



DRAFT VERSION:
Empowering Communities:
BCP Council's Voluntary and Community
Sector and Volunteering Strategy
2021-2024

Foreword

We are passionate about creating vibrant communities, with an outstanding quality of life, where everyone can play an active role and feel part of their local community. That is why we are committed to supporting our voluntary and community sector to thrive. We wish to enable everyone to feel confident to volunteer in a variety of ways, to help others in their communities across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

Over the last year we have seen the remarkably agile response of individuals, groups and organisations to come together and take action to help others. BCP Council recognises the longer-term impact that the COVID-19 pandemic will have on local people and organisations and is committed to helping strengthen our communities so that everyone feels safe, engaged and included. By working together with individuals, groups, organisations and partners across the local area, BCP Council is looking at ways to help local communities recover and flourish.

This voluntary and community sector and volunteering strategy outlines a set of priorities and key actions over the next three years to achieve this vision and create connected communities. Through consultation and engagement, we have listened to the views of residents, organisations and groups across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole to help inform the strategy and develop ways that we can work together to help make a difference.

We look forward to working together to create a great place to live, work and visit.



Councillor Drew Mellor,
Leader of BCP Council.

Councillor Karen Rampton,
Portfolio holder for Adults.

Councillor Jane Kelly,
Lead Member for Community Engagement.

Vision and Purpose

Our Vision is to ensure that Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole is a vibrant, connected community which provides meaningful opportunities for volunteering and social action, and empower a thriving Voluntary and community sector to help support community needs.

In order to create vibrant communities everyone needs to play their part. We need to bring individuals, communities and networks closer together to better understand local needs, share knowledge and resources, and together co-design ways to build resilient communities that can find solutions to their needs.

With the ongoing challenges of austerity, budget cuts and pressure on resources across our communities, alongside the increasing demand on services and complexity of needs, we now more than ever need to work together to find new and innovative ways to help support those most vulnerable in our communities. The council is transforming its operations and services alongside local voluntary and community sector organisations, to find new ways to collaborate, fund and deliver services to meet community needs.

This strategy outlines the framework and a set of priorities that we believe are important to help communities to thrive.

The strategy was developed based on views and feedback through public consultation and stakeholder engagement with a range of voluntary and community sector organisations, the community, faith groups and individuals. We explored how can we make opportunities more accessible and open to help people to get involved, as well as improve on the types of opportunities available and the experiences that people have. We listened to what is important to empower a thriving community and voluntary sector.

Size of the Voluntary and Community Sector

Nationally



163,000
charities⁽¹⁾

there are approximately 163,000 charities in the UK



21 million
volunteers⁽¹⁾

there are more than 21 million volunteers that help UK charities



£23.9bn
per year⁽¹⁾

the estimated value of volunteer work is £23.9 billion per year



£12.2bn
UK economy⁽¹⁾

they add £12.2bn to the UK economy

Locally in BCP area (April 2021)



657
general registered charities⁽¹⁾

with a combined income of £407m (if exclude RNLI, £215m)



70,347
regularly volunteer⁽¹⁾

(22% of the total population)



11
million hours⁽⁴⁾

total number of hours given per year (median of 8 hours per person per month)



10%
contribution to GDP⁽⁵⁾



2,600+
voluntary and community sector groups⁽²⁾



115,115
people volunteer at least once a year⁽¹⁾

(36% of the total population)



£150.3
million⁽³⁾

replacement cost per year (applying 2018 median wage of £13.60/hour)

⁽¹⁾ NCVO Civil Society Almanac 2020

⁽²⁾ 'Below the Radar' Third Sector Research Centre, 2011

⁽³⁾ BCP Council Economic Overview

⁽⁴⁾ NCVO, Time Well Spent

⁽⁵⁾ Pro Bono Economics: Undervalued and overlooked? The need for better understanding civil society's contribution to the UK economy, May 2020.

