



# BLACKPOOL'S VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY 2026 - 2031

# INTRODUCTION

Volunteering for Health aims to create the conditions within local health systems for volunteering to thrive and test and build volunteering infrastructure, through collaboration of statutory and VCSE partners, empowering communities to improve health and wellbeing in ways that matter most to local people.



"In **July 2024**, the Lancashire & South Cumbria Health Champions partnership, comprising of Lancashire Teaching Hospitals Charity, Volunteer Centre Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde, Community CVS Blackburn, Lancashire Association of CVS, Cumbria CVS and Spring North was one of 15 partnerships across the UK to be awarded funding as part of the Volunteering for Health programme.

Volunteering for Health aims to create the conditions within local health systems for **volunteering to thrive and test and build volunteering infrastructure, through collaboration of statutory and VCSE partners**, empowering communities to improve health and wellbeing in ways that matter most to local people.

## The Lancashire & South Cumbria Health Champions partnership is:

- Using a test and learn approach to introduce new models of volunteering within a variety of settings across the system developing new volunteering opportunities that respond to health and social care priorities at the system and place-based levels.

- Deploying a range of volunteer health champions in response to emerging needs and in partnership with ICB's to address and reduce health inequalities by achieving better health outcomes for children, young people and our most deprived communities.
- Developing new place-based volunteering partnerships that develop volunteering strategies linked to their place and share volunteer policies, processes and relationships that create an enabling environment and allow for the portability of volunteers across organisations within the place.
- Developing common approaches on data capture and reporting that integrate information on volunteering at the place based and system levels that will enable evidence-based decision making and ensure that volunteering is fully embedded as a core consideration within planning and development at the place based and system levels.
- Developing a partnership wide digital volunteer dashboard to track, report and analyse volunteer interventions to offer insight and intelligence of their impact and efficiency to inform future developments, and volunteer strategy.

**In the first 2 years of our delivery**, we have been developing the partnership, creating volunteer health champion roles and exploring digital platform solutions.

At a local level in Blackpool, we have been gathering insights from volunteers, volunteer managers, VCFSE organisations and the general public **to inform and develop Blackpool's Vision for Volunteering** and Volunteering Strategy to transform health and social care volunteering and build volunteering infrastructure aligned to identified strategic goals and community needs.

A huge thank you goes to my fellow Steering Group members for their support and guidance over the last year, with special thanks to our Strategic Volunteering Lead, Megan Walker, for ensuring that through co-production **this strategy is truly representative of our volunteering community.**"

## Lynn Saggerson

Blackpool Volunteering Strategy Steering Group Chair  
Chief Executive Volunteer Centre Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde

# A message from Councillor Jo Farrell

*Volunteering sits at the very heart of strong and resilient communities and is one of the things that make Blackpool such a special place to live.*

Across Blackpool **volunteers give their time, energy and compassion** to support their neighbours, run community groups and create opportunities for people to connect. Their contributions and kindness help to tackle isolation and creates a sense of belonging that benefits us all.

The impact that volunteers have on residents' health and wellbeing **cannot be overstated.**

**Early intervention is vital** in prevention of poor mental and physical wellbeing and volunteers play a vital role in helping residents to live healthier, more connected lives by providing community activities, practical support and befriending thus reducing pressure on the local public services.

Our voluntary, community, faith and social enterprises (VCFSE) In Blackpool provide trusted spaces, support and opportunities for **people to engage, contribute and thrive.**

Working in partnership with others from the VSCFE sector and statutory public services they can **respond quickly to local needs**, reaching people who might otherwise feel isolated or overlooked and also support the shaping of services that reflect the real needs and strengths of our residents.

**Blackpool Council is committed and proud to work alongside these organisations**, our wider partners and the many dedicated volunteers across the town. By working with the VCFSE sector, other public services and local communities the Council recognises that our partnerships can achieve far more, supporting thriving communities which are inclusive, accessible and valued.

Looking ahead, my vision is for **volunteers to play an even greater role** in Blackpool's future.

I want people to feel empowered to get involved in volunteering supporting their own growth in confidence and skills whilst helping others and **shaping the future of their community.**

By working together and investing in volunteering **we are helping to build a healthier, more connected and resilient Blackpool** for years to come.

## **Councillor Jo Farrell**

Cabinet Member for Communities and Wellbeing



# Our Vision

*Shaped with volunteers and communities, our new vision for volunteering is:*

**Blackpool is a place where everyone feels able, welcomed and encouraged** to make a meaningful difference in their community. Volunteering is visible, celebrated and woven into everyday life — a natural and joyful act that brings people together, builds pride and strengthens wellbeing.

To deliver on this vision, four key priorities have been identified:



## Access, Pathways & Progression

Blackpool will be a place where volunteering is **easy to access, simple to navigate and rich with opportunities for people to grow**. In five years, every resident regardless of; age, background or experience.

Will be able to step into volunteering through clear pathways, personalised support and flexible opportunities that build confidence, skills and long-term progression.



## Promotion & Reframing Volunteering

In five years, **volunteering in Blackpool will be widely recognised**, celebrated and understood as a powerful force for personal growth and community change.

Through bold storytelling, visible promotion and a shift in how volunteering is framed, residents will see volunteering as a skilled, meaningful and valued part of Blackpool's identity.



## Volunteer Experience & Support

In five years, **every volunteer in Blackpool will feel welcomed**, supported and genuinely valued, with organisations equipped to provide consistent, high-quality experiences that help people thrive.

Volunteering will be shaped around care, communication and inclusion, ensuring that everyone from first-time to long-standing volunteers feels confident and part of something meaningful.



## Inclusion & Removing Barriers

In five years, **volunteering in Blackpool will be genuinely accessible to everyone** with practical, cultural and systemic barriers removed. So, people from all backgrounds can take part confidently and comfortably.

