

SUFFOLK VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY

**2021 -
2024**



Volunteers at Riding for the Disabled Woodbridge

INTRODUCTION

We know that volunteering works. Something magical happens when people freely give their time and skills to volunteer and they do so for many reasons. Some volunteers seek to help others, some support a particular cause or community project, while others hope to develop skills, meet people or try a new activity. Whatever the motivation, volunteering succeeds in three ways:

- Volunteering boosts wellbeing and personal growth in the individual while enhancing services for the common good, and moreover, building the capacity of Suffolk communities.
- Building skills in the individual, builds strength in the community.
- Volunteering helps to make our communities more resilient and cohesive, with people from different backgrounds and ages coming together to volunteer.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on Volunteering in Suffolk; the way people volunteer, who volunteers, and the type of volunteering undertaken. Many retired people who were the backbone of voluntary groups had to take a break, while hundreds if not thousands of new people stepped forward to volunteer. A combination, of common cause, furlough or working from home, accessibility of informal volunteering and need for their skill all helped this shift. We must note that not all volunteers or communities will use the term 'volunteer' or 'volunteering'. They may identify as a forum member or simply 'helping out' in their community.

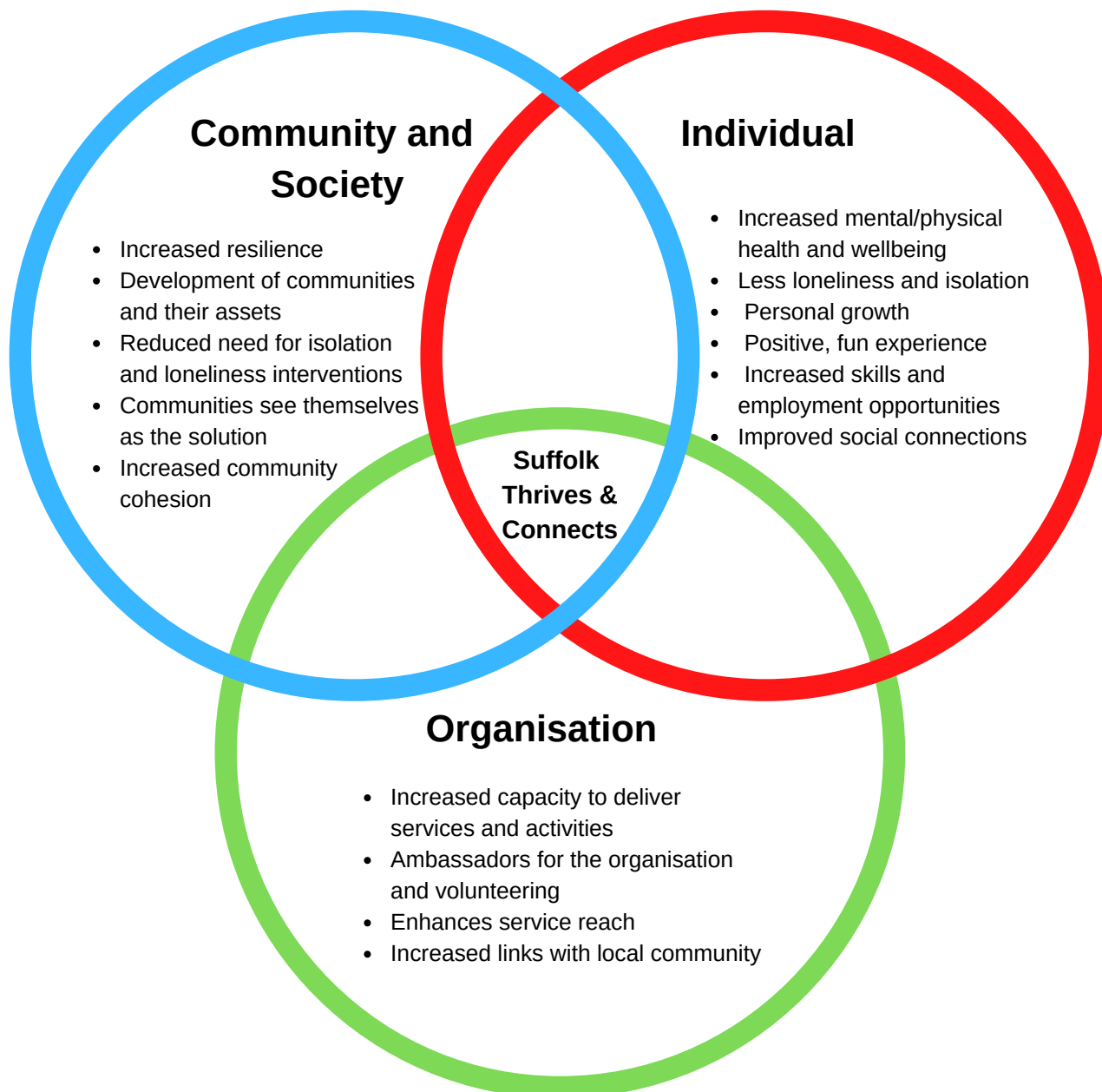
We have seen new approaches to volunteering as leaders embrace: digital solutions, innovation, creativity and become more flexible in their approach. Businesses are increasingly 'switched on' to their social responsibility and encourage staff to volunteer through Corporate Social Responsibility policies and Employer Supported Volunteering programmes .

