Government</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 Sustainable Funding of Volunteering	6
1.2 Representation to Government	6
1.3 Promotion of Volunteering	7
<b>2. Volunteering Is For All</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Barriers to Volunteering	8
2.2 Knowing Where to Go – Improving Experience of the Volunteering Infrastructure	9
2.3 Creating Quality Opportunities for All	10
2.4 Match-Fund Opportunities	12
2.5 Raising Awareness and Widening Access to Information	13
<b>3. Creating a Culture of Volunteering</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 The Role of Schools	15
3.2 Incentives	16
3.3 Recognition and Accreditation	17
3.4 The Wider Context and Intergenerational Volunteering	17
<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>18</b>

## About v

v is the charity launched in May 2006 to champion youth volunteering in England through the implementation of recommendations set out in the Russell Commission and accepted in full by the Government. Our key objective is to create a significant and lasting change in the quality, quantity and diversity of youth volunteering opportunities.

v was established to build on the excellent work already being undertaken in the youth volunteering sector, both in terms of creating new and additional opportunities, and by extending the reach of existing opportunities to those young people who have not previously volunteered.

To date, we have:

- Commissioned over 180,000 new volunteering opportunities
- Developed and launched **vinspired.com**, a one-stop shop web-based portal for young people wanting to access volunteering opportunities
- Launched our youth fund **vcashpoint**, putting funding directly in the hands of young people developing initiatives for community benefit
- Assumed management of Millennium Volunteers (MV) from the DfES and announced details of the new National Youth Volunteering Programme
- Received pledges of over £20 million from the private sector for youth volunteering through the Match Fund programme

## Background

We are delighted for this opportunity to feed into the Commission on the Future of Volunteering, to highlight possible areas of future synergy and to inform thinking, particularly where it affects young people.

This response has been put together in consultation with our youth advisory board, v20, three of whom have themselves given oral evidence to the Commission.

While our response addresses all three themes of the Commission we have also chosen to focus on several questions where members of v20 have expressed firm views and where we can make a considerable contribution.

Many of the questions asked by the Commission echo those that were explored with regard to the 16-25 year-old age group in the Russell Commission. There is therefore huge potential for v:

- 1) To update the Commission on our progress in implementing the Russell Commission in order to share learning and avoid unnecessary duplication
- 2) To discuss how the new framework for youth volunteering can be integrated into a wider vision for volunteering in England
- 3) To explore in particular, the transition points at 16 and 25, to ensure a smooth progression into and from engagement with v.

If you have any questions regarding our response, please contact:

**Helen Dennis**  
**Public Affairs & Policy Manager,**  
**v, 5th Floor, Dean Bradley House**  
**52 Horseferry Road**  
**London**  
**SW1P 2AF**  
**020 7960 7022**  
**Helen.Dennis@wearev.com**

## Key Recommendations

**Government must allow sufficient time and opportunity for full implementation of the Russell Commission recommendations**

- **The v framework for targeted youth action and engagement should fit seamlessly into the wider vision for volunteering in England**
- **A culture shift will only occur if Government, media, schools and Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) work together to promote volunteering**

**Much more needs to be done to build capacity in the sector to support new opportunities and *Capacitybuilders* should prioritise investment in volunteer management**

# 1. The Relationship between Volunteering and Government

v is in a unique position as an independent charity that was established and funded by Government.

Instead of charging a Government department with the implementation of its recommendations, The Russell Commission saw the need for a dedicated implementation body to be responsible and accountable for the new national framework. Furthermore, the Commission also recognised that “young people should have a strong role in the body’s governance, decision-making and character.”<sup>1</sup> One year on from the launch of v, we can make some assessment of progress to date, which has been considerable given the mandate to create, staff and resource a charity from scratch. We believe that the creation of an independent implementation body was correct and that the same level of youth involvement and private sector investment could not have been achieved by a Government department.

## 1.1 Sustainable Funding of Volunteering

The funding required to implement a national framework, create opportunities and raise awareness is significant and v is delighted that the Government has recognised the substantial investment that is needed to create a step-change in youth volunteering.

