


## What is the Volunteering Knowledge Network?

It's an open network, enabling researchers, practitioners and policy makers to collaborate on projects which strengthen the evidence base for volunteering. The Volunteering Knowledge Network enables stakeholders to share information about new research projects and initiate new programmes of study which address gaps in our knowledge about volunteering.

# volunteering knowledge network

powered by 

 The National Young Volunteers Service  
5th Floor Dean Bradley House  
52 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 2AF  
[research@vinspired.com](mailto:research@vinspired.com)  
(020) 7960 7000



### **On what foundation does the Volunteering Knowledge Network build?**

The Volunteering Knowledge Network builds on the partnership working that **v** has engaged in through its instigation and membership of the Longitudinal Research Scoping Study consortium (in which it is partnered with Birkbeck, NATCEN and the Institute for Volunteering Research) and a range of current research initiatives in which it is working variously with IES, CFE, Demos, Dubit, the Institute for Employment Studies and NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research).

### **Why do we need a 'Knowledge' Network?**

The Volunteering Knowledge Network differs from existing set-ups that are established specifically for researchers or practitioners or policymakers, in that it brings these three communities - and individuals and organisations from all sectors - together to share and enrich knowledge. Thus, it complements rather than supplants existing networks and, when appropriate, draws them together.

At a minimal level the vision is that the Volunteering Knowledge Network will be the database or contact list that individuals and organisations will want to be on; more ambitiously it ought to provide a respected and objective voice in the field and related areas - an authority on all that relates to volunteering, rather than simply (another) *protagonist* for it.

In this context, policymakers are partners within the Network not targets to be lobbied by the Network. Thus, the Volunteering Knowledge Network will give voice to the evidence generated by researchers and the needs identified by policymakers and practitioners, sparking and sustaining an ongoing dialogue between all three.

### **How will the network add value?**

The Network provides a key forum to support the development of a robust evidence base for volunteering, and youth volunteering in particular. It acts as a conduit to enable stakeholders to share information about the existing volunteering knowledge base, identify gaps in data, initiate or support the commissioning of new research projects and disseminate research findings to relevant audiences.

The Network is likely to be especially active when:

- A government department, or some other agency, asks for a piece of research evidence or professional practice to be analysed;
- There is a need for new research or policy in the volunteering field;
- Partners wish to make, or to explore making, a joint funding bid;
- There is a particular youth volunteering 'story' emerging from new research carried out or evidence otherwise gathered by one or more of the partners or a third party;
- A particular policy announcement is made and a sector response is required.

The Network is therefore designed to be both pro-active (in sharing knowledge and facilitating new partnerships) and responsive to the needs of the research and policy landscape. It will be co-ordinated in a dynamic way, using digital technology to harness the skills, knowledge and expertise of its members.

### **What part will **v** play in supporting the Network?**

**v** will organise and host face-to-face meetings and online events to facilitate regular dialogue within the network. It will also facilitate and maintain virtual communications between the Network's membership. This role reflects **v**'s commitment to building the knowledge base on youth volunteering and to influence policy change for the sector as a whole.

### **What are the Network's Terms of Reference?**

The formal terms of reference proposed for the Volunteering Knowledge Network are:

1. To discuss and explore the implications of new research, policy and practice initiatives as they arise, especially in the youth volunteering field but also in related areas such as social action, community organizing or employability preparation;
2. To provide a shared voice with which to engage opinion formers and policymakers - for instance, on the need for greater and better longitudinal research in the youth volunteering field;
3. To aid the dissemination of new 'knowledge' in the youth volunteering field - functioning as the successor to the Longitudinal Research Scoping Study Consortium, and as an extension of it;
4. To strengthen collaboration and new partnerships between organisations and independent researchers, practitioners and policy specialists in the field, as illustrated through **v**'s current approach to research (that is, usually as either a research sponsor or a co-researcher rather than a *lone* researcher).

### **How have potential participants responded to the idea of the Network?**

A number of existing **v** partners and supporters - organisations and individuals from a range of settings and sectors - have already expressed interest in being a part of the Network and it is likely that others will want to do so in due course.

### **How can I become part of the Network?**

All that you need to do is to e-mail **v** at [knowledge@vinspired.com](mailto:knowledge@vinspired.com) and we'll be in touch!