



Department for  
**Social  
Development**

[www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk)

# Join In, Get Involved: Build a Better Future.

## Can you help us plan for volunteering?

July 2009



## **We want to hear from you.**

The Department for Social Development is currently consulting on its plans for a Volunteering Strategy to support and encourage volunteering in Northern Ireland.

**We want to hear your opinion on how we can do this best.**

## **What is volunteering?**

Volunteering takes place when someone gives time to help someone else or a cause they care about, simply because they want to and without expecting a payment. Volunteers are making an important contribution to community life in Northern Ireland. Lots of people engaged in voluntary activity may not necessarily think of themselves as volunteers. They may see themselves as “just helping out” or “lending a hand”. Here are some examples of what volunteers do:

**Sports coaches**

**Tour guides**

**Community Circus**

**Youth workers**

**School governors**

**Befrienders**

**Counsellors**

**Planting trees**

**Fundraising**

**Mountain rescue**

**Dog walking**

**Residents groups**

**Gardening**

**Management committees**

**Community playgroup helpers**

**Mentors**

**Prison visiting**

**Volunteer drivers**

**Teaching English**

## Why do we need a strategy for volunteering?

Volunteers are a valuable resource, we want to recognise their contribution and encourage more people to get involved. Here are some facts<sup>1</sup> about volunteering.

- Over 282,000 individuals volunteer with an organisation.
- Volunteering levels in Northern Ireland since 1995 are at best static.
- Over 75% of organisations that involve volunteers could not manage without their volunteers.
- 55% of organisations are finding it more difficult to recruit volunteers.
- Work commitments are the main reason people give for not getting involved.
- Volunteers are motivated by wanting to improve things.

Volunteering has benefits for individuals, organisations and society so the Department for Social Development would like to encourage and strengthen it. We would like to involve more people in volunteering action to build a better future for everyone.

## What sorts of things are being proposed?

The Department for Social Development is currently consulting on over 40 proposals which will shape a Volunteering Strategy. This leaflet summarises some of the main issues. The proposals and a full version of the consultation document are on our website: [www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk). This document is also available in a variety of other formats and languages through the website.

<sup>1</sup> *It's All About Time*, Volunteer Development Agency, 2007

## **The main issues addressed in the consultation are:**

How can we improve the experience volunteers have?

How can we ensure the right services are in place to support volunteering?

How can we recognise the importance of volunteering?

How can we enhance diversity and accessibility in volunteering?

We want to hear your views as part of this consultation to help us ensure that the strategy meets the needs of volunteers and the organisations which involve them.

## **How to let us know what you think.**

- You can fill in the short questionnaire on the attached response card. The card does not need a stamp.
- You can attend a public consultation event. For more information visit our website: [www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk)
- You can email a response to: [volunteering@dsdni.gov.uk](mailto:volunteering@dsdni.gov.uk)
- You can write to us at:

Volunteering  
Department for Social Development  
Voluntary and Community Unit  
Lighthouse Building  
1 Cromac Place  
BELFAST  
BT7 2JB

**We need to hear from you by 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009.**

## Questionnaire

How can we encourage more people to volunteer?

How can we improve the experience volunteers have?

How can we encourage people to recognise the important work volunteers do?

Do you have any other comments about volunteering?

**Please send us your comments using this detachable response card (which does not need a stamp). The card is already addressed.**

**FREEPOST RRHG-KSCA-EJGZ**  
**Volunteer Development Agency**  
**129 Ormeau Road**  
**Belfast**  
**BT7 1SH**