The Suffolk Volunteering Strategy has been refreshed to allow reflections and learning from the Covid-19 pandemic. Three clear objectives will inspire an action to move volunteering forward in Suffolk.



EA-CAT members providing support at Trinity Park Vaccination Centre January 2021

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING



Five Ways to Wellbeing



Benefits to the individual can also be demonstrated through the 5 Ways to Wellbeing: Take Notice, Keep Learning, Connect, Give and Be Active. Visit [Healthy Suffolk](#) for more information.

DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of community/society, the environment, or individuals (outside of immediate family). It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice.



A volunteer from BMESSG (BME Suffolk Support Group) delivering activity packs during the Covid-19 Pandemic

THE VISION FOR VOLUNTEERING IN SUFFOLK

People living in Suffolk are, inspired, encouraged, and empowered to volunteer.

It is underpinned by the 4 values:

1. **Inclusivity and Equality:** Volunteering is open to everyone,
2. **Volunteering is Voluntary:** Volunteering is a choice that is freely made,
3. **Mutual Benefit:** Volunteering benefits those that volunteer and those that are helped,
4. **Volunteering is Diverse:** Volunteering can be formal and informal; both have equal value.



A volunteer for the Museum of East Anglian Life

Objective 1

TO RAISE THE PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERING IN SUFFOLK

- To encourage everyone to volunteer through a diverse and engaging volunteering offer,
- To ensure that information on volunteering opportunities is clear and available to all,
- To increase volunteering for people aged 14 to 25 years,
- To increase innovative volunteering opportunities including digital volunteering,
- To celebrate the impact of all types of volunteering (formal and informal) on the individual, organisation and community/society.

