

U.K.'S CHARITABLE SECTOR - THE CURRENT STATE AND FUTURE OF VOLUNTEERING

Where are we now and where are we going?



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INTRODUCTION

The state of play in the volunteering sector



20.1

Million Brits

Volunteered at least once in 2017-18

The non-profit and charity sector is the quiet achiever of the British economy, contributing more than £17.1 billion and 865,000 paid workers – almost 3% of the U.K.'s total workforce. This figure makes the 'Third Sector' a bigger source of employment than agriculture, mining or real estate, but formal employment figures are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to impact on society.



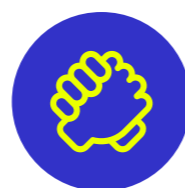
ONE

out of five

volunteered at least once a month

The measure of the U.K.'s charities isn't defined by economic impact, but rather by their collective good – and volunteers are the engine of this mammoth output. Some 20.1 million people, or an estimated 38% of U.K.'s population, formally volunteered at least once in 2017-18. That figure includes only those

who volunteered through a group, club or organisation, and balloons to 53% of the population when factoring in 'informal' volunteering. More than one in five volunteered at least once a month, with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations estimating that 11.9 million Britons are engaged, regular volunteers.



11.9

Million Brits

are engaged, regular volunteers

Charities fill a range of vitally important holes in public life, and with unpaid helpers dwarfing paid workers in the charitable space, volunteers are perhaps the most crucial cog in the third sector. In northern England alone, a 2018 survey by IPPR North found that volunteers contributed more than 67 million hours to charities last year – and that, without this support, more than 80% of charities would go out of business in that region alone.

But while the sheer numbers of those unpaid helpers paint an impressive picture of the U.K.'s voluntary sector, dig a little

deeper and a host of issues facing charities and not-for-profit societies start to emerge. Falling public trust in institutions, flow-on effects from changing workforce patterns, concern about charity transparency, lower government spending and increased competition from 'non-traditional' volunteer organisations have all been flagged as major factors in the challenging nature of the U.K.'s volunteer sector. These issues are only compounded by a lack of resources to invest in technology to react to these changes.

With such a wide array of challenges, innovation and

collaboration will define the future of the third sector. After conducting a series of interviews with senior executives from across the U.K.'s third sector, this whitepaper seeks to address the current state of volunteering in charities and not-for-profits, as well as what leading organisations are doing to address these challenges. Experts from British Red Cross, PDSA, the UK's leading vet charity, the RSPCA and more have provided exclusive insights to illuminate the issues impacting the British volunteering sector – and what the future will look like for U.K.'s best-loved charities.

CAF WORLD GIVING INDEX - TOP 10 COUNTRIES WITH SCORE AND PARTICIPATION IN GIVING BEHAVIOURS

	CAF World Giving Index ranking	CAF World Giving Index score (%)	Helping a stranger (%)	Donating money (%)	Volunteering time (%)
Indonesia	1	59	46	78	53
Australia	2	59	65	71	40
New Zealand	3	58	66	68	40
United States of America	4	58	72	61	39
Ireland	5	56	64	64	40
>> United Kingdom	6	55	63	68	33
Singapore	7	54	67	58	39
Kenya	8	54	72	46	45
Myanmar	9	54	40	88	34
Bahrain	10	53	74	53	33

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Trust, relevance and efficiency

Overwhelmingly, charities remain well-regarded by the U.K. public. Some 58% of the population think charities play an 'essential' or 'very important' role in society, with just 6% reporting they think charities aren't important. This translates to a robust local culture of supporting charities – according to the Charities Aid Foundation, the U.K. ranks sixth in the world for generosity, with one-third of the population volunteering and 68% donating to charities.

However, steady volunteering numbers hide the fact that trust in charities has dropped precipitously in recent years. In 2014, just 18% of Brits said their trust in charities had decreased year-on-year, a figure that climbed to a record 45% last year, according to the Charity Commission for England and Wales (only 5% reported an increase in trust). Compounding this, 41% of those whose trust has fallen said this would mean they would support charities less in the future, either in donations or volunteering time.

While scandals surrounding charities such as Oxfam, Kids Company and Age UK have taken their toll on the sector, the single biggest factor in plummeting trust, according to the Charity Commission, is financial. Some 37% of Brits say that "ensuring that a reasonable proportion of donations make it to [the] end cause" is the most important quality for maintaining trust and confidence in charities – even more important than the charity making a positive difference to their chosen cause.

