

Title of Action Plan being assessed	Participation in regular volunteering
LAA indicator	NI 6
Name of person completing this assessment	Simon Banks
Contact Telephone Number	01245-430478
Date	30/6/09
Which Partners are involved?	Essex Association of Volunteer Centres Essex Association of CVSs ESTIC Voluntary sector generally District councils Essex Police

1. What are the aims and objectives of this Action Plan – are there any in addition to achieving the LAA indicator target?

Improve services through increased volunteering
Improve quality of life of residents who volunteer, through effects on mental and physical health, skills, self-confidence and sense of empowerment
Create more inclusive, participatory society

2. What are the steps used to deliver the Action Plan?

This is a new structure and process. However, it builds on:

- Recruitment and placing of volunteers through Volunteer Centres
- Existing policies in statutory authorities for recruitment and management of volunteers, and practice where there is no policy
- Existing policies in statutory authorities for their staff volunteering, and practice where there is no policy
- Existing operation and policies of Colchester Time Bank.

The Action Plan is monitored and promoted by the joint NI 6/ NI 7 Support Group.

3a. Think carefully about each of the equality groups below in turn. Could the Action Plan have a negative or positive effect on people in the group? Tick any group that could be positively affected, and put a cross against any group that could be negatively affected. Some groups can have both a tick and a cross.

Y	X	Race and Culture	Y	X	Disability
Y	X	Age	Y		Gender
Y	X	Sexual Orientation	Y	X	Religion and Belief
Y	X	Rural Isolation	Y	X	Economic Deprivation

3b. Describe any positive or negative issues that you think are relevant under each equality strand. If you identify an issue that substantially affects a particular group, and might stop them benefiting, state what changes you will make to your Action Plan.

Race & Culture

Issues: Initiatives to promote volunteering may use channels unfamiliar to or inadvertently unfriendly to BME people. We have no information on equality monitoring of volunteers placed by Volunteer Centres. Also if interpreting and translation are not available, this will exclude some people, though probably not many as people not fluent in English may not want to volunteer outside communities of the same language. Finally, volunteers may encounter racial or cultural hostility and measures against this need to be in place.

Changes to Action Plan: Ensure Volunteer Centres have means to monitor volunteer throughput by equality measures. Promote equality issues in training and facilitate spread of best practice. Make sure publicity reflects diversity and avoids stereotypes.

Age

Issues: People in their 60s and early 70s are overrepresented among volunteers, for several good reasons including being retired with time available, not commuting and tending to live in the same place for long periods. Some age groups will be underrepresented because they have little time or inclination to volunteer. However, without specific action to engage young people, they may be underrepresented among volunteers to their loss. NEET school leavers may need targeted action. From the mid 70s on volunteering rates decline steeply, mainly because of declining health and in some cases income and “can’t do” assumptions. There is evidence that volunteering benefits the physical and even more the mental health of older people. However, the issues here concern existing barriers the project may fail to lift, rather than new barriers it may impose.

Changes to Action Plan: Examine with relevant organisations such as ECVYS and Age Concern barriers to youth and older retired people volunteering and insert action points. Make sure publicity reflects diversity and avoids stereotypes.

Disability

Issues: Unless volunteering venues and publicity are accessible, some disabled volunteers will be excluded. Accessibility audits can identify the issues. Some volunteers may encounter hostile or patronising attitudes. This is most likely to happen when they volunteer outside the disability field, and similar points can be made about other equality groups, for example young people volunteering other than in sports or youth organisations. Images used in publicity should be positive and include disabled people. Training for people recruiting or managing volunteers should cover disability equality issues and overcome the perception that this is just about people in wheelchairs or with white sticks.

Changes to Action Plan: Promote accessibility audits and inclusion of disability issues in training. Make sure publicity reflects diversity and avoids stereotypes.

Religion and Belief

Issues: Some volunteers may encounter hostility on grounds of their belief (for example, Muslims or Jews). Others may encounter practices which exclude them, for example a situation in which it is difficult to get food outside the workplace, and internal provision does not include options acceptable on religious grounds, or a strict dress code (formalised or not) or failure to take account of special religious days. There is a spectrum of situations from those which clearly exclude anyone following the requirements of their religion, to situations where there is no religious bar but an individual may feel unable to participate for religious or philosophical reasons – for example if a function is held in a church. The points made about training and images under other headings apply here.

Changes to Action Plan: Encourage the incorporation of these issues in training. Make sure

publicity demonstrates diversity.

Gender

Issues: Volunteering opportunities, training and promotional meetings should offer a range of times. Without that, women (overrepresented among people with childcare responsibilities) or men (overrepresented among long-distance commuters) may be excluded. Similar issues apply to the entitlement of statutory sector staff who are part-time (mostly women) to volunteer with employer help. There are likely to be particular opportunities to facilitate volunteering for women who, wishing to return to work after a long time out, seek to gain or regain skills, confidence or helpful entries in a CV.

