

# vpolicy

## A response from v to the Third Sector Strategy for Communities and Local Government

September 20, 2007

## 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 200,000 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

v welcomes the opportunity to comment on the CLG's Third Sector Strategy and to consider how the Department can implement the cross-government recommendations set out in the recently published review of 'The Future Role of the Third Sector in Social and Economic Regeneration'.

We are delighted that the Government is committed to working with us to achieve a step-change in youth volunteering, as set out in the Russell Commission report. It is now imperative that all Government departments work together to keep volunteering high on the agenda, and to ensure that policies support this objective.

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

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# Consultation Questions

## 1. How effectively do we implement Compact principles?

- 1.1** v experiences the Compact both as a funded organisation and as a funder. In all that we do, we are firmly committed to the Compact principles and we ourselves welcome the much-needed stability that 3-year funding can provide.
- 1.2** We support the proposals to strengthen the Compact and in designing our own administered funding programme, the National Youth Volunteering Programme, we have sought to implement Compact principles, in order to allow those organisations responsible for local delivery to plan and develop their work in a strategic way.

## 2. In what other ways could we help improve the effectiveness of engagement with the third sector at the:

**i) regional and sub-regional levels; and**

**ii) local level?**

- 2.1** The next year will see a transformation in support for youth volunteering offered at a local level. v's National Youth Volunteering Programme (NYVP) will create vteams in every local authority area in England, to develop networks with local third sector organisations and to broker young people into appropriate volunteering opportunities.
- 2.2** Building on the best of the work delivered by Millennium Volunteers, vteams will be hosted by existing third sector organisations and further details will be announced later this year.

We will expect our vteams to develop strategic relationships across local authority departments and to champion youth volunteering as a way in which young people can make a positive contribution. The relationship between vteam and the local Children & Young People's Trust will be critical and we expect volunteering to be given prominence in all Children & Young People's Plans. (Analysis of CYPPs by NfER showed that 49/75 plans had included volunteering as a target under 'Make a Positive Contribution')<sup>1</sup>.

- 2.3** Other key plans (e.g. Youth Justice Plan, Learning & Skills Council Plan) should take full account of the contribution volunteering can make to their objectives and in particular, v would like to see a local commitment to promoting volunteering amongst 19-25 year-olds, most of whom fall outside the remit of Children & Young People's Trusts.
- 2.4** There is a need for fuller discussion about the role that Local Area Agreements can play in promoting volunteering across the board and as Volunteering England has already illustrated, volunteering can help local authorities achieve priorities in all four strategic blocks of the LAA. For example, the contribution that

volunteering can make to 'building respect in communities and reducing anti-social behaviour'.

In terms of funding for youth volunteering, v is very clear that we cannot fund all youth volunteering opportunities and we are therefore encouraging organisations to seek funding from a diversity of sources, including from the local authority. The LAA should therefore be seen as a strategic tool for leveraging funding at a local level and we will be equipping vteams to make the case for volunteering through involvement in the local Sustainable Community Strategy.

### **3. Would your organisation wish to be considered to become a strategic partner?**

**3.1** v is already a strategic partner of the Office of the Third Sector (OTS) and we are therefore discounted from applying to be a CLG strategic partner. However we would be interested to know how this new forum will interact with the OTS.

**3.2** In the Third Sector Review (Strengthening Communities), the OTS announced its intention to create a 'streamlined advisory structure', drawing expertise from across the third sector into a single advisory body. v recognises that there may also be the need for other Government departments to work more intensively with partners who may be able to offer expertise in a particular area (for example, education or social care) but it should not stand in isolation – existing OTS strategic partners should be invited as a matter of course in order to support joined-up thinking across Government.

### **4. Do you agree with our focus on community anchors?**

**4.1** As far as volunteering is concerned, activity in local communities is dispersed and takes place through a wide-range of third sector (and public sector) organisations. In addition to formal opportunities, there is also a huge amount of 'informal' voluntary action that goes on in communities and which can slip under the radar. Therefore whilst community anchors may offer a useful focus for the management of community assets etc... they will only be one way in which to engage with the third sector at a local level.

### **5. Are there good models of regional and sub-regional bodies, local authorities, or LSPs working strategically to support community anchor organisations in conjunction with the local third sector?**

**5.1** At this stage, we do not have sufficient information to comment.

### **6. Are there major gaps in our proposals for improving our strategic engagement with the third sector?**

**6.1** Once vteams are in place, we will be in a position to assess the way in which local authorities are effectively engaging with volunteer-involving organisations and would be happy to share our findings and examples of best practice with the CLG.