



An Open Letter to Senior Managers & Boards of Volunteer Involving & Deploying Organisations in all Sectors

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been unprecedented. Organisations of all types - charities, small and large businesses and public sector bodies - have been challenged in delivering their core services. Few have escaped the financial, operational and strategic changes created by this crisis.

Despite the challenges, many organisations are also experiencing unprecedented support from volunteers who simply want to help. People who care about a cause and their community roll up their sleeves, put their heads together, and find ways to make a difference. Volunteers are vital players in the ways your organisation and your community will heal and move forward. Their ingenuity can also be central to creating new and innovative solutions yet to be considered by your team.

To fully leverage volunteer talent, you must include at the decision-making table the person who leads volunteer engagement in your organisation. They offer a perspective few others see. Including their leadership and voice will enable you to define your organisation's future sustainability strategy. In order to effectively achieve this, those organisations writing this letter implore you to make these bold commitments:

- **Invest In Volunteer Engagement** – It is easy to overlook the strategic impact your volunteers have on your organisation and its mission: from board members & committees, to donors, fundraising supporters and the wider team of volunteers working across your activities. Now is the time to invest in your organisation's volunteer engagement leadership to ensure a great volunteer experience and to maximise the value of this wide-ranging support. Engage and partner with funders to elevate their understanding and support of strategic investment in your organisation's volunteer engagement strategy.
- **Communicate with Your Volunteers** – Keep those who support your organisation close by sharing ongoing strategic, mission-aligned communication. Doing so is essential to keeping your volunteers engaged, especially as lockdown eases and some supporters will be anxious about restarting their volunteering and/or shifting to new ways of supporting your work. Nurture relationships in meaningful ways that resonate with your volunteers, remembering that they are powerful advocates for you in your community.
- **Anticipate the Need for Flexibility** – Your organisation and the way it works may look different in the future. Amidst shifting expectations, call upon your volunteers for their agility. Support them to remain nimble and ready to respond to the changes necessary to drive sustained strategic outcomes.
- **Think in New Ways** – The economic impact of COVID-19 is already significant. New challenges will call for fresh solutions to address your community's needs. New risks will need to be embraced and managed in order to seize the opportunities and challenges we all face. Invite the limitless pool of talent your volunteers offer to help create new answers to the unsolved questions.

Now is the time for leaders to ensure that the capacity to support communities is sustained and developed for the future. This only happens when your greatest resource - caring, talented, resourceful people - benefit from your attention and investment, through well-developed volunteer management.

What steps are you taking today to ensure volunteer energy is essential to your sustainability plan? How will you and your peers answer the call to support volunteers as the lifeblood of your organisation?

Who is behind this open letter?



Association of Volunteer Managers (AVM)

The Association of Volunteer Managers (AVM) is an independent membership body that aims to support, represent and champion people in volunteer management in the UK regardless of field, discipline or sector. It has been set up by and for people who manage volunteers.



Association of Voluntary Service Managers (AVSM)

In existence for over 25 years, AVSM – the Association of Volunteer Service Managers – is a national membership organisation for anyone managing volunteers in hospice or palliative care settings.

Run by members for members, we provide information, training and support to staff in over 120 hospices across the UK.



Heritage Volunteering Group

At the Heritage Volunteering Group our mission is to help you unlock the power of volunteering through collaboration and sharing best practice. Passionate and always smiling, we believe that by inspiring collaboration and creating opportunities for people to share ideas we can help transform volunteering in the heritage sector.



Rob Jackson Consulting Ltd

Rob Jackson Consulting Ltd provides consultancy, training, speaking, writing and mentoring services in strategic volunteer engagement and volunteer management. We are passionate about engaging and inspiring people to bring about change.



Scottish Volunteering Forum

The Scottish Volunteering Forum is a collaborative group of cross-sector organisations that are committed to developing and improving volunteer participation in Scotland. We exist to influence the strategic landscape and champion innovative approaches using our collective intelligence and expertise.



Volunteer Now

Volunteer Now is the lead organisation for promoting and supporting volunteering across Northern Ireland. We build recognition for volunteering and celebrate the contribution volunteers make. We provide access to opportunities and encourage people to volunteer. We are a resource for volunteer involving organisations providing support on involving volunteers, governance and safeguarding.