These figures demonstrate a new frontier for charities in the U.K. Where previously major not-for-profits traded on brand profile and reputation alone, now consumers closely link trust and outcomes. Younger citizens who are more informed about ethical choices and the impact of their consumption habits are spending more time researching their chosen causes and are more careful about choosing who they support than ever before.

This is equally true for organisations looking to attract a voluntary workforce. According to British Red Cross director of volunteer mobilisation, Chris Reed, charities are keenly aware that new generations of charity supporters have different motivations and new avenues to instigate social change, particularly when it comes to volunteers.



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"As charities, we need to recognise that there are forces at play – rising social movements, people increasingly doing their own thing without formal bureaucratic organisations – meaning we need to make some fundamental changes and look beyond our own organisations to ensure that we remain relevant going forward," says Reed.

The British Red Cross has traditionally had a 'one size fits all' approach to volunteering led by the human resources function. With a formal volunteering network of about 20,000 people annually, plus a further 6,500 other volunteers, the renowned humanitarian charity has long been reliant on a largely HR-led volunteering process. However, recent research conducted internally for the British Red Cross found the inflexible system meant that volunteers were not enjoying the largely manual experience of registering and training.

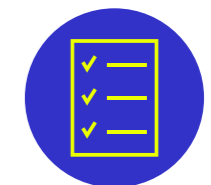
Reed says that it was taking up to four months for volunteers to be trained and placed into roles, reflecting data from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations that up to 35% of U.K.

volunteers think their experience could be better-organised.

Kate Van Der Plank, head of volunteering at the PDSA, says that charities need to spend time thinking about how they remain relevant and offer a variety of different volunteering opportunities to fit different lifestyles, availability and interests whilst still delivering benefit to the charity. PDSA had 3678 volunteers in 2018 – a slight increase on 2017. "Volunteers add value to all parts of the organisation, from one off volunteering activities supporting our events, through to ongoing roles in our shops, hospitals or offices. Some of our volunteers have as much as 30 or 40 years' service with us which we're hugely grateful for and immensely proud of," says Van Der Plank.

"Where previously people would retire around 50-55 and perhaps go on to have a second volunteering career, these days the increasing pension age means that people are working longer. Changing workforce dynamics mean that older people are also staying home to look after grandchildren, so there are a lot of challenges that charities face," she says.

"In the face of competition from other retailers and charitable organisations we're really committed to being the best place to volunteer. We do really look after our volunteers in terms of making sure they have great experiences, we very much see them as part of a team [and] celebrate milestones and anniversaries, run a volunteer awards scheme. We invest in training and have various different schemes where volunteers can get national vocational qualifications as well," she says.



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"WHEN VOLUNTEERS FEEL WHAT THEY'RE DOING IS WORTHWHILE, WHEN THEY ARE CLEAR ON THEIR ROLE AND HAVE RECEIVED THE RIGHT TRAINING AND SUPPORT SO THAT THEY FEEL CONFIDENT IN THEIR ABILITY TO DO A GREAT JOB, IT BECOMES A REWARDING AND WORTHWHILE EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE"

KATE VAN DER PLANK PDSA

FUTURE FOCUS

Engagement in a new era of volunteering

The changing face of volunteering isn't marked solely by a generational or motivational shift, but also by new scrutiny on charities themselves. With people having less time to spend volunteering and more competing demands on their time, both volunteers and the general public are scrutinising charities to a higher level than ever before.

YouGov research has found that, among those who don't donate or volunteer for charitable causes, 32% avoid doing so because too many resources are spent on administrative costs. This reason outstrips even not being able to afford the time or money (29%) as the single biggest reason for not supporting charities. The antidote to this, experts say, is engagement. This takes many forms – engaging existing volunteers to perform better, engaging with the general public to educate them on how funds are spent, and using new tools and technology to better-inform their stakeholders.

Changing volunteer patterns mean that, more than ever before, charities are

also having to grapple with new ways of reaching them. With volunteers looking to assist charities on their own terms, British charities are looking to become more flexible – with digital technology offering a potential solution.

"The traditional model of someone coming into a charity and volunteering regularly well into their retirement is slipping away," says Brian Reeves, volunteering development manager with the RSPCA. "It's short, sharp bursts – people have less time to commit on a regular basis, but want to make a difference for particular periods of time. There's an attitude of people wanting to get something out of volunteering as well as what they give. Whether it's a personal fulfillment, a skill, experience or training, there's different motivations and we need to be more flexible as charities in response to that."

