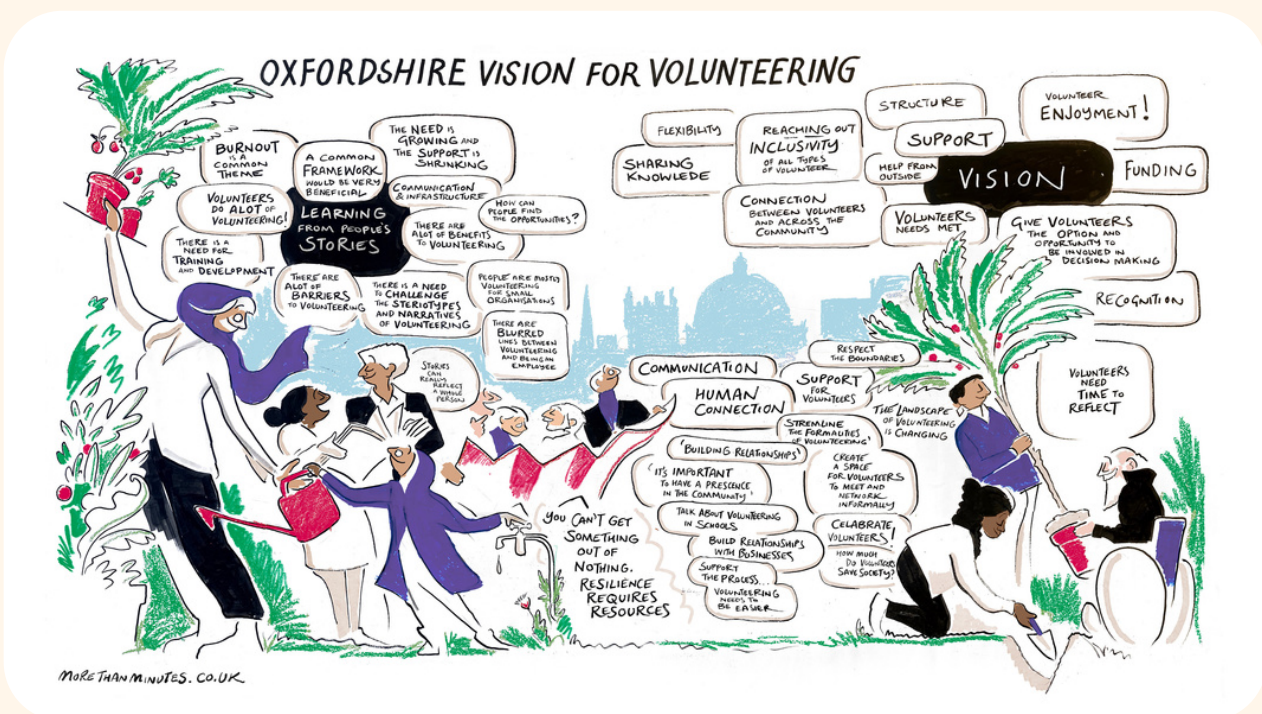


The Oxfordshire Vision for Volunteering

Executive Summary



Visual minutes created at the
Oxfordshire Vision for Volunteering
Discussion Session
May 2023

Why do we need a Vision for Volunteering for Oxfordshire?

Last year we set out to understand the experience of volunteering in Oxfordshire, how volunteering has been changed and shaped by recent events, and what partners, systems, stakeholders and citizens need to do together to ensure a thriving, inclusive, sustainable future for volunteering in Oxfordshire.

The publication of our Vision for Volunteering is timely, coinciding with Oxfordshire County Council's [Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2022-2027](#) and the national [Vision for Volunteering](#).

How did we research the Vision?

Over 350 people from across Oxfordshire, volunteering with more than 470 different organisations, contributed information for our Vision for Volunteering.

This included more than 320 people, representing a wide spectrum of volunteering activities across Oxfordshire, who completed our public survey.