Our recommendation is that enough time and opportunity is allowed for full implementation of the Russell Commission. We are delighted that the recently published Third Sector review has publicly announced an investment of £117m in youth volunteering over the three CSR years, 2008/9, 2009/10 and 2010/11 and our belief is that new initiatives, including those that may come out the Commission on the Future of Volunteering should not seek to replace or duplicate that which is already in development.

## 1.2 Representation to Government

The England Volunteering Development Council has developed into a powerful lobby and creation of this Commission is perhaps evidence itself of the EVDC’s effectiveness in representing volunteering to Government. There is little sense in establishing any separate lobby on youth volunteering and v would therefore like to see the EVDC develop to allow representation of the National Youth Volunteering Programme.

A useful development would be the creation of an Inter-Ministerial Group on Volunteering, to champion volunteering across departments and assist in profile-raising. Building on the model used by Government following publication of the Russell Commission, this could bring together Ministers with a smaller group of organisations instrumental in delivering the long-term vision for volunteering in England in a more strategic way.



### 1.3 Promotion of Volunteering

We strongly believe that there is a leadership role that Government needs to play in order to create a 'culture of volunteering' and we are encouraged by the Prime Minister's commitment to the promotion of volunteering and the idea of an annual celebration of volunteering (24/7). A shift in culture is possible if everyone gets behind a cause, as demonstrated by behaviour-change on environmental issues e.g. recycling and the public's increasing positive response to it over time. However, this requires sustained leadership from a whole range of actors, including Government, the sector and the media.

There also needs to be more attention paid to how a strategy for volunteering can be joined up with other Government programmes. The Office of the Third Sector (OTS) is well placed to lead on this work and we warmly welcome the action across Government departments stated in the Third Sector Review. We strongly recommend that the OTS retains a strategic lead on volunteering (including international volunteering), and is made aware of any initiatives or proposals that other departments are developing and plays a key role in streamlining funding for volunteering.

Our experience to date is that the OTS is sometimes unaware of relevant pieces of work being undertaken across Whitehall and consequently, v has not been notified of documents or procurements that impact on or make reference to our work.

We are encouraged to see the Respect agenda moving to the new Department for Children, Schools and Families. There has been a shift away from some of the negative rhetoric around young people but some Government policies continue to send out a contradictory message about young people and the contribution that they make to their communities. It is a constant disappointment to see the media putting a negative spin on all announcements relating to young people; the recent ten year strategy for positive activities is a case in point.

## 2. Volunteering Is For All

In preparation for this response, we have spoken to members of our youth advisory board v20 who have had between them a wide range of volunteering experiences. Among other things, members of v20 have been involved in the following activities:

- University student advocacy
- After-school clubs
- International gap year experiences
- Peer support
- Youth arts showcase
- Assisting people with disabilities
- Boards of governance
- Fundraising
- Charity shops
- Campaign groups
- Mentoring
- Volunteering in sports

It is clear from the diversity of experiences listed above that there are many different ideas about and pathways to volunteering. Consequently, in seeking to engage a new generation of young people in volunteering, v is aware that a variety of approaches will be needed and a diverse range of voluntary organisations engaged.

### Why do young people volunteer?

- *"I volunteer because I believe it's important to make a difference in some way to the community you live in, even if it's just a small difference"*
- *"I like to give something back to my community and to the countries and communities that I visit. I also feel that I can acquire new skills and gain opportunities that I might not otherwise be able to do"*
- *"I think the main reason would be the satisfaction that I get from it, knowing that you are doing something worthwhile... on a more selfish level I know that it's good for stuff like your CV and personal statement"*

### 2.1 Barriers to Volunteering

Given the immense enthusiasm for volunteering expressed by young people in the comments noted above, one has to ask why more young people are not volunteering. Part of the answer is in our definition of 'volunteering'. A large number of young people are actively involved in their communities and the 2005 Citizenship Survey reveals that young people aged 16-19 are actually the most likely to take part in 'informal volunteering'.<sup>2</sup>

However the figure for more 'formal volunteering' is much lower in comparison (as it is for all age groups), indicating that there is more that could be done to channel activity in a more structured way.