Organisations will understand the diverse needs of residents and design volunteering around inclusion from the start, ensuring that no one is excluded because of cost, complexity, language, disability or circumstance.



# The Volunteering Picture in Blackpool

*Local Realities . National Trends . Resident Insights*

## Blackpool's Local Realities

Blackpool's volunteering landscape is shaped by the town's wider social and economic context. As **the most deprived local authority in England**, with **ten of the twenty most deprived neighbourhoods nationally**, many residents face barriers that affect how they engage in community life. High levels of poverty — including **32.9% of children living in low-income families** — and poorer health outcomes mean people often have less time, confidence or capacity to volunteer.

## National Volunteering Trends

These inequalities influence participation. Nationally, formal volunteering has declined, only **16% of adults volunteering monthly**, and rates remain significantly higher in more affluent areas. Regionally, the Lancashire & South Cumbria State of the Sector report highlights **rising demand, reduced funding and stretched staff capacity**, making it harder for organisations to recruit and support volunteers.



## Our Blackpool Resident Survey

Local insight reflects this picture. In our Blackpool resident survey, **48 people said volunteering promotion in the area is low**, and many told us they struggle to find clear, visible opportunities that fit their lives. Yet the appetite to contribute is strong — residents value connection, confidence and wellbeing, and want roles that are flexible, welcoming and meaningful.

## Conclusion upon research

Together, these demographic and participation trends show why Blackpool needs a volunteering approach that is **inclusive, barrier-free and shaped by local people** — one that supports residents to take part and helps organisations create the conditions for volunteering to thrive.

# Case Study - Elaine's Volunteering Story

**"Would you say that volunteering saved my life?  
It gave me a reason to live."**

Elaine's volunteering journey began in the early 1960s, during the early years of her marriage. Reflecting on that period, she explains, "After the first four years of marriage, when my husband worked somewhere else, we had started a family and had a shop. At the time we also voluntarily ran the Anglian Young People Society at our church in Poulton-le-Fylde. I think that was my first real taste of volunteering."

For the next 30 years, Elaine and her husband worked together as hoteliers, a role that demanded their full attention and left little time for voluntary activity. Upon retiring in the late 1990s, they attended meetings of the Blackpool Civic Trust. Elaine recalls, "I got talked into standing as Secretary at the forthcoming AGM."

The rest is history — six years as Secretary, nine years as Chairman, twelve years as President, and now starting my second year as Chairman again."

A profound personal loss soon followed. Elaine describes this period with honesty and clarity: "I hadn't been Secretary for long when I lost my lovely husband. In 43 years of marriage, we had spent 39 of them together, 24 hours a day, seven days a week — and suddenly I was alone. Family and friends rallied round me, but I felt as though I had been split in half."

She recalls reaching a moment of deep crisis:

"One day I reached rock bottom, and I don't know what I would have done if the phone hadn't rung at that precise moment. It did. Someone was asking about some minutes, and we chatted, and my 'moment' passed."

That phone call marked a turning point. Over the following 25 years, Elaine's involvement in community organisations grew significantly. Today, she continues to hold senior voluntary roles, stating, "Even at my age, I am still Chairman of two very important organisations — the Volunteer Centre and the Civic Trust — and Vice Chairman of the Winter Gardens Trust."

Elaine is clear about the impact volunteering has had on her life:

"Would you say that volunteering saved my life? It gave me a reason to live."

**Her message to others is simple and powerful:  
"The more you put into it, the more you will get out of it."**

**Elaine Smith MBE**



## Why Blackpool Needs This Strategy

People across Blackpool told us that volunteering makes a real difference — it boosts wellbeing, reduces loneliness, builds confidence and skills, and helps organisations support more residents. But they also told us that volunteering isn't always easy to access, and that support can feel uneven across the town.

This strategy sets out a simple, shared way for partners, organisations and communities to work together so volunteering can grow and thrive. It's been shaped by local voices and belongs to Blackpool's volunteers, VCFSE groups, faith organisations, social enterprises and statutory partners.

By working in a more coordinated way, we can make volunteering more visible, more inclusive and easier for people to get involved in — and ensure it continues to bring real benefits to residents and communities over the next five years.



*"[Volunteering] gives young people & adult volunteers skills for life making them a valuable member of the community with integrity and honour. "*

**Darrell Shuck - Scout Team Member & Member of District Leadership team**

# The Foundations of Our Strategy



## How We Built This Together

Listening, learning and working together has been at the heart of developing this strategy. We spoke with people across Blackpool who volunteer, support volunteers, or benefit from volunteering, making sure the voices we heard reflected the diversity of our town. Their experiences, ideas and challenges shaped every part of this strategy.

## To Build This Strategy We Brought Together Insights From 6 Main Sources:

### VCFSE Sector Workshop

Organisations came together to explore the current picture of volunteering in Blackpool and to describe what they want volunteering to look like in the future. This session shaped the shared vision and the main themes of the strategy.

### Vision Sessions With Individual Organisations

We met separately with organisations to understand their day-to-day realities — what's working, what's difficult, and what support they need. These conversations helped ensure the strategy is realistic, grounded and reflects the different needs across the sector.

### Volunteer Survey

Volunteers told us why they get involved, what keeps them motivated, and what gets in the way. Their insight — including from young people aged 14–25 — highlighted what matters most to people who give their time.

### Social Prescribing Survey and Case Studies

Social prescribing link workers and partners shared insight into how volunteering supports health and wellbeing, and where barriers still exist. Nine case studies provided real examples of how volunteering helps people build confidence, reduce isolation and connect with their community

### Volunteer Manager Survey

Volunteer managers shared what they need to recruit, support and retain volunteers. Their feedback shaped actions around training, confidence and improving the volunteer experience.