324

Survey respondents

13

Storytellers

45

Open meeting attendees

21

Discussion participants

2

Written submissions

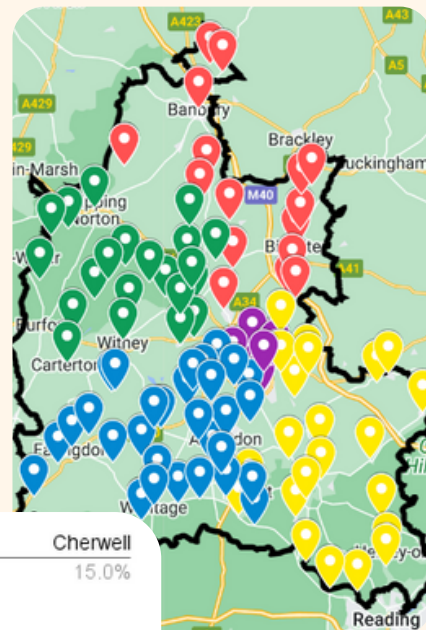
8

Advisory group members

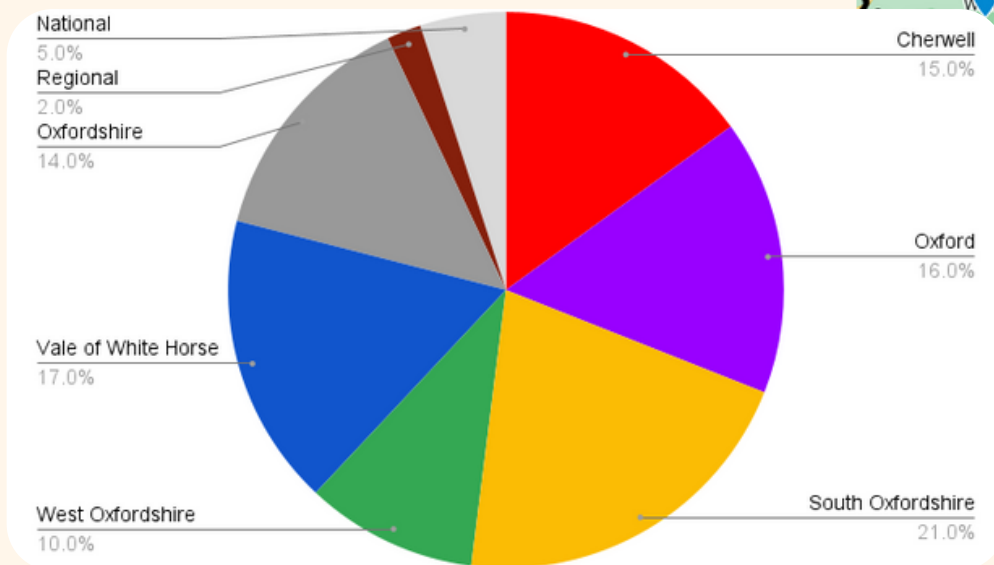
Survey snapshot

People from across Oxfordshire answered the survey.

They volunteer in organisations operating in our districts, in the wider region, nationally and internationally.



Survey responses



Where the organisations respondents volunteer for operate

623

Voluntary roles

471

Organisations volunteered with

1.91

Average number of volunteer roles per person

16

Highest number of roles held by one person

15

People volunteering with more than one group

1018

Total number of organisations mentioned

Identifying themes

Following the survey, a cross-section of volunteers was approached for more detailed conversations. Working in partnership with the Old Fire Station and using the [Storytelling methodology](#), these volunteers spoke freely about their experiences of volunteering in Oxfordshire. After transcribing their stories, we were able to look at common themes.

As part of our commitment to creating multiple routes to engagement, we also held two open meetings online and received written submissions. We concluded with an in-person stakeholder discussion session facilitated by the Old Fire Station.

We then identified common themes from the survey, the stories, our open meetings, the written submissions and the final discussion session. We have used these themes to structure the detailed report, using the voices of volunteers throughout.

Volunteer Preferences

What Motivates Volunteers

Crisis Point: A Catalyst for Volunteering

Volunteer Demographics and Inclusion

Volunteering and Paid Work

Volunteering Infrastructure: Information and Advertising

Volunteering Infrastructure: Induction, Verification, and Permission

Volunteering Infrastructure: Training, Communicating, and Socialising

Volunteer Wellbeing

Money – It's a Drag

Key findings

Volunteering **needs to be accessible to everyone in Oxfordshire**. This requires, among other things, the use of thoughtful and inclusive language when advertising roles, as well as work to encourage and support volunteering in areas and communities which organisations may previously have overlooked. It also requires organisations to be flexible when designing opportunities, responsive to the needs of each individual, and genuinely open to all.

Volunteers **need clear points of access to volunteering opportunities** – to know where, when, and how they can volunteer – and to have a clearly defined role.

Volunteers **need to feel recognised as individuals**, to be praised, to understand the outcomes of their efforts, and to feel that they are making a difference. This requires effective communication on the part of voluntary organisations and systems of feedback.

Volunteers **need to feel respected, trusted, and welcome**. This requires that voluntary organisations are prepared to be transparent and prepared to share responsibility.

Volunteers **need to enjoy volunteering**. This requires the cultivation of social opportunities and relationship-building, as well as activities not directly related to the volunteers' tasks, such as social events, walks, barbecues, and annual celebrations.

Volunteers **need to be able to work according to their strengths and within appropriate boundaries**. This requires that organisations tailor their expectations to individual circumstances, avoid making assumptions, and are responsive to individual need.

Key findings

Volunteers **need time to reflect and opportunities to experiment**. This requires that organisations are open to saying ‘yes’ and that they include space for supervision.

Volunteers **need opportunities to start new organisations or create new volunteering projects**, particularly in areas where there is an existing lack of representation or support. This requires funding, physical spaces and training to be made easily available.

Volunteers **need training and support**. This requires that knowledge and experience is shared widely between voluntary organisations.

Volunteers **like to give their time to organisations rooted locally**, whether that’s small hyper-local community groups or local branches of national organisations.

Volunteers **are rarely motivated solely by altruism or solely by personal benefit** but by a mix of motives.

Volunteers are **put off by the bureaucracy** of signing up to volunteer and by duplication in paperwork and training.

Communication with volunteers is often overlooked but is vital to the volunteer experience.

Organisations feel that they have to jump through too many hoops when applying for funding. Smaller organisations lack the resources to seek out funding opportunities or to navigate their way through numerous different application processes.

Demand, the complexity of demand, and what is asked of volunteers in many organisations has increased as the sector absorbs growing pressures from statutory services.

The Oxfordshire Vision for Volunteering

Using a combination of the themes and the key findings, we were able to develop 10 core principles for our Vision for Volunteering.

1. Include everyone
2. Keep it personal
3. Value the person
4. Nurture relationships
5. Offer flexibility
6. Make it enjoyable
7. Training and support matters
8. Create space for experimentation
9. Fund it
10. Build community

Next steps

Working in partnership with Oxfordshire's diverse community and voluntary sector, and with our partners across the county, we will develop an action plan to support the realisation of the Oxfordshire Vision for Volunteering.

Published July 2023

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