Recent research published by v suggests that young people would like more support and guidance to know how to take action on issues they feel concerned and passionate about. The report, *Barriers preventing passionate young people acting on their concerns*, surveyed 1000 16-25 year-olds and explodes the myth that young people are apathetic and disengaged. Instead, the report shows that there is much in their lives, on a local and global level, that they care passionately about and on which they would take action given the right opportunity.

Interestingly, the top two global concerns – terrorism and war – were the two that young people have done the least about in terms of taking action. The research also showed that the majority of young people felt powerless to do anything about local issues, including the lack of activities, crime and the negative perceptions of young people.

When young people were asked what, if anything, was stopping them from getting more involved with the things they care about, over 50% cited 'not having enough time' as a barrier. A significant percentage also said that they were not sure how to help, or that they did not have anything to offer.

It is therefore clear from this research that much more needs to be done to raise awareness of volunteering opportunities, to encourage youth-led action and to provide clearer signposting. The research also revealed the enormous potential for matching volunteering opportunities with young people's passions, harnessing things like music, friendship and sport for community benefit. v's activities in these areas are outlined later in this response.

## 2.2 Knowing Where to Go – Improving Experience of the Volunteering Infrastructure

Other barriers are more structural, as this anecdote shows:

*Giving oral evidence to the Commission, one member of v20 spoke about a presentation on youth volunteering that had been made in her local school – following the presentation approximately 40 students signed up to participate but subsequently no-one appears to have been contacted. Moreover, she also spoke about the complete lack of suitable opportunities in her (rural) area for young people under the age of 18 and how difficult it had been to find a volunteering placement. Her experience highlights the need for both improved infrastructure and the creation of new opportunities.*

The headline recommendation from the Russell Commission was to create a new national framework for youth action and engagement that would deliver a step change in the diversity, quality and quantity of young people's volunteering. It recognised that a huge amount of good work was already taking place within the sector and acknowledged the success of Millennium Volunteers. However, the Commission also found that coverage is patchy and that the work of MV could be strengthened through its reform, re-branding and expansion.

Therefore, we have now announced details of the National Youth Volunteering Programme (NYVP) which will build on the best of Millennium Volunteers to ensure a consistent brokering service via vteams in every local authority area, and make funding available to a wider range of small, medium-sized and large organisations for the direct delivery of volunteering opportunities. Through the NYVP, v will be investing a total of £72.6m in the sector. £42.6m is now available over three years for brokering and £30m for the direct delivery of new opportunities.

The aim of vteams is to ensure a consistent and quality service for young people – and to root volunteering organically but very firmly in the local community, working with schools and brokering opportunities with Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) of all shapes and sizes.

It is envisaged that vteams will deliver specialist youth-centred work alongside local volunteer development agencies and the NYVP guidance specifically welcomes partnership bids, which may involve Volunteer Centres. It may take time for vteams to establish themselves and achieve full impact. Reiterating the point made earlier in this document, there is little sense in investing so substantially in a new infrastructure only for it to be dismantled by Government and replaced with a new initiative.

It will be absolutely essential for the general volunteering infrastructure in England to work in a complementary fashion alongside the more specialist v infrastructure for young people. Our recommendation for the Commission is that it should also be looking at consistency. The Volunteering England Strategy for Volunteering Infrastructure Building on Success highlighted the need for a more rationalised and 'even' service observing that, *"In some local authority areas there can be as many as five volunteer development agencies each offering the full range of core functions and often being funded by the same funder... However, there are many local authority areas in England where there are no agencies offering the full core functions of volunteering infrastructure."*<sup>3</sup>

This is an issue that v is addressing through a more strategic approach to local investment – in terms of more general volunteering, the picture is much more complex but as far as possible, Volunteer Centres should be encouraged to work together and to merge where work is being replicated or is unsustainable.