### Feedback From the Big Thank You Event

People at the event shared ideas about what would help more residents get involved and feel confident to start volunteering.



# From Insight to Action

*How Shared Evidence and Community Voices Shaped the Future of Volunteering in Blackpool*

## Bringing the Insight Together

We looked across all sources to identify the strongest themes and the biggest challenges. When volunteers, managers, organisations and social prescribing partners raised the same issues, these became key priorities. Where views differed, we explored why and looked for solutions that could work for everyone.

This combined insight helped us decide which objectives and actions would make the biggest difference and could be delivered collectively by the sector.

## How the Evidence Shaped the Strategy

- The vision reflects the shared ambition developed in the sector workshop and refined through conversations with individual organisations.
- The objectives focus on issues that came up consistently — improving access, supporting young people, strengthening the sector and making volunteering more inclusive.
- The actions are based on what volunteers say they need, what organisations and volunteer managers say they can deliver, what social prescribing partners see in practice, and what residents at the Big Thank You Event said would help more people get involved.

## Continuing to Work Together

This strategy is the start of a longer journey. We will continue working with volunteers, volunteer managers, VCFSE partners and social prescribing teams as we deliver the actions, making sure the strategy stays relevant and continues to reflect the needs and strengths of Blackpool's communities.



# Types of Volunteering in Blackpool

**Volunteering in Blackpool** takes many forms and contributes to the local community in different but equally valuable ways. This strategy recognises the full spectrum of activity — from highly structured roles to informal neighbourly action.

## Formal Volunteering Roles

Formal volunteering usually takes place within registered charities and established organisations. These roles include clear descriptions, recruitment and application processes, induction, training, supervision, and safeguarding measures. Structured roles provide accountability, support volunteer development, and ensure services are delivered safely and effectively.

## Corporate and Employer-Supported Volunteering

Corporate volunteering is often ad-hoc, with businesses providing staff time, skills, or resources to support community initiatives. These contributions offer valuable capacity, specialist expertise, and strengthen partnerships between sectors.

## Peer and Lived-Experience Roles

Peer and lived-experience volunteering draws on personal experience to provide empathy, insight, and empowerment. Examples include Horizon programmes, NHS-based volunteer roles, and empowerment initiatives.

These roles help bridge services and communities, building trust and improving outcomes.

## Informal Community Action

Informal volunteering and grassroots action are equally important. Small voluntary or community groups often operate with minimal structure but play a crucial role in local infrastructure.

Examples include faith groups providing warm meals, neighbours organising clothing or food drives, or community members responding quickly to local needs. These activities strengthen social capital and community resilience.

## Young People Volunteering

Youth engagement is a priority, offering young people opportunities to build skills, confidence, and a sense of belonging. Intergenerational volunteering connects different age groups, shares knowledge, and reduces isolation.

## Flexible and Micro-Volunteering

Flexible, short-term, and micro-volunteering opportunities remove barriers for people who cannot commit to traditional volunteering patterns due to work, caring responsibilities, or health. This ensures volunteering remains inclusive and accessible.



## Volunteering: More Than Service Delivery

Survey findings show that volunteering is about much more than service delivery. It builds belonging, confidence, and purpose, strengthening wellbeing and fostering meaningful relationships. Volunteering creates opportunities for people to feel valued and connected — outcomes that are as important as the practical support provided.

## NHS Definition of Volunteering

**The NHS defines volunteering as:**

*"An 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."*

This broad and inclusive understanding reflects the approach of this strategy, recognising both formal and informal contributions as essential to a thriving community ecosystem.

# Putting Our Priorities into Action

## Create Clear and Accessible Volunteering Pathways

Blackpool will make volunteering easy to access, simple to navigate and rich with opportunities for people to grow. We will develop clear pathways, personalised support and flexible opportunities so every resident — regardless of age, background or experience — can confidently step into volunteering and progress over time.

## Strengthen the Visibility and Value of Volunteering

Volunteering will be widely recognised, celebrated and understood as a powerful force for personal growth and community change. We will shift how volunteering is framed through bold storytelling, visible promotion and consistent messaging that shows volunteering as skilled, meaningful and central to Blackpool's identity.

## Improve the Volunteer Experience Across All Organisations

Every volunteer will feel welcomed, supported and genuinely valued. We will equip organisations to provide consistent, high-quality experiences built on care, communication and inclusion — ensuring volunteers at every stage feel confident, connected and part of something meaningful.



## Remove Barriers and Build Inclusive Volunteering for All

Volunteering in Blackpool will be genuinely accessible to everyone. We will work with partners to remove practical, cultural and systemic barriers so people from all backgrounds can take part comfortably and confidently. Organisations will design volunteering around inclusion from the start, ensuring no one is excluded because of cost, complexity, language, disability or circumstance.

# Create Clear and Accessible Volunteering Pathways

**Aim: Create a supportive, skills-building pathway that meets young people's needs and opens up progression.**

**To deliver on this aim, we have set five key objectives**



**Objective One:**  
Understand the current landscape and identify gaps



**Objective Two:**  
Co-produce meaningful, appealing opportunities



**Objective Three:**  
Build a structured, skills-focused pathway



**Objective Four:**  
Increase early engagement and momentum



**Objective Five:**  
Track progress and demonstrate impact

## Key actions:

- Map existing roles and produce a shared Young People's Volunteering Map.
- Establish a Youth Advisory Group and run co-design workshops.
- Develop a multi-organisation Skills Passport and flexible, skills-building roles.
- Deliver quarterly taster sessions linked to real opportunities.
- Track a baseline cohort's confidence, skills and progression.

