



The state of volunteering in the UK

Katie Turner

Lead Advisor, Volunteering for
Development

VSO International

General Election 2015



The beginning of formal volunteering

- 1700s
- ‘Formal’ or organised volunteering – attached to specific organisation or cause – began to emerge
- The first charitable and volunteer recruitment organisations were set up
- Sparked the beginning of debates between state welfare intervention vs. private charities.



The rise of Britain's Welfare State

- Post-World War I
- A comprehensive welfare state began to emerge
- UK Government takes greater responsibility for the protection and promotion of its citizens' economic and social well-being.
- Volunteering seen as an important component of a health democracy and providing services outside of those within the provision of the state.



The increased formalisation of volunteering

- Increasing disillusionment with public services
- Increased formalisation of the volunteer sector
- The first local 'volunteer bureaux' (volunteer centres) established
- From volunteering as a social service to a form of community action



Tensions between volunteering and public services

- Tensions emerging within health and social services around the increased involvement of volunteers
- 1973 – a national Volunteer Centre set up
- Government fuels tensions by promoting volunteering as a cheaper alternative to state provision



Volunteering and politics

- Replacement for state services, OR;
- Strengthening existing state provisions?
- Using volunteering as a political tool.
- Key element of strategies to promote social participation and increase individual and collective citizenship
- Youth volunteering - a policy mechanism for addressing concerns about young people's citizenship.



Volunteering infrastructure in 2015

- Volunteer policy is devolved with England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales responsible for their own policies.
- National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) - national development agency for volunteering and the voluntary sector.
- National Citizen Service programme - 16-17yr old UK
- 2013 - 30,000 young people took part
- UK International Citizenship Service (ICS) - young people between 18-25yrs volunteer in projects overseas.
- Voluntary sector organisations – mobilising and managing volunteers in house



Snapshot of volunteering in the UK today

- The UK has one of the highest rates of volunteering in the world
- The annual economic value of regular formal volunteering to be £23.9 billion
- In 2013 over 14 million people in the UK volunteered
- Around a 24% to 33% of people in each age range report volunteering at least once a month (with those aged 65-74 the most likely to volunteer this frequently).



The most popular sectors for volunteering in the UK

2008/09



The most popular volunteer activities in the UK



The floods in the UK – volunteer response



Thank you!

