

We ♥ Volunteers

Cheshire West Vision for
Volunteering **2025-30**



**Cheshire West
Voluntary Action**
Championing the community sector



Welcome



I'm delighted to introduce the Cheshire West Vision for Volunteering (2025-30).

When asked "Can you imagine a world without volunteering", what comes to mind? At Cheshire West Voluntary Action (CWVA), we believe volunteering plays a pivotal role in our communities.

Volunteers aren't just people who 'help out'. Their commitment underpins many crucial community services. Volunteers can be, and always have been, changemakers in their community, with a record of establishing some of our most important and enduring organisations.

Volunteers can also benefit themselves. For example, through improved mental wellbeing, learning new skills, meeting new people, providing a sense of purpose and bringing self-confidence. This can also lead to valuable opportunities, including pathways into employment.

The volunteering landscape has undergone a significant shift over the past five years. We know that people are volunteering less overall than before the COVID-19 pandemic and this is a national issue.

Many organisations, particularly smaller ones that may rely on volunteering, are struggling to retain and recruit volunteers. This is despite the majority of volunteers being satisfied in their role.

Expectations of how and when people can volunteer are changing too, and Cheshire West is no exception, or possibly more susceptible, to this trend.

In a reducing and changing volunteering landscape, community sector organisations in our borough have a higher reliance on volunteers than in some neighbouring regions.

At CWVA, we understand and champion the true

value of volunteers, and appreciate the challenges this trend poses to our communities.

Using the national Vision for Volunteering as a framework, this vision is a piece of work that has been led and designed through consultation with volunteers, community sector organisations and other stakeholders across Cheshire West.

The Vision for Volunteering is based on five key themes.

- **Inclusive**
- **Empowering**
- **Collaborative**
- **Experimental**
- **Appreciated**

There are specific issues that some members of the community face, such as when younger people are trying to find volunteering opportunities. We'll go into more detail about each of the themes later in the vision and how we're looking to tackle some of these challenges highlighted during our consultation.

While this coproduced vision has been led by CWVA, it's owned by everyone in the community and we want you to help shape the future for volunteering in Cheshire West – volunteers, organisations, policy makers and others. Join us and be changemakers.

Gary Cliffe

Chief Executive

Cheshire West Voluntary Action (CWVA)



Endorsements

"Not only does volunteering help improve the health and wellbeing of volunteers themselves, but volunteers and the organisations they support can play a vitally important role with helping tackle health challenges and inequalities in the local community. It's important we make sure everyone can explore volunteering and the Vision for Volunteering will provide an excellent framework to help us do this."

Laura Marsh, Place Director for Cheshire West

"I'm delighted to support this coproduced Cheshire West Vision for Volunteering, led by Cheshire West Voluntary Action. Volunteering is the lifeblood of strong, vibrant communities and, as a Council, we're proud to endorse volunteering as a vital tool for nurturing community spirit, addressing local challenges, and creating opportunities for individuals to make a meaningful impact. The Council, local businesses, charities, schools and residents must work together to cultivate a culture where volunteering continues to be valued and accessible to everyone."

Councillor Louise Gittins, Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council

"By giving their time, energy and experience to make a difference, volunteers sum up all that is best about our society. CWVA's Vision for Volunteering celebrates volunteers and has the quality of volunteering at its heart. NAVCA is proud that member organisations like CWVA are joining the national Vision for Volunteering movement and charting a course to engage more volunteers and empower volunteers to have more control over the brilliant things they do."

Rich Warrington, Deputy Chief Executive at the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA)



**Cheshire West
and Chester**



navca
local focus national voice

Creating the Vision for Volunteering

20

hours of
workshops and
focus groups

107

volunteering
stories captured

2

surveys for
organisations and
the public

1

vision

156

ideas fed in

78

organisations
engaged from
different sectors

331

people took part

We ♥ Volunteers

Five themes for the Vision for Volunteering

Volunteering is inclusive

Volunteering in Cheshire West is accessible for people of all ages and abilities, whether in larger towns or rural villages, making sure that the benefits are felt by individuals and communities alike. Diversity in volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) is actively championed, helping build both resilience and capacity.

By 2030 in Cheshire West...

VIOs understand how to embed equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) practices in their volunteer management.

Cheshire West is a place where people of all ages and abilities can thrive through access to meaningful, engaging, and varied volunteering opportunities.

We all acknowledge that positive volunteering experiences can be a valuable pathway to self-development and reintegration.