# Create Clear and Accessible Volunteering Pathways



Holly Gibson  
Youth Worker  
United Youth Alliance

**“Youth volunteering is paramount for the success of the Fylde Coast and the development of the Coast of Social Action. Ensuring that we can create a clear pathway that champions volunteering and the positive benefits it brings to self and community is crucial, particularly to young people as it can demonstrate the altruism to support Blackpool. At the UYA, we work alongside young people and encourage them to be active members of their communities, championing the benefits that working as active community members can be.”**

## Olivia's Story

When Olivia first came to United Youth Alliance, she was studying at Blackpool Sixth Form and feeling completely lost. “I had no real plans or ideas on what I wanted to do,” she said. “I genuinely felt like I wasn’t going to succeed in life despite all the potential and drive I have.” Her weekend job felt stagnant, her courses didn’t feel right, and most days she found herself “wishing I could just stay in bed for a few more hours.”

Volunteering changed everything. Olivia describes gaining “a variety of new skills and an uncountable amount of knowledge,” but the biggest shift was in her confidence. “I used to be the quiet one who couldn’t speak up for themselves,” she explained, “but now I can use my voice, set boundaries and actually believe in myself.” She found a sense of purpose she never expected: “I finally understand what it means to be valued and appreciated for my hard work.”

Her mental health improved dramatically too. Instead of dreading the day, she now wakes up feeling ready — sometimes even excited. She credits the supportive environment at UYA for helping her grow: “I could be myself while also achieving professional goals... that made a huge difference.”

Olivia also made a real impact on the young people she worked with. Being close in age meant she could relate to their experiences and create a relaxed, safe space. “I think they appreciated having someone who understood their struggles,” she said. Some even saw her as a role model: “Despite being only 19, I’ve found myself in a secure job where I’m learning every day.”

Her journey from young person, to volunteer, to full-time apprentice is something she’s incredibly proud of. “None of it would be possible without the UYA... I couldn’t be happier or more grateful.”

When asked what she’d say to someone thinking about volunteering, she doesn’t hesitate: “100% do it!! The life skills, the confidence, the connections — it’s unreal.” She believes volunteering changes you in ways you don’t expect: “You’ll look back and think, ‘Wow, I’ve come so far.’”

**Olivia McCaul**  
Business Admin Apprentice  
United Youth Alliance



# Strengthen the Visibility and Value of Volunteering

**Aim:** Elevate the narrative around volunteering and the skills it develops.

To deliver on this aim, we have set five key objectives



**Objective One:**  
Embed  
strengths-based  
role design across  
Blackpool



**Objective Two:**  
Shift public  
perceptions of  
volunteering



**Objective Three:**  
Strengthen  
messaging and  
storytelling  
across partners



**Objective Four:**  
Use ethical and  
effective  
promotional  
channels



**Objective Five:**  
Build confidence  
and capacity in  
smaller  
organisations

Key actions:

- Co-design a strengths-based role template and provide training for smaller organisations.
- Launch a skills-focused campaign during Volunteers' Week.
- Share real volunteer stories and provide partners with social media assets.
- Develop influencer guidelines and a shared messaging framework.
- Offer drop-in support and a checklist for inclusive role design.

# Strengthen the Visibility and Value of Volunteering



Deborah Creegan  
Volunteer Coordinator  
Streetlife

**"Volunteering is not only positive for the people who benefit from the it, but it is also a rewarding and beneficial experience for the volunteer, helping to build communities and improve an individuals' wellbeing. In Blackpool, Streetlife is building on reframing volunteering as a visible, valued part of community life—celebrating the pride and community spirit that volunteers bring and promoting the good work local people are doing to strengthen services for young people. At Streetlife, volunteering is a purposeful pathway that builds confidence, promotes inclusion and supports positive progression. We value volunteers for their skills, lived experience and backgrounds, creating safe and inclusive opportunities to contribute while supporting positive personal development and wider social outcomes."**

## Wally's Story

When Wally moved from Scunthorpe to Blackpool in 2025, he described himself as "very low in confidence" and "quite reclusive." After several years out of work due to mental-health challenges, he had been living off savings and spending most of his time alone. The move was his attempt at a reset: "I needed a fresh start, so I sold up and bought a flat in Blackpool."

Volunteering became the catalyst for a dramatic improvement in his wellbeing. As he puts it, "My life has changed 1000%." Working two days a week with young people at Streetlife helped him rebuild confidence and reconnect with others. He explains, "I'm way more confident now. I love socialising and meeting anyone." What began as a small step into the community quickly grew into a full, active routine that supported his mental health.

Wally now volunteers with Birdman Parrot Rescue, attends a men's group, sings in the Electric Pink Voices LGBT choir and takes part in community courses. He speaks openly about how different he feels: "Yes, this is the same person from about six months ago." His increased confidence has even led him back into dating after years of feeling unable to. He describes himself now as someone who gets out into the community "as much as I can."

His improved wellbeing is also reflected in his willingness to take part in fun, expressive activities that once would have felt impossible. "I'll dress up as Santa, an elf, Wally the Parrotman — and in May I'm probably being a can-can girl," he says, adding that he will also be performing at Blackpool Pride. The joy and humour in these moments highlight just how far his confidence and mental health have come. As he puts it simply, "I love Blackpool."

Wally hopes his volunteering makes a difference to others, but he is clear about the impact it has had on him: it has given him purpose, connection and a renewed sense of self. "I like to think I'm helping folk and making a bit of a difference," he says, but the transformation in his own wellbeing is unmistakable.

His advice to anyone considering volunteering is straightforward and grounded in experience: "Do it — but read up about places first and find the right place for you. It's massively rewarding."