It also needs to be understood that v is not and should not be the only funder of youth volunteering. Other statutory services should also be investing where volunteering could meet their public policies objectives for young people, as stated in Russell Commission Recommendation 9. The private sector too needs further encouragement to invest in order to meet their social objectives and work in partnership with the third sector.

### 2.3 Creating Quality Opportunities for All

In order to satisfy the anticipated demand for placements brought about through the new National Youth Volunteering framework, v will be investing substantially in the creation of new volunteering opportunities and through Strand Two of the National Youth Volunteering Programme, we will be investing £30m in the direct delivery of new volunteering opportunities.

In addition, we will be working to drive up standards in volunteer-involving organisations, encouraging them to engage with the framework and draw on our expertise in order to:

- Embrace Youth Involvement
- Deliver High Quality Volunteering Experiences
- Embed Quality & Diversity
- Enable Creativity and Innovation
- Support Skills Development
- Encourage Partnership Working
- Maximise Community Impact

Through this strand of funding we will be seeking to fund a variety of opportunities including:

- **Short-term or taster opportunities**  
Opportunities for young people to take part in a one-off volunteering opportunity that enables them to get a flavour of volunteering and a sense of its potential value both to themselves and their local community.
- **Part-time opportunities**  
Volunteering activity which is usually a few hours per month – but also including young people who make a structured commitment to volunteer for up to two or three days per week.
- **Full-time opportunities**  
Activities where a young person makes a structured commitment to volunteer for approximately 30 hours a week over a period of not less than 13 weeks. Full-time volunteers can claim up to £60 per week for travel and expenses associated with their volunteering experience.

To complement the NYVP, v will actively seek-out, fund and test new models for youth volunteering that extend reach, respond to young people's passions and engage them in international experiences.

Through the NYVP framework, we hope to engage with a wide range of volunteer-involving organisations, some of whom may already have expertise in youth volunteering and others who may be new partners. The recent report published by the Conservative Party's Social Justice Policy Group talked about 'poverty-fighting' TSOs and the need for volunteering activity to be focused on certain key areas – family breakdown, addictions, educational failure, economic dependency and personal indebtedness. v is interested in exploring these ideas further and we hope that the vteams in particular will be well-placed to build local links with a wider range of organisations, including those who fall within these themes.

However, there is also a need to prepare organisations for young volunteers and v20 have expressed concern that some organisations are not currently able to offer a quality volunteering experience for young people. Put quite simply, there is not enough capacity within many TSOs to invest time and staff in volunteer management. Many TSOs are short-staffed and working to deliver contractual outcomes – therefore if there is to be an expansion of volunteering within poverty-fighting TSOs, there needs to be adequate investment in resources for volunteer

management as already noted above. In particular, it will be very difficult to engage more disadvantaged young people or those from certain target groups (for example, those with a learning disability) without the investment in additional support that is needed in order to sustain their involvement.

With uncertainty about the future of the Volunteering Hub, there is a need to ensure that capacity-building for volunteering remains high on the agenda. Without support for volunteer management, the sector will be unable and ill-equipped to integrate young volunteers into their organisations, relying instead on contract funding to sustain their work. v therefore urges Capacitybuilders to follow through on their pledge to prioritise volunteering within the 'People and Skills' strategic theme, should this proposed arrangement be taken forward.

There are still some particular barriers that can prevent some 16 & 17 year-olds from accessing volunteering opportunities. Quite rightly, all those who are working with vulnerable groups require a CRB check and whilst young people under the age of 18 can apply for a CRB check, it would be much more appropriate for a 16 and 17 year-old in this instance to be volunteering under supervision (thus not requiring a check). This supervision must be resourced but does not necessarily have to be a staff member. This could come from an older volunteer or mentor and it would be useful to identify examples of best practice in this area (specifically where young people are working with vulnerable adults) that could be replicated in a wider range of TSOs. It would be particularly helpful if the CRB could provide written clarification in consultation with the sector:

- Firstly, of its position in relation to 16 and 17 year-old volunteers; and
- Secondly, a written definition of 'benefit' to reassure those volunteer-involving organisations offering accreditation and training as recommended by Russell that they will still be able to secure free checks for volunteers.