Changes to Action Plan: Encourage reflection of gender issues in training and in targeted promotions. Encourage spread of best practice through VCS partners. Make sure publicity demonstrates diversity and avoids stereotypes.

Sexual Orientation

Issues: Volunteers could encounter hostility, against which measures need to be in place. At present organisations in this field are not well-represented in relevant forums, and without care, this could lead to messages being missed. Anecdotally, this may be a problem with some faith-based groups, but local evidence is lacking. Training for people working with volunteers should cover this issue.

Changes to Action Plan: Encourage incorporation of these issues into training.

Rural Isolation

Issues: There is a distinct risk that people isolated in rural areas – without cars, for example – may be unable to take advantage of volunteering opportunities. Community transport promoted through LAA target LI 5.1 can help, as can engaging very local organisations (including parish councils). Moreover, much rural volunteering is highly informal. This is difficult to promote through high-level partnership action, but it will not suffer in any way from action to promote more formal volunteering and some time banks may be able to help. As for beneficiaries of volunteer services in rural areas, they only stand to gain.

Changes to Action Plan: No changes as such, but need to stress link to LI 5.1, parish councils and rural time banking.

Economic Deprivation

Issues: Volunteers are underrepresented among people on low income or otherwise deprived, for obvious reasons. If people are struggling to make ends meet, they are unlikely to be interested in volunteering. However, Time Banks offers a route to involvement for people unlikely to engage in formal volunteering, and volunteering offers a route to skills, self-confidence and references for people facing various difficulties, such as learning difficulties. VCS projects based in areas of high deprivation are numerous, and LAA processes need to make sure these get their fair share of volunteers and other resources. Images used in promoting volunteering should not inadvertently imply that it is a preserve of people comfortably off. Young people who are NEET may benefit from volunteering and this may need targeted action.

Changes to Action Plan: No changes as such, but need to ensure action does not concentrate on easy wins in prosperous areas to exclusion of harder targets.

4. What equality statistics or other evidence from public engagement do you need to help you test your initial conclusions in Section 1?

What statistics or reports already exist – nationally or locally?

What else do you need to know – what are the gaps?

How will you collect this evidence? If you feel that particular organisations or community/voluntary groups will be able to help you please list these too.

STATISTICS

What evidence do you want?	Where is it available?	How will you use the evidence?
Evidence of variations in volunteering motivation and participation levels between different groups	Tracker survey; Place survey	Identify low levels of positive responses by groups and locations, find out reasons and where appropriate, action that can be taken
Estimates of the ethnic make-up of Essex updated and improved from the 2001 census	Schools language survey; migration tool; 2001 census (for trends)	Identify low levels by groups and locations (already done but need to revisit), reasons for this and possible action
Make-up of ECC workforce by all equality strands measured	Essex Data Book; ONS	Use as basis for identifying underrepresentation in ECC staff volunteering and address any imbalances
Indications of make-up of volunteers passing through Volunteer Centres by equality strands	Volunteer Centres	Supplement census info to identify underrepresentation and address any imbalances

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

What do you want to know?	What questions will you ask?	Who are you going to ask?	Name of planned source (if known)	What will you do with the answer?
<p>Indications of barriers to volunteering (including perceptions and attitudes of the potential volunteers) for disadvantaged groups, and of credible remedies</p>	<p>What barriers exist to volunteering by the groups they represent and what would help overcome them?</p> <p>What outreach to minority and disadvantaged groups will be effective?</p>	<p>VCS minority group organisations (ethnicity, age etc)</p>	<p>ECVYS ECDP EDPA EREC MENTER AGE CONCERN TACMEP Other VCS minority group organisations as identified</p>	<p>Amend action plan and possible implementation action</p>
<p>What demand and potential demand for volunteering exists in these groups and to what extent it is met</p>	<p>What is profile of volunteers by equality strands? Any indications/ ideas to explain imbalances? Any action taken to address this? Any indication of differences in volunteer retention and experience?</p>	<p>Volunteer Centres CVSs Selected volunteer-receiving organisations</p>	<p>Volunteer Centres CVSs ECC (libraries, arts/heritage) District councils (Braintree, Chelmsford, Epping Forest?) Age Concern Essex Wildlife Trust EDPA ECDP Sports Council (Essex) Victim Support Salvation Army</p>	<p>Identify imbalances; identify reasons where possible where these do not reflect and informed choices of potential volunteers, incorporate corrective measures where possible in the action plan</p>

5. The Essex Partnership needs a copy of this Section of your EIA in order to co-ordinate any public engagement activities. You will be given feed back by the Essex partnership on the best way to manage the public engagement activity you have identified on the form. Please send this to the e-mail address below.

Please submit this form to the Essex Partnership team: info@essexpartnership.org