**Wally Walster**  
Day Centre Volunteer  
Streetlife



# Improve the Volunteer Experience Across All Organisations

**Aim: Build a consistent, values-led volunteer journey across Blackpool.**

**To deliver on this aim, we have set four key objectives**



**Objective One:**  
Establish shared standards through a Blackpool Volunteering Charter



**Objective Two:**  
Create a consistent volunteer journey



**Objective Three:**  
Strengthen culture, belonging and peer connection



**Objective Four:**  
Improve recognition and workforce development

Key actions:

- Co-produce and launch the Blackpool Volunteering Charter.
- Develop shared onboarding, a Volunteer Resource Pack and co-production processes.
- Introduce quarterly Volunteer Forums and map existing networks.
- Promote everyday appreciation practices.
- Add a Coordinator of the Year award and explore Level 3/AQA training.
- Create templates, frameworks and a mentor network for coordinators.

# Improve the Volunteer Experience Across All Organisations



**Camilla Ball**  
**Deputy Manager**  
**Shared Lives and Volunteers**  
**Blackpool Council**

**“When we truly listen to and support our volunteers from the very beginning—and continue to value their experiences—we create a service where people feel they belong, grow in confidence, and make a lasting difference in the lives of others.”**

## Sally's Story

When Sally first joined in January 2024, she was facing significant personal challenges. She described struggling with low confidence, anxiety, and increasing social isolation, which made everyday interactions difficult.

She explained, “I decided to become a volunteer because I was struggling with a lack of confidence and self-belief. My anxiety made it hard for me to socialise and over time I became more and more isolated.”

Taking the first step into volunteering felt daunting, but it quickly became a turning point. “Taking the step to volunteer was a big challenge for me but it is one of the best decisions I have ever made.” She began gradually, starting with just one afternoon a week. With consistent encouragement, understanding, and support from the volunteer team—tailored to her pace and needs—her confidence began to grow. Over time, she expanded her involvement and now takes on multiple roles across the service.

She accompanies a lady with early onset dementia each Monday afternoon, supports reception at the Phoenix Centre, volunteers at The Arc, and mentors other volunteers with their iPool training. In addition, she regularly steps in to help cover extra shifts when needed, demonstrating both commitment and reliability.

Volunteering has had a profound impact on her personal development. “Through volunteering I have gained new skills, met amazing people and learned a lot about myself,” she shares. The experience has helped her rebuild confidence and recognise her ability to make a positive difference, not only in the lives of others but in her own. “It has helped me to rebuild my confidence and believe that I can make a difference – not just in other people’s lives, but in my own too.”

Reflecting on her journey, she describes the experience as life-changing. “Volunteering has truly changed me for the better as it has given me purpose, friendship and a sense of self-worth that I never thought I’d find again.” Her story highlights the transformational power of volunteering and the importance of creating supportive, flexible opportunities that enable individuals to grow, connect, and thrive.

**Sally**  
**Volunteer**  
**Shared Lives and Volunteers**  
**Blackpool Council**



# Remove Barriers and Build Inclusive Volunteering for All

**Aim: Make volunteering in Blackpool genuinely accessible to everyone.**

**To deliver on this aim, we have set four key objectives**



**Objective One:**  
Improve DBS and onboarding consistency



**Objective Two:**  
Build inclusive, accessible volunteering practices



**Objective Three:**  
Strengthen shared resources and infrastructure



**Objective Four:**  
Improve access to training for volunteers and coordinators

## Key actions:

- Map DBS processes and develop a clear DBS & Onboarding Flowchart.
- Provide guidance on the Update Service and common delays.
- Deliver inclusive role design workshops and promote ESL volunteer models.
- Add a resources page to Community First and revisit Volunteer Passport options.
- Create a suite of guidance toolkits that equip organisations with approaches for meaningfully engaging people across a wide range of protected characteristics, helping them design truly inclusive volunteering opportunities.
- Improve access to MeLearning, iPool and Learning Rooms training.

# Remove Barriers and Build Inclusive Volunteering for All



**Sam Smith**  
Volunteer Coordinator/Team Lead  
Community First BWF

**“Inclusive volunteering in Blackpool starts with listening, understanding and adapting. We ask every volunteer what they need to feel comfortable — whether that’s reasonable adjustments, accessible spaces or simply the confidence to share who they are. Weekly check-ins, open conversations and honest supervisions help us spot barriers early and tackle them together. When people feel safe, supported and able to be themselves, volunteering becomes truly accessible for all.”**

## Garry's Story

When Garry first considered volunteering, he was navigating a difficult period in his life. He had recently experienced bereavement and was living with social anxiety and hidden disabilities that made everyday interactions feel overwhelming. He described himself as someone who was “trying to cope with things people couldn’t always see,” and felt disconnected from others and from his own sense of purpose.

Volunteering became a turning point in rebuilding his confidence and wellbeing. Garry explains that through volunteering he “met a lot of people who helped me understand myself” and learned how to prioritise his time in ways that supported both his needs and the needs of others. He speaks openly about the impact this had on his mental health, saying, “I feel generally more useful and full of purpose.” The inclusive environment he stepped into allowed him to participate at his own pace, without judgement, and to feel valued for who he is.

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**Garry Miller**  
Brokerage Volunteer  
Community First BWF



# Investing in Our People and Resources

**Volunteering in Blackpool** depends on the people and organisations who make it happen. To deliver this strategy, we need to invest in the infrastructure that supports volunteering, the people who coordinate and care for volunteers and the individuals who give their time, energy and commitment as volunteers.

## Why This Matters

Organisations told us that many staff are juggling multiple responsibilities, leaving limited time to recruit, support and retain volunteers.

Evidence shows that volunteering infrastructure support and dedicated volunteer support roles make a real difference — but funding challenges mean not every organisation can provide them.

## What This Means for the Strategy

Investing in people, resources and structures underpins every priority in this strategy. Its aim is to ensure that volunteers have a positive experience, organisations feel confident, and the whole volunteering system in Blackpool can grow in a sustainable, inclusive way.