Definition: Voluntary & Community Sector

Organisations whose primary purpose is to create social impact rather than profit. This sector is independent from local and national government, and distinct from the private sector. It is critical in extending the support available to vulnerable residents through a variety of organisations and groups, such as charities, community groups, charitable incorporated organisations, resident groups and community associations, social enterprises, non-constituted groups of residents, faith communities and others. *Reach Volunteering*

Definition: Volunteering

Any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. *National Council for Voluntary Organisations*

Social action is about people coming together to help improve their lives and solve the problems that are important in their communities. It involves people giving their time and other resources for the common good, in a range of forms – from volunteering and community-owned services to community organising or simple neighbourly acts.



The COVID-19 Pandemic has significantly impacted on our communities and changed people's lives in many ways, through bereavement, health conditions, job losses, change in family circumstances and lockdown loneliness. There has been a rise in demand on crisis services through the council and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).

There was an overwhelming 'neighbourly' response that emerged from within our communities during the crisis to help support others who needed help. Volunteers and local community groups stepped in to help out with tasks such as shopping for others, cooking or phoning someone feeling lonely or isolated. Through this strategy we want to encourage and support those connections to continue to thrive within communities and become part of the new normal.

Community Action Network (CAN) is a local charity that provides professional and practical support to the voluntary sector in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, and provides support to the VCS through advice, training and helping the sector to develop and recover. They recently carried out a State of the Sector survey with 41 local Community and voluntary organisations and found that many are worried about future funding and sustainability and about half (51%) of organisations said that they are at risk of permanent closure within 12 months if they can't find funding. Demand on services continues to rise, and organisations are collaborating and finding new ways to respond to evolving needs, as well as supporting communities and individuals to help themselves.

Working with VCS in the BCP area



BCP Council recognises the VCS have specialist skills and experience that can make them best placed to respond to specific communities and needs. There is a diverse range of organisations and groups that exist across BCP and a range of partnerships that exist to bring networks together to focus on particular needs that extends the breadth and depth of Council services. Without the work of the sector, there would be far more challenges and higher demand on Council services.

We want to continue to build networks, partnerships and collaborative ways of working, and create dynamic, innovative and open minded approaches to transform the way services are designed and delivered to meet increasing demand. It's about collaboration, trust and transfer of ownership, building on examples seen during the pandemic where people worked closely together on a common goal.

Priorities for working with the Voluntary and community sector to support Connected Vibrant Communities

1. Build effective partnerships and working relationships that support stronger connected communities
2. Extend the Council's services by building capacity through specialist partners
3. Learn from the community response to Covid and embrace new ways of working
4. Help people to connect with their communities
5. Support community-led approaches to help build resilient communities
6. Focus on early intervention and prevention to support people to avoid crisis

Effective partnerships and networks

- Facilitate and support partnerships with the VCS to tackle local community issues
- Extend partnerships to include broader range of representatives from across public, private, VCS, community and faith groups and residents
- Share information more broadly to improve knowledge and signposting
- Share best practice to inspire innovation and effective partnerships
- Co-design work and solidify partnership working that values the input of all parties
- Develop and co-design a partnership agreement with the VCS on how we work together

Building capacity with specialist partners

- Provide financial support to infrastructure and operational partners that extend specialist services and support to residents
- Promote the work and agreements with VCS more broadly within the Council and across partnerships
- Share best practice to inspire innovation
- Create a deeper understanding of community needs by working more closely with relevant partners
- Provide a small grants scheme to local organisations to help fund community projects

Learning from the community response to COVID-19

- Work with the VCS and partners to understand and embed learnings and best practice from Covid response into new ways of working
- Use intelligence to gather insight on the scale and longer term impact of COVID-19
- Work with local organisations and groups to understand ways to work together to aid the sector's recovery
- Learn from the Covid community response seen locally to help communities to continue to unite and support each other
- BCP Council will recruit additional resource to focus on helping communities recover from lockdown loneliness and other issues

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Help people to connect with their communities

- Invest in BCP Council's community development team with dedicated workers in priority neighbourhoods
- Help communities to set up activities and new initiatives that connect people
- Work more closely with diverse and seldom heard groups from communities
- Improve awareness and better signposting across networks, organisations and communities to make it easier for people to access the support they need
- Work with partners to deliver initiatives that tackle digital exclusion and improve communities' digital skills
- Work with local partners and communities to build stronger connected communities