Finally, it is unfortunate that some insurance policies continue to discriminate against young volunteers and this can affect 16 and 17 year-olds as well as those under the age of 16. Some organisations may have genuine difficulties in finding a suitable insurance policy but this can also be used as an excuse by some organisations that are reluctant to engage with younger volunteers.

## 2.4 Match-Fund Opportunities

Since v launched as an independent charity in 2006, we have secured pledges worth over £22m from over 65 private sector organisations.

This additional funding has produced some of the most imaginative and collaborative opportunities for youth volunteering engaging large numbers of young people through events such as Oxjam, which awards grants to young people putting on music events in support of Oxfam. The in-kind support that we have received from some partners, by way of media publicity for example, has also helped to raise profile and publicise particular projects. The match fund is particularly good at engaging young people from across the country in national projects, complementing the local, grassroots focus of the NYVP.

One of our match-fund projects, **vcashpoint** has been developed by our youth advisory board, **v20**, and has allowed young people to apply for grants of up to £2,500 to run community projects. We received over 500 applications for the first round of **vcashpoint** and ideas ranged from co-ordinating football training and a tournament for disadvantaged young people to arranging fun and educational trips for children with special needs.

There are other ways in which the private sector could be engaged in volunteering, by for example, encouraging their own staff to volunteer in the community and partner with local TSOs. Drawing on our own experience to date, **v** would advise the Commission that harnessing support from the private sector will allow for a more ambitious vision for the future of volunteering.

## 2.5 Raising Awareness and Widening Access to Information

The Russell Commission made several recommendations aimed at promoting awareness of volunteering and increasing access to information on youth volunteering opportunities. The Russell Commission identified that while fifty percent of the adult population volunteered in some capacity, volunteering lacked sufficient public profile, particularly when it came to recognising and celebrating youth achievements.<sup>4</sup>

It is very early to be assessing progress but we would like to share our experience and learning so far with the Commission.

- Russell recommended that a series of campaigns be developed to promote awareness of volunteering and **v** will be launching several high-profile campaigns over the next year. While many would have liked us to launch an awareness-raising campaign immediately, this was inappropriate due to the need to balance supply and demand. Fundamentally, there are currently not enough quality volunteering placements available for young people so it would not have been fair to raise expectations before commissioning new opportunities.
- Russell also recommended the creation of a national volunteering portal ensuring that all young people have ready access to information on volunteering opportunities.

**v** has been progressively engaging in awareness-raising with young people and has benefited from a range of in-kind support from match fund partners. In association with the Premier League, we began raising awareness of **v** at 20 Premier League football grounds in December and through our partnership with GCap Media launched a radio campaign across over 40 stations in England in January 2007. During February and March, we also launched a targeted awareness campaign to attract applications from young people to our youth fund **vcashpoint**.

Working closely with **v20** and other young people, we have developed a theme called “**whatsyourv?**” which is being used in our awareness campaigns to broaden the appeal of volunteering and crucially, to change the image of volunteering for young people. This theme is being deployed across multiple media platforms (such as postcards, on-line, radio, press, outdoor and viral marketing) as we enter the next phase of campaigning activity. Mass campaigns are not ‘the only’ way to promote



volunteering and schools do have a significant role to play (see below). However, we believe that these campaigns and the use of new media will be critical in changing the image of volunteering amongst young people.

The portal, **vinspired.com**, was launched at the end of June 2007, replacing the transitional site **vupforit** launched in September 2006 and we are now able to analyse site performance including the number of users, pages viewed, time spent on site and user journey through the site, as well as the performance of individual referring partner sites. With this information, we can therefore measure the success of any future campaigns.