## What We Need

### To strengthen volunteering across Blackpool, we need have:

- Strong local volunteering infrastructure to support the development of volunteer involving organisation and volunteering.
- Skilled and well resourced people with the time and training to recruit and support volunteers well
- Stronger and more streamlined systems and processes that make volunteering easier to navigate
- Sustainable funding so organisations can plan, improve and innovate



# How You Can Get Involved

Volunteering is a great way to connect with your community, meet new people and make a positive difference in Blackpool. Whether you want to learn new skills, give something back or try something completely new, **there are opportunities for everyone.**

## Want to Volunteer?

If you'd like to get involved, you can explore opportunities through the **Community First Blackpool, Wyre & Fylde website.**

Once you're there, you'll be able to:

- browse available volunteering opportunities in Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde
- register for a free account to express interest in roles that match your skills and interests

It's simple, flexible and open to everyone. If you're not sure where to start, or need any extra support, you can also attend a volunteer drop-in session for more information.

## Want to Recruit Volunteers?

Volunteers across Blackpool support one-off events, ongoing activities and community projects of all kinds. If you're a community group or organisation looking to involve volunteers, you can register with **Community First BWF** to:

- create and promote volunteering opportunities on our website
- access training, guidance and resources
- receive support with volunteer recruitment and management

This provides organisations the support to offer high-quality, inclusive volunteer experiences.



## Need More Information?

If you have questions about volunteering in Blackpool or want support getting started, you can contact the Community First team through their website.

<https://www.communityfirstbwf.org/>

# Acknowledgements

The development of the Blackpool Volunteering Strategy has been made possible through the significant support, insight and commitment of our Steering Group. Their contributions were instrumental in shaping the strategic direction and ensuring the strategy reflects the strengths, needs and aspirations of Blackpool's communities.

While this strategy sets out a five-year programme of continued partnership building, it is important to formally recognise the organisations whose collaboration underpinned its development at the outset.

**We extend our sincere appreciation to our Steering Group partners for their invaluable role in supporting the creation of this strategy and for their ongoing commitment to strengthening volunteering across Blackpool.**



# Appendix

This appendix brings together the supporting materials, evidence and tools that informed the development of the Blackpool Volunteering Strategy. These documents provide additional detail behind the insights, engagement activity and analysis that shaped the strategic priorities and actions.

Included in the Appendix:

## **Engagement Summary**

- Overview of workshops, surveys, interviews and events used to gather insight.

## **Volunteer Survey Findings**

- Key themes, demographic breakdown and detailed responses from volunteers.

## **Volunteer Manager Survey Findings**

- Insight into recruitment, support needs, challenges and organisational capacity.

## **VCFSE Sector Workshop Outputs**

- Vision statements, thematic discussions and priority-setting exercises.

## **Organisation Vision Session Notes**

- Summary of challenges, opportunities and support needs identified by individual organisations.

## **Big Thank You Event Feedback**

- Ideas, suggestions and reflections from residents and organisations.

# Appendix 1 - Vision



## BLACKPOOL'S VISION FOR VOLUNTEERING 2026 -2031

### Our Values and Aspirational Goals



**Access, Pathways  
& Progression**



**Promotion &  
Reframing Volunteering**



**Volunteer Experience  
& Support**



**Inclusion &  
Removing Barriers**

Blackpool is a place where everyone, from every walk of life, feels empowered, welcomed, and supported to make a meaningful difference in their community. Volunteering is visible, celebrated, and woven into everyday life — a natural, joyful act that brings people together, builds pride, and changes lives one moment at a time. Our volunteering ecosystem is cohesive and person-centred, offering clear pathways, shared standards, and a supportive environment where volunteers grow, organisations thrive, and communities feel the impact.

# Appendix 1 - Vision

## Access, Pathways & Progression



Blackpool will be a place where volunteering is easy to access, simple to navigate and rich with opportunities for people to grow. In five years, every resident regardless of; age, background or experience. Will be able to step into volunteering through clear pathways, personalised support and flexible opportunities that build confidence, skills and long-term progression.

## Promotion & Reframing Volunteering



In five years, volunteering in Blackpool will be widely recognised, celebrated and understood as a powerful force for personal growth and community change. Through bold storytelling, visible promotion and a shift in how volunteering is framed, residents will see volunteering as a skilled, meaningful and valued part of Blackpool's identity.

## Volunteer Experience & Support



In five years, every volunteer in Blackpool will feel welcomed, supported and genuinely valued, with organisations equipped to provide consistent, high-quality experiences that help people thrive. Volunteering will be shaped around care, communication and inclusion, ensuring that everyone from first-time to long-standing volunteers feels confident and part of something meaningful.

## Inclusion & Removing Barriers



In five years, volunteering in Blackpool will be genuinely accessible to everyone with practical, cultural and systemic barriers removed. So, people from all backgrounds can take part confidently and comfortably. Organisations will understand the diverse needs of residents and design volunteering around inclusion from the start, ensuring that no one is excluded because of cost, complexity, language, disability or circumstance.

# Appendix 2 - Volunteer Survey Findings

## **Approaches to developing volunteering across Lancashire**

One Website for all 63%

More Promotion of Volunteering Opportunities 49%

Accessible Training for Volunteers 40%

Encourage more employers to let their employees volunteer 39%

More flexible volunteering roles - home-based, bite sized, online etc.  
34%

## **If you ever ended a volunteering role, what was the reason?**

Not applicable 50%

I no longer have time due to family/work commitments 12%

I wanted to focus on other things in life 9%

My volunteer role ended with the organisation 9%

I did not enjoy or find fulfilling my last volunteer role 6%

I moved to a different area 6%

## **Motivations for Volunteering**

To do something worthwhile/help my community 76%

To contribute to a cause I care about 59%

To share my skills 42%

To gain more life satisfaction 34%

To access training/learn new skills 24%

# Appendix 2 - Volunteer Survey Findings

## Volunteers were asked - If you could improve volunteering in any way, what would you change? And is there anything else you'd like to share to help us improve volunteering in your area?