Volunteering is flexible so roles adapt to fit people's circumstances wherever possible.

Everyone is committed to removing barriers to engagement where they appear.

Diversity in a team of volunteers is celebrated, and involving volunteers from all walks of life builds an organisation's resilience.

Volunteering is locally accessible for everyone in every community across the borough.

"We need more young people. They bring fresh perspectives and can help us champion volunteering – change the landscape, future-proof our work."

"Helping people to start giving a little can grow into them giving a lot."

Volunteering is **empowering**

Volunteers are recognised as changemakers in their communities. They are supported with stepping forward, making decisions, and pursuing projects that align with their strengths and interests. By learning new skills and developing a sense of belonging, volunteers and communities in Cheshire West are better equipped to chart their own course.

By 2030 in Cheshire West...

Volunteers have the power to choose roles that are varied, and align with their skills and interests.

Volunteers are treated with dignity and mutual respect.

Volunteering can give people agency and meaning in their lives.

Volunteers' voices shape community places and spaces that matter to them.

Volunteering provides a pathway to boosting employability and building new skills.

Volunteering can empower a new generation of community leaders to step up, take on responsibilities, and lead on change.

“Volunteering has enabled me to meet amazing people I'd possibly never know otherwise.”

Volunteering is **collaborative**

Strong partnerships make it easy for volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) to work together in Cheshire West. Partnerships are encouraged across community, public and private sectors, helping create a vibrant volunteering landscape.

By 2030 in Cheshire West...

Every volunteer has something valuable to offer, and all VIOs collaborate to make sure any enthusiasm is harnessed.

Volunteers can easily move between organisations and projects.

Volunteers and staff collaborate effectively, supporting one another and recognising the value of each.

Cheshire West embeds a culture of learning and lived experience in volunteering through coproduction. Organisations work closely with communities to design crucial voluntary services.

Established organisations with greater resources support and enable emerging groups with fewer.

CWVA works with neighbouring boroughs to make sure people can easily volunteer close to home, regardless of boundaries.

“Volunteers on the frontline understand the true value of working together more than anyone: it is the essence of volunteering.”

“Partnership working among voluntary organisations is essential – joint projects have a wider reach and always better serve our communities. We can’t work in silo.”

Volunteering is experimental

Volunteering in Cheshire West is flexible, innovative, and dynamic. Volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) are adaptable to changing circumstances, with opportunities naturally evolving from people’s skills and interests. VIOs are unafraid to try new things and feel confident with designing their own solutions to support volunteers.

By 2030 in Cheshire West...

VIOs feel confident in pursuing and piloting new ideas to tackle community challenges.

Volunteers are seen as innovators and creatives, bringing a genuine culture of experimentation in volunteering.

Volunteers are able to work across sectors, developing a passport for skills, interests, training, and abilities.

VIOs and volunteers can use emerging technologies to be the best they can.

Engaging volunteering opportunities are created and grow organically, tailored to emerging skills, interests, and abilities.

Organisations create innovative solutions to simplify complex recruitment, while making sure people’s safety and wellbeing is always a priority.

“Learn from the pandemic – we need to diversify the options for volunteers.”

Volunteering is appreciated

Volunteering in Cheshire West is a part of everyday life, and volunteers receive the recognition they deserve. Communities, individuals, and organisations understand the true value of volunteers' contributions. All efforts are celebrated, and volunteers enjoy a positive experience that is underpinned by dignity and respect.

By 2030 in Cheshire West...

Volunteers are offered appropriate training, resources, and support to thrive in their roles.

People understand the increased wellbeing and wider benefits of volunteering, and how to signpost to volunteering opportunities.

Organisations value the unique contributions of all volunteers, who recognise the wider benefits of volunteering themselves.

Organisations understand and can measure the social impact of their volunteers.

Volunteering is appreciated by individuals, communities, organisations, and policy makers as playing a role in improving health inequality outcomes.

We all share responsibility for busting the volunteering myths and misconceptions.

Volunteering is diverse, and everyone is aware of how to find a suitable role.

This is a vision for everyone in Cheshire West. Our ambition is that it will form a framework for investing time and resources into volunteering, elevating its importance and extending its reach far and wide. We will continue to work with all sectors on how this vision can be adopted by other organisations, and used to harness the enthusiasm for volunteering that we know is alive and well, amplifying the benefits to our communities.

Our thanks go to all organisations, individuals, and stakeholders who have contributed to or endorsed this vision. Without their engagement, this piece of work wouldn't have been possible.

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