The RSPCA, Reeves says, has experimented with 'micro-volunteering' – the idea that people can complete small volunteering tasks in spare time while

waiting for the bus or picking children up from school. Enabled by digital tools, micro-volunteers enter the RSPCA's wider volunteering database and are able to access resources: "that's a potential pipeline of future volunteers for the future, we nurture people into the program that way," he says.

Flexibility is a two-way street, and many charities such as the British Red Cross are recruiting volunteers for increasingly specialised roles, says Reed.

"We know we need to be more flexible with our volunteering experience, rather than rigid 'shift patterns', if we instead want to attract volunteers with the skills we need. As an organisation we're being a lot more choosy about the skills and the type of person we want and we know we need to adapt to the time they can give. We have to be in line with the volunteers' motivations and see how we can adapt to them so that they can also help us," he says.

Technology is no longer a barrier to volunteering, but an enabler to reaching younger audiences with new skills, says Reeves. The RSPCA recently adopted a new volunteer engagement system, including new e-learning portals and upskilling tools, joining a growing number of charities to recognise that short-term digital investment can lead to longer-term volunteering success.

"AS CHARITIES, WE NEED TO RECOGNISE THAT THERE ARE FORCES AT PLAY – RISING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, PEOPLE INCREASINGLY DOING THEIR OWN THING WITHOUT FORMAL BUREAUCRATIC ORGANISATIONS – MEANING WE NEED TO MAKE SOME FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES AND LOOK BEYOND OUR OWN ORGANISATIONS TO ENSURE THAT WE REMAIN RELEVANT GOING FORWARD"

CHRIS REED British Red Cross

"Younger volunteers are really enjoying that and we're trying to keep up with digital technology as it continues to move forward. We want to utilise technology to make things easier – we know having the digital application forms work really well as people can do it in their own time. The quality of volunteers coming through digital is better because we get a more complete picture of their skills and experience and can filter out and help our selection process, it's been really successful for us," he says.

The opportunities offered by a digitally-connected volunteering platform can also help improve volunteer experience and address lost opportunities – the National Council for Voluntary Organisations' 'Time Well Spent' report found that 9% of potential volunteers said that they didn't end up volunteering because the group or organisation took too long to respond – and 6% decided not to volunteer because of

too much paperwork or a long administrative process.

According to the NCVO, 57% of British volunteers carried out their duties via a mixture of online and offline tasks in 2018. Yet, with just 6% of volunteering done purely on digital platforms, NCVO chair Paul Kellner stated that the opportunities offered by new technology are "huge", identifying flexible arrangements for tech-savvy volunteers and better access for disabled people.

PDSA's Van Der Plank and Reed of the British Red Cross echo these

sentiments, with Reed stating that a "largely digital journey" creates both a more connected experience for volunteers and has the added benefit of reducing bureaucracy and overhead costs. With a multitude of challenges, technology won't be the silver bullet for charities, but as new generations of volunteers look for more fulfillment and stronger engagement, such platforms offer the third sector a way to future-proof, remain relevant and continue to deliver vital services to the British public.

"THE TRADITIONAL MODEL OF CHARITY VOLUNTEERING IS SLIPPING AWAY... IT'S SHORT, SHARP BURSTS – PEOPLE HAVE LESS TIME TO COMMIT ON A REGULAR BASIS, BUT WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR PARTICULAR PERIODS OF TIME [AND] WE AS CHARITIES NEED TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE IN RESPONSE"

BRIAN REEVES RSPCA



© RSPCA

EFFICIENCY AS A METHOD FOR ATTRACTING VOLUNTEERS

With the British public now paying keen attention to charity finances, volunteers are becoming even more engaged with the operational aspects of charities. One volunteer we spoke to said she stopped volunteering with a prominent cancer charity after researching how much money they spent on fundraising and administrative costs. Instead, she "did her homework" to find a different charity that supported a cause she was passionate about, but with lower overheads, and began volunteering there instead. The top ten charities spent an average of 61.7% of their funds on charitable activities, with the rest going either to administrative, fundraising or revenue-generating activities. According to Charity Choice, the British Red Cross spends 80p of every £1 raised on their core charitable remit.

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