Support community-led approaches that build resilient communities

- Help people to become more self-reliant in finding support
- Support residents and communities to develop their own skills and capabilities to thrive
- Better share information about local activities and groups across communities and be more inclusive
- Work with communities to help them set up their own initiatives and groups to respond to need
- Embed community-led approaches as part of the Council's transformation programme

Early intervention and prevention to support people to avoid crisis

- Work in partnership with the VCS to better share information around prevention and when and how to offer help
- Embed lived experience examples within the development work to shape Council services and partnership work
- Work in partnership to look at ways in which the VCS can provide wellbeing support alongside more formal health services

Investing in the Sector

BCP Council funds the VCS to provide services through grants and contracts, such as for domiciliary care, residential care, disability support service and other community services including befriending and support for carers.

It funds specialist VCS organisations to provide services to support local communities that extend the breadth and depth of services to residents. For example, Citizens Advice Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole receive a grant to provide information and advice services on issues such as debt and money challenges, tackling hate crime and discrimination.

BCP Council also invests in supporting and building capacity within the VCS. It part funds Community Action Network (CAN), an independent local infrastructure charity, that it provides professional and practical advice to support organisations, groups and charities to develop, runs a volunteer hub and speaks up on behalf of the sector and local community.

BCP Council are investing in other ways to help the sector become more sustainable by creating more funding into the sector.

BH Coastal Lottery is a platform that enables BCP VCS to fundraise to provide services to the residents of BCP. 60% of the funding from ticket sales goes the local good causes. It also operate BH Coastal Lottery Small Grant Scheme which provides small grants to local good causes of up to £500.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Neighbourhood Portion is a fund generated from new housing developments for reinvestment back into improving local community facilities, and provides grants for residents, businesses and community groups to support local community projects. Bids can range from a few hundred pounds to tens of thousands of pounds where funds are available.

We recently established a Living Legacy Grant Scheme with local charity Dorset Community Foundation which provides grants of up to £5,000 to local voluntary and community sector organisations to fund local projects that help improve communities.

The Council recognises the Public Services Social Value Act in the way it commissions services to consider the social, economic and environmental benefits of a contract; and discuss with local providers and communities to design better services that are inclusive and accessible and finding new and innovative solutions to difficult problems. By creating strong networks at a local level, it provides the opportunity for more local provision, supporting to local organisations and reduce the carbon footprint in our area. People will be encouraged to volunteer in their local areas or use sustainable transport where possible.

Volunteering and social action in the BCP area



Almost every aspect of everyday life, the communities we live in, our physical environment, our sport and leisure activities, where we work and worship, our schools and hospitals benefit from volunteers. We want to make sure the vital contribution of volunteers is valued and that there are opportunities for everyone to take part in volunteering and social action across BCP.

Volunteering offers many benefits, personal social, and economic, for the volunteers themselves, local groups, organisations and charities, the wider community and economy. Benefits include helping others, giving something back, improving wellbeing, having a sense of purpose and gaining skills and experience whilst meeting new people and making friends.

We recognise there may be barriers to volunteering such as not enough time, family/work commitments or lacking the confidence to get involved. This strategy is the commitment of BCP Council, working in partnership with Community Action Network and others to support and encourage volunteering through opportunities with the Council and the wider community. We want to support local people who want to help and give the gift of their time, experience and insight, to do so safely and effectively, and provide rewarding experiences that positively impact the organisation/community.

The public consultation identified that there needs to be better promotion and awareness of volunteering and work experience opportunities available and what they entail, and promotion needs to be across a wide range of ways in order to reach everyone across our communities.

Priorities for developing volunteering opportunities and social action where everyone can play an active role to help others

- a) Recognising the value and promoting the benefits of volunteering
- b) Enhancing accessibility, choice and diversity
- c) Providing positive and rewarding volunteering experiences
- d) Bringing communities together to enable social action
- e) Engaging employers and business leaders to play their part
- f) Developing a more joined up approach to volunteering within the Council

Valuing and promoting volunteering

- Work with Community Action Network (CAN) to support and encourage volunteering and promote it's volunteering hub
- Evidence the impact of volunteering on improving lives and places, including social value models
- Inspire others to volunteer through stories, examples and Champions
- Build on Together We Can and look at ways to sustain interest in ongoing volunteering, recognising crisis response
- Learn from national community responses to embrace innovative ways to encourage volunteering and social action
- Build capacity for sustained growth in volunteering through local organisations
- Work across sectors to share good practice, increase recognition and improve the experience of volunteers