The site is growing every day, with over 4,800 registered users, 54,000 searches for volunteering opportunities and 59% of young people saying that they have not volunteered before. Looking at the statistics to date, we have evidence demonstrating the particularly successful impact of the radio campaign from January through May. Information provided in response to the 'How did you hear about the site?' question also indicates an increased awareness of the portal via word of mouth; other websites; and via a search engine.

Youth involvement has been absolutely critical to the creation of **vinspired.com** with **v20** heavily involved with the site development and now contributing on an on-going basis via the blog.

However, for **vinspired.com** to fully achieve its potential, several improvements can be made:

- There is still some resistance in the sector to the idea of a one-stop shop. While the concept is supported in theory, many organisations are reluctant to pool resources and prefer to power their own sites. As a result, TSOs are not automatically listing their opportunities on Youthnet's National Volunteering Database (which powers **vinspired.com**) and a culture change is needed. The needs of young people should come before the needs of the providers.
- We have identified improvements that relate to the opportunity search engine and the ability to match opportunities and geographical area.
- Finally, more needs to be done to target young men, people from BME and other communities where volunteering is not pervasive and those who are at the upper end of our target age-group.

If the Commission on the Future of Volunteering was to recommend a similar 'one-stop shop' of volunteering opportunities in England, it would make sense to share data and engineer a way in which 16-25 year-olds could be automatically directed towards **vinspired.com** which is specifically tailored to their age-group.

## 3. Creating a Culture of Volunteering

In preparation for this response, we asked members of v20 to comment on whether all young people should volunteer. As you can see from the selected comments below, there were a whole range of views and opinions. However the most commonly agreed position (and the one communicated during oral evidence) is that volunteering cannot be compulsory and must be freely chosen. At the same time, most of our v20 members are passionate about more of their peers taking part in volunteering and creating a climate where voluntary action is 'the norm'.

### Should all young people volunteer?

- *"I think everyone who is able should be encouraged to volunteer in some way or another – volunteering allows people to give something back to the community"*
- *"It doesn't suit everyone – different people have different interests and you shouldn't impose volunteering on people if they don't want to do it – the whole concept is that it should be voluntary"*
- *"I think everyone should have the opportunity to volunteer and should know how they could get involved... but I don't think everyone should volunteer – what makes volunteering so special is that everyone is there because they want to be"*
- *"I don't believe it makes you a 'better citizen'. However, I do believe that it makes you a more aware citizen. It makes you appreciate the smaller things especially if you've spent 5 hours gardening in a near-by car park cutting back weeds!"*
- *"In a culture of take, take, take, I think people should be encouraged to see the value in giving and not expecting anything material in return"*
- *"In volunteering you are doing a service for someone out of the goodness of your heart and that makes you a better person in general, let alone a better citizen"*

### 3.1 The Role of Schools

There is significant consensus around the idea that schools need to be doing much more to promote volunteering to children and young people and could be well-placed to introduce the concept of volunteering at an early age.

However our preference would be for schools to be 'promoters' rather than 'enforcers' and we have concerns about volunteering being included as a requirement in the school curriculum. Negative experiences at a young age can often lead to disengagement later on in life; moreover, we would have significant worries about quality assurance and the degree to which curriculum-based "volunteering" would be youth-led.

The Russell Commission has already addressed this issue and suggested that materials and lesson plans be developed for citizenship teachers making it easy for them to explain volunteering to their pupils. It also highlighted various innovative programmes that schools can run to encourage the experience of voluntary work among pre-16 year-olds. There is a lot of potential for schools to create the space (for example, during a lunch hour) for youth-led volunteering and action groups. Finally, it is particularly important that the reforms to Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) properly acknowledge the opportunities for volunteering and the role that schools and other IAG providers have to play in sign-posting young people to appropriate agencies.

There is also enormous potential for the volunteering agenda to link in with extended schools and some v-funded projects may already be delivering opportunities in this way. There are now over 5000 schools offering additional services and activities that meet wider needs of children, young people, families and their communities. Activities included in the Extended Schools Prospectus include after-school clubs, childcare, sports and arts – a number of these activities could provide stimulating opportunities for young volunteers.