### Better Promotion, Awareness & One-Stop Information Access — 27%

People repeatedly ask for clearer, more visible, centralised ways to find opportunities. This includes a website, app, social media promotion, workplace visits, and general awareness-raising.

Examples from the document:

"a website for the area... find out who is currently looking for volunteers"

"Raise profile of benefits of volunteering and signpost to one source for all opportunities"

"If I Google volunteering in my area then I should easily... see all the questions... with local answers"

"advertising and promotion bigger, louder, wider!"

### Training, Induction, Support & Volunteer Management — 24%

A strong theme around needing better onboarding, ongoing support, clearer roles, leadership, and recognition.

Examples:

"More one to one training"

"Better induction and more recognition for volunteers"

"I had one training session then left to do it alone... Made me anxious"

"More specific training that comes with actual certificates"

### Flexibility & Accessibility of Volunteering — 18%

People want flexible roles, drop-in options, reduced paperwork, easier processes, and opportunities that fit around work or confidence levels.

Examples:

"make it easy... 'drop-in' volunteering where possible"

"Work with how much time an individual has"

"Easier process to become a volunteer"

"Working people who have a 9-5 are desperate to volunteer but roles struggle to accommodate them"

### Youth Volunteering & Early Education — 15%

A consistent call for more opportunities for under-18s, Duke of Edinburgh, and embedding volunteering in schools and colleges.

Examples:

"expanding volunteering opportunities for under 18s... Duke of Edinburgh"

"starting school-age children off with the idea that volunteering is valuable"

"volunteering should start in high school... timetabled for all students"

### Employer-Supported Volunteering — 10%

Many respondents want employers to release staff, create policies, or allow monthly volunteering days.

Examples:

"employers to have strategies... allow their staff to volunteer for a day each month"

"Encourage employers to release staff for volunteering"

"Full time workers want to volunteer. But struggle with time."

# Appendix 3 – Volunteer Manager Findings

## Challenges faced in the volunteer manager role

Recruiting enough volunteers 52%

Retaining -keeping volunteers 48%

Travel or transport barriers due for volunteers due to cost of travel 37%

Balancing volunteer management with other responsibilities 37%

Lack of resources/budget for volunteering (such as volunteer expenses, training, events.... 30%

## Improving/developing volunteering

Promotion of volunteering

Volunteer retention

Volunteering for those who need more support

Support and info for volunteer managers

Training for volunteer managers, volunteer recognition, volunteering into employment, young people 37%

## Volunteer roles offered to young people

No, our roles are not suitable 44%

Yes 30%

## Additional comments and recommendations

### 1. Inclusion & Targeted Support for Under-represented Groups — 50%

Half of all respondents emphasise the need to widen participation, particularly for young people, people with English as a second language, and those with additional needs or disabilities.

Examples from the document:

- “Develop tailored outreach and opportunities for young people... cultivate a lifelong culture of volunteering.”

- “Three definite gaps... young volunteers, those with English as a second language and suitable roles for those with additional needs.”
- “Including minority groups... those with additional needs, young people and those who speak English as a second language.”

### 2. System-wide Coordination & Leadership — 38%

Respondents call for a more joined-up, whole-town approach, clearer leadership, and defined points of contact.

Examples:

- “A whole town plan to help narrow these gaps.”
- “A whole town approach is needed for volunteering.”
- “One named person as a point of contact... we spend ages trying to find out who we need to speak to.”
- “Vision for Volunteering should also contact managers and CEOs... so they realise the importance of volunteers.”

### 3. Volunteering as a Pathway to Employment & Value Recognition — 25%

Respondents highlight the need to make volunteering “worth it,” link it to employment, and ensure volunteer roles are recognised and supported.

Examples:

- “Volunteering as a route to employment... read the research.”
- “If we can make it worth it for some people then they will definitely volunteer more.”
- “Volunteer Coordinator as a stand-alone role... would be seen in a more positive way.”

# Appendix 4 - VCFSE Sector Workshop Outputs

**Context** - Workshop discussions highlighted the need to modernise, diversify and strengthen volunteering so that it is accessible, inclusive, sustainable and impactful for both individuals and organisations.

**The Vision**- Volunteering should be person-centred, flexible, inclusive and valued — removing barriers to participation while strengthening skills, wellbeing, and community ownership.

## Key Themes

### 1. Access & Inclusion

- Address practical barriers (transport, costs, parking, DBS/red tape).
- Offer flexible opportunities that reflect people's time, ability and personal circumstances.
- Create clear pathways for young people and students.
- Diversify age representation and widen participation.
- Promote corporate volunteering and school engagement.

### 2. Volunteer Experience & Retention

- Ensure clear, accessible role descriptions (no overly complex wording).
- Strengthen onboarding, communication and conflict resolution.
- Balance flexibility with accountability and commitment.
- Provide meaningful recognition (without tokenism).
- Build confidence through person-centred role design.

### 3. Skills, Progression & Digital Opportunity

- Support skills development and digital confidence.
- Recognise lived experience as expertise.
- Create career progression pathways.
- Position volunteering as a route into employment and leadership.

### 4. Health & Wellbeing Impact

- Tackle social isolation.
- Support mental health and belonging.
- Foster friendships and community ownership.
- Recognise volunteering as preventative wellbeing support.

### 5. Marketing, Narrative & Perception

- Challenge stigma and stereotypes around volunteering.
- Improve social media and marketing of roles.
- Provide clear, consistent and accessible information.
- Reframe volunteering as skilled, impactful and community-building.