Enhance accessibility, choice and diversity

- Work with organisations and communities to identify and breakdown potential barriers to volunteering
- Utilise insight from surveys and other feedback to improve the volunteering offer across communities
- Develop new approaches to volunteering to make giving time easier with more choice
- Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to volunteer through a diverse range of opportunities
- Work with partners to improve accessibility of opportunities to enable everyone to contribute
- Provide sufficient support to care leavers and others to find and get involved in volunteering and social action

Positive and Rewarding Experiences

- Work in close partnership with CAN and local VCS to help improve the range of volunteering opportunities available
- Explore ways to celebrate volunteers' efforts
- Support local workforce to understand and manage volunteers effectively
- CAN will develop a "ready to volunteer" training programme for volunteers
- Support VCS organisations to provide volunteers with appropriate levels of training and support

Bringing communities together

- Make it easier for people to sign up and access a range of volunteering opportunities
- Enable self-organised volunteering opportunities within communities
- Support and develop existing volunteering groups at different stages of their development
- Create more opportunities for joined up approaches in the way in which organisations work with and recruit volunteers
- Review sharing platforms and other technologies to help people connect more easily to build stronger connected communities
- Build on the Together We Can volunteer response to help others with small errands and tasks in local neighbourhoods

Engaging employers and business leaders

- BCP Council will commit to helping staff to get more involved in volunteering in their communities
- CAN have developed a Business Supporter Membership to engage more with businesses
- Work more closely with businesses as part of their corporate social responsibility agendas and better link with local community needs
- **Create more opportunities for skilled and vocational volunteering that will help build skillsets**
- **Look at employability skills and supporting people into the workplace**
- **Improve the promotion and range of work experience available across BCP Council**

A more joined up approach within the Council

- Council staff network created to better share information about volunteering
- Create synergies across departments such as toolkits and templates
- Look at how we can create common processes and practices where possible, such as recruiting volunteers so that it is easier for people to sign up to volunteer with different Council departments
- Act upon the public consultation findings to better understand people's experiences of volunteering and work placements and make improvements
- Further develop volunteering and work experience opportunities within the Council to be inclusive for all communities and support our most vulnerable to get involved
- Create a communication plan to better publicise and promote volunteering and work opportunities that exist at the Council

Commented [AG1]: Kelly – pls note these 3 bullet points in bold are to be added into the longer strategy.

Delivery of the Strategy

This strategy includes a delivery plan which provides further detail about how we aim to deliver against our priorities and the timescales for achieving this over the three year period. It incorporates the broad arrange of work that is being planned by others as well as how we can work together on common goals and activities through partnerships and collaborative working. Insert text - Community Action Network is a key delivery partner and are grant funded by the Council to provide advice and support to the voluntary and community sector, as well as promoting and sharing volunteering opportunities. The delivery plans will be reviewed on an annual basis in order to respond to local need.

The strategy will be overseen by the Vibrant Communities Board, reporting to the BCP Health and Wellbeing Board and linking strategies together that support the overall vision for vibrant communities. We will know if the priorities are working by measuring success against what is a vibrant connected community as outlined in the vision. We will use a range of data sources, including key performance indicators, stakeholder engagement, resident surveys, anecdotal evidence and feedback that identifies how this work and activity is making a difference to communities and people across BCP. We will define the baseline data at the start of the strategy and track progress annually using a set of key performance indicators as detailed below. In addition, there will be individual measures against specific actions with the detailed delivery plans.

Key performance indicators for measuring success:

- A range of active community and voluntary sector organisations and community groups exist and are able to provide support to meet community needs
- VCS organisations and groups feel more stable, stronger and sustainable
- There are strong partnerships and networks that work closely together to support community needs
- Partnerships include a broader range of representatives from across organisations, groups and individuals
- There are positive examples of codesign and coproduction between the Council, community and voluntary sector and residents
- Residents feel they belong to their local area
- Residents are helping others through volunteering and social action
- Residents do not feel socially isolated