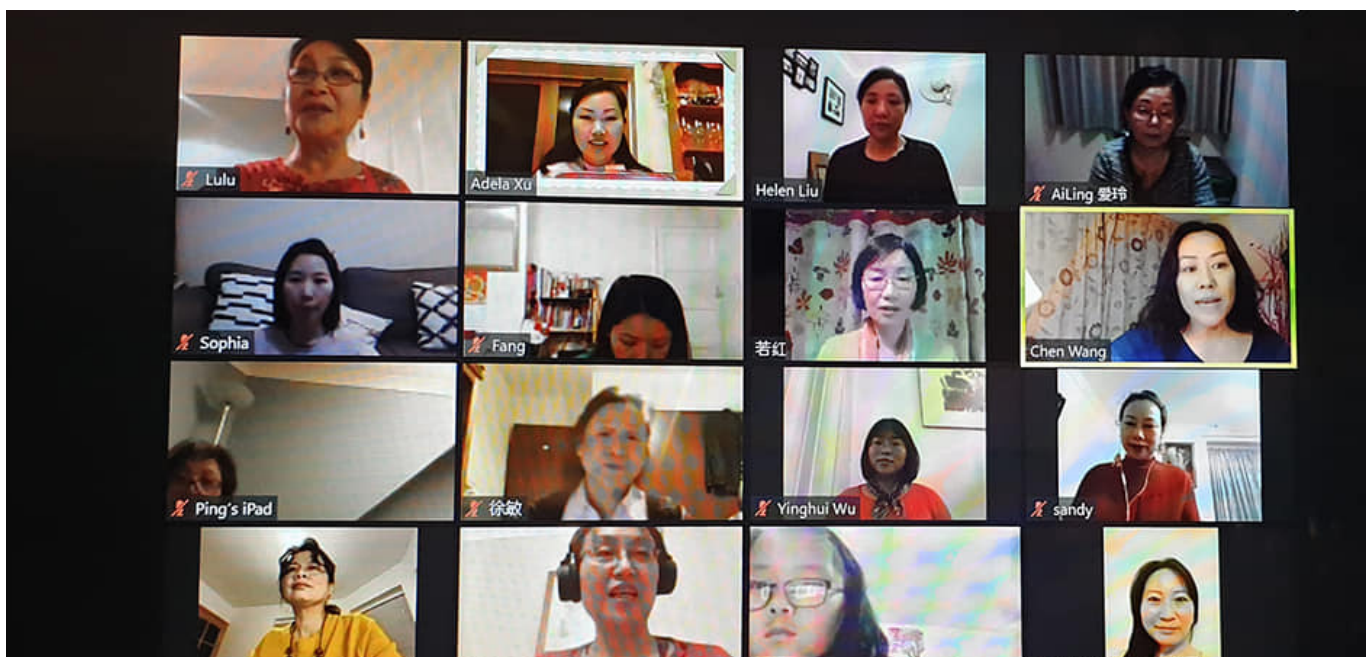


A volunteer cadet for the Suffolk Constabulary salutes

Objective 2

TO SUPPORT PEOPLE TO VOLUNTEER & BE MORE ENGAGED IN THEIR COMMUNITY

- To enable people to give their time, use their passion and work together to achieve change in their community,
- To ensure that volunteers and volunteer leaders are supported in their role and enjoy the experience,
- To encourage partnerships so that people can volunteer easily, flexibly and share their skills to benefit individuals, organisation and community/society,
- To enable people to develop their skills through volunteering,
- To increase wellbeing and reduce isolation and loneliness through volunteering.



Volunteers help out with the online Chinese Family Welfare Association singing group

Objective 3

TO ENGAGE EMPLOYERS & BUSINESS LEADERS IN PROVIDING & PROMOTING VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES.

- To strengthen relationships between Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector and local employers through volunteering,
- To encourage employers to support their employees to volunteer, this may be through Employee Supported Volunteering schemes or working practices that are flexible,
- To enable staff to use their skills to increase community cohesion, resilience and economic growth in Suffolk,
- To recognise the key contribution volunteering makes to the Suffolk economy.



Suffolk County Council staff volunteering as part of their Employer Supported Volunteering programme

VOLUNTEERS ARE UNPAID, BUT VOLUNTEERING ISN'T COST FREE!

A volunteer program has many social, cultural, human and economic benefits, however for volunteers to fulfil an unpaid role there are associated costs and considerations. It's important to remember when deciding to involve volunteers that volunteers are unpaid, but delivering a volunteer program does not come free to the organisation. Volunteering should also not cost volunteers money.

All charities and community groups creating, supporting or expanding a volunteer program will need to consider resources and funding. This includes people (paid or unpaid) to manage and supervise a program, training for volunteers, coordinators, as well as physical resource costs: PPE, mileage and equipment. Volunteer involvement should be part of a business and operational plan. Understanding the social to economic benefit of volunteering and allocating resources will ensure volunteer involvement is effective, sustainable, impactful, safe and a positive experience for everyone involved, including volunteers, staff, beneficiaries and stakeholders.

In Suffolk there are Funding and Community Officers who can offer advice and there are a variety of funding avenues. Many organisations use a framework for planning their involvement of volunteers. In Suffolk, Community Action Suffolk encourage organisations to consider the Volunteer Journey: Plan, Include, Support and Celebrate. How do you plan for people to give their time for free to benefit your organisation? When recruiting volunteers, how do you include the wider community and increase diversity? Will your volunteers be supported? Finally, how do you celebrate the impact of your volunteers?



NEXT STEPS

The Suffolk Volunteering Strategy will continue to work with those public, private, voluntary sector and community organisations working within Suffolk, to encourage the implementation of the strategy across sectors and organisations. After endorsement from the Health and Wellbeing board, it is proposed that an action plan is commissioned to determine priorities, timescales and resource requirements. The action plan will bring the strategy to life, ensuring that the aims of the strategy are delivered and outcomes are met. The action plan will seek the explicit commitment of organisations and agencies across all sectors to deliver its ambitions for Suffolk. The action plan will work to bring together a diverse partnership of a range of key agencies. They will work together to amplify volunteering opportunities, ensure the resources to enable volunteering are available and maximise the benefits to Suffolk residents and the services they rely on. We will continue to work with the members of the Steering Group and Focus Group but will also look to engage with further groups to ensure a spread of knowledge and reach across all sectors.

Process and Stakeholders Engaged

The Volunteering Strategy refresh has been facilitated by Community Action Suffolk and driven by a multi agency representative group including:

Suffolk County Council

Suffolk Constabulary

Health - Clinical Commissioning Groups

Suffolk Voluntary Organisations Group

Church of England

Suffolk Association of Local Councils

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector

All District and Borough Councils



Volunteer and Trailing Dog Conker from Search And Rescue Dog Association Anglia (SARDA Anglia)