### 3.2 Incentives

v is aware that there is a current debate around the potential role of incentives in encouraging more young people to volunteer, whether it be the offering of initial incentives to young people or the build up of credit on some kind of card.

The difficulty with this discussion is that is happening at a purely conceptual level without any reference to volunteering infrastructure and capacity. v wholly supports the aim of seeing more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds involved in volunteering and our NYVP guidance notes make specific reference to this. However, it might be more useful to ask whether or not there are currently enough inspiring opportunities for young people to engage in before latching onto the latest new idea.

It may be worth revisiting this debate in a years' time, once the infrastructure has been established and new opportunities created, but v does not believe that this is the right time to be introducing on-going incentives that might dramatically change the nature of volunteering and the relationship between volunteer and host organisation.

Using small incentives like free food or t-shirts to generate interest in an activity is of course a tried and tested method of the sector. Young people who have contributed to discussions with us have confirmed that initial incentives can be useful but they have also stressed that incentives should not be extravagant or 'silly' and should not become expected. We also need to further build the link between volunteering and skills particularly the social and emotional aspects of learning. The opportunity to develop skills can also act as an incentive to engage in volunteering, particularly amongst young people who have struggled with more formal learning pathways and accreditation such as a DofE certificate or a Youth Achievement Award can often be a route back into education.

### 3.3 Recognition and Accreditation

Recommendation 11 of the Russell Commission stated that, “the aspirations of young people will be met best through a progression of awards and accreditation that recognises the commitment they show and the skills they gain in the course of volunteering”.

As an integral part of the National Youth Volunteering Programme, v will be announcing details later this year of a new system that will allow young people to record and reflect on their achievements, distinguishing between recognition, celebration and accreditation. In order to build a ‘culture of volunteering’, it is important to increase recognition of skills developed whilst volunteering, and we hope that the framework will become an established point of reference for employers.

However, other young people have also told us that accreditation is not for them. Instead they want the opportunity to volunteer and to have their contribution recognised, without having to build a portfolio and record details of their activities. The challenge for v is how we can create a nationally recognised framework, with which all young volunteers can engage whether taking part in accredited activity or not.

Our mandate is to focus on 16-25 year-olds but where accreditation is concerned, it makes little sense to impose arbitrary cut-off points based on age. We would therefore be interested in talking with the Commission about how the NYVP framework could link into a wider all-age system of accreditation.

### 3.4 The Wider Context and Intergenerational Volunteering

v looks forward to further innovation in volunteering and we are currently compiling a compendium of innovative youth-led volunteering schemes from around the world. We are happy to share this with the Commission when it is completed (should you think it will be useful).

There is also scope for local TSOs to develop innovative programmes for inter-generational volunteering, bringing younger and older people together to learn from, and support one another. During the conclusion of our first grants round in February 2007, we specifically called for volunteering projects with an inter-generational element and response was fairly poor, indicating that more needs to be done to innovate and model best-practice in this area. There is also potential for older adults to volunteer with young people and as announced in the 10 Year Strategy for Positive Activities, v will be exploring, with the DCSF, OTS and the business community, how more disengaged young people can be offered a mentor to advise and support their transition to adulthood.

In summary, it is essential that the v framework for youth action and engagement fits together with the overall vision for volunteering in England and moving forward, it will be critical for us to identify all points of possible overlap and potential partnership. The youth volunteering agenda does not sit in isolation and we look forward to working with the Commission to build a coherent vision for the future of volunteering.

## Endnotes

---

- <sup>1</sup> Russell Commission: A National Framework for Youth Action and Engagement (2005), p.107.
- <sup>2</sup> 2005 Citizenship Survey: Active Communities Report (2006, CLG), p.8
- <sup>3</sup> Chris Penberthy and Andy Foster, Building on Success, (2004) p. 31
- <sup>4</sup> Russell Commission: A National Framework for Youth Action and Engagement (2005), p.20.