### 6. Infrastructure & Sector Cohesion


- Improve communication across the voluntary sector.
- Develop shared standards and onboarding consistency.
- Create a central point of contact.
- Strengthen evaluation and shared goals.
- Elevate and champion the volunteer voice through co-production.

# Appendix 5 - Organisation Vision Toolkit Summary

## ACTIVITY 1 – WHAT'S WORKING WELL

1. **Friendly, welcoming environments** - Supportive staff/coordinators, relaxed atmosphere, inclusive culture, safe space.
2. **Feeling valued, useful, and connected** - Appreciation, friendships, sense of purpose and belonging.
3. **Mental health and wellbeing benefits** - Increased confidence, reduced isolation, emotional support.

## ACTIVITY 2 – WHAT COULD BE BETTER

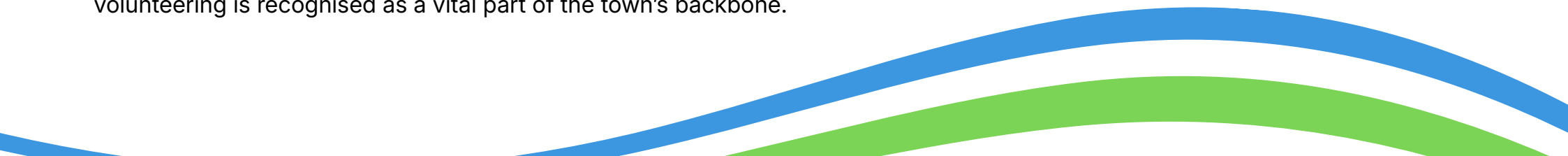
1. **Poor marketing and low awareness** - People don't know where to start looking; opportunities not visible. It's not promoted or recognised enough by local authorities.
  2. **Accessibility barriers** - For both organisation and volunteers. Challenges for disabled people and minorities (e.g. people who aren't proficient in english), digitally excluded groups may also struggle in advertising roles.
  3. **Need for more flexible opportunities** - Strong demand for more evening and weekend roles. So the average working person can offer their time too.
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# Appendix 5 - Organisation Vision Toolkit Summary

## ACTIVITY 3 – THINGS THAT MIGHT GET IN THE WAY

1. **Time pressures and cost of living** - work, home life (care responsibilities etc.) and financial strain reduce availability to volunteer (especially if organisations don't cover expenses)
2. **Health issues** - Physical and mental health challenges limit involvement. Low confidence and anxiety may also prevent individuals from starting.
3. **Transport and mobility challenges** - Limited public transport options, parking difficulties, and physical access barriers, particularly where venues are not fully disability-friendly.

## ACTIVITY 4 – OPPORTUNITIES & IDEAS

1. **Better marketing and visibility** - Stronger offline promotion through public transport spaces, bus stops, and billboards; improved social media reach supported by funding and digital-skills training; and a greater community presence with organisations actively engaging people face-to-face and sharing information about what they do.
  2. **Stronger collaboration across sectors** - Stronger collaboration across sectors in Blackpool would help create a more coordinated and resilient volunteering landscape. When VCFSE organisations, the NHS, Blackpool Council and local businesses work together, they can share information, pool resources and reach communities that individual organisations often miss. This joined-up approach would make volunteering more visible and recognised, create clearer pathways into working roles and ensure volunteers are matched to opportunities that genuinely meet local needs and suit their skillsets and/or lived experience. In a town where services can feel fragmented and demand is high, collaboration helps build a more consistent, supportive experience for volunteers and strengthens the overall impact on Blackpool's communities.
  3. **Reward and recognition schemes** - Reward and recognition schemes can strengthen volunteering in Blackpool by making people feel genuinely appreciated for the time and energy they give. Through coordinated action between the Council, VCFSE organisations, the NHS, and local businesses, Blackpool could introduce practical incentives such as points-based reward systems, local discounts, free or reduced-rate parking for volunteers, and more visible public celebration of volunteer contributions. These approaches not only acknowledge the value volunteers bring but also help attract new people, retain existing volunteers, and build a culture where volunteering is recognised as a vital part of the town's backbone.
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# Appendix 5 - Organisation Vision Toolkit Summary

## Top Quotes

1. **Feeling welcome and surrounded by kind caring people keeps me young." & "Volunteering is a great way to feel useful in what seems a useless world."**

These reinforce the infographic's themes around friendly environments, feeling valued, and mental wellbeing benefits.

2. **"People don't always understand if they are volunteering." & "Opportunities are not advertised well enough... without word of mouth many people wouldn't know how to begin their volunteering journey."**

These support the theme of poor marketing and low awareness.

3. **" Finding free time or cost of living (having to work full time to 'survive')."**

This directly supports the theme of time pressures and financial strain as major barriers.

4. **"Work together not in competition with each other."**

This reinforces the infographic's theme around stronger collaboration across sectors.



# Appendix 6 - Big Thank You Event Feedback

## What actions could help improve volunteering in our area? (Original wording from participants)

- "Better 'marketing' of volunteer roles"
- "Further cohesion and less individualism"
- "Shared lives"
- "Better advertising"
- "Volunteering saved my life. It's the most rewarding job"
- "Accessing metropole residents and using their skills for connections and integration"
- "Spread the word about different charities"
- "To tell more school what we do and clubs"
- "Better explanation of what charity does and how i can help as a volunteer"
- "School and club involvement/ better advertising of roles."

## What makes it hard for someone to start volunteering? (Original wording from participants)

- "Hard to walk in 'door'"
- "Time with other commitments"
- "People don't have enough knowledge on volunteering"
- "Time and money restraints"
- "Don't know where to start"
- "Lack of time and resources for their own life and wellbeing"



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