



TimeBank's response to One Nation Labour: renewing our bond with the third sector.

About TimeBank

TimeBank is a national volunteering charity. Our vision is to make volunteering part of the fabric of everyday life and a rewarding experience for everyone involved, enabling outstanding volunteering opportunities to happen for more people, more of the time. We do this by utilising the skills and experience of volunteers to deliver social impact projects that directly address the needs of disadvantaged and socially excluded groups across the UK.

We believe that volunteering can be an effective way of tackling complex problems in our society, from the challenges of an ageing population to community integration. From social exclusion to digital inclusion, we show the difference volunteers can make and use this to influence others – policy makers, charities and businesses.

TimeBank has 14 years' experience and a strong track record in delivering a wide range of successful mentoring programmes and we have matched over 6,000 individuals in mentoring relationships. Our refugee mentoring scheme, Time Together, was the first national mentoring programme to successfully achieve the Approved Provider Standard from the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation and led to the mainstreaming of mentoring provision for refugees in the UK. We have continued this tradition of excellence with both our Back to Life and The Switch projects gaining Approved Provider Status.

TimeBank currently provides volunteer mentoring support to small charities and social enterprises; ex-service personnel and family members; UK residents with little or no English language; young people leaving care; young people with mental health problems and carers struggling with the stresses and strains of caring.

We have chosen to respond on the questions raised on volunteering which, as a national volunteering charity, we feel best placed to comment on.

The key themes of our response are:

- Recognise that volunteering is not free.
- Be clear about what you mean by volunteers and volunteering.
- Don't reinvent the wheel or succumb to the temptation to create new initiatives before engaging with existing volunteering organisations to draw on their skills and experience.
- Reconsider the Big Society and the Compact with the voluntary and community sector.
- Set up a regional representative structure with volunteer-involving and delivery organisations instead of relying on London-based membership organisations.
- Lead the way on employee volunteering.



Volunteering

1. What are the main barriers to volunteering?

- i. The barriers to volunteering range from the prosaic – simply not offering the opportunities that potential volunteers want, at a time and place to suit them, to the structural – the institutional behaviour of organisations.
- ii. There is an assumption by many (in Government and local authorities, as well as the private sector) that volunteering, being freely given, is cost free. This is not the case. Volunteers need support, management and other resources to make a difference. At a strategic level there is a need to support and resource infrastructure bodies so that there is a more co-ordinated approach to volunteer management, to enable more, and better volunteering to happen. At a local level there is a need to recognise that the resourcing, support, promotion and delivery of volunteering incurs costs.
- iii. The relentless silo/innovation approach adopted by successive Governments to promoting volunteering (older people, young people, uniformed volunteering, citizenship) has alienated many in the volunteering sector who feel the money could have been better spent supporting what already exists. The most recent survey by nfp Synergy (the New Alchemy, September 2014) highlights once again that those most likely to volunteer are the young, the old, and those who are more affluent. The Cabinet Office Community Life Survey (2013) found that nearly twice the amount of people volunteered in the least deprived areas when compared with the most deprived areas. The initiatives adopted by Government rarely reflect the need to widen access to volunteering to socially excluded groups. Sadly, none of this is new or surprising. The Citizenship Survey (previously the Home Office Citizenship Survey) ran every two years from 2001-2011 and found that those least likely to volunteer are:
 - Those with no qualifications at GCSE, and those with the highest qualifications.
 - Those not born in the United Kingdom.
 - Those in lower supervisory and technical/semi-routine and routine occupations.
 - Those with a disability or life limiting illness.

A new Labour Government should invest time in exploring with the volunteering sector why these particular groups continue to be under-represented in volunteering, and what barriers, perceived or actual, they face. Greater efforts should then be made to work with existing volunteering organisations to offer integrated opportunities in mainstream volunteering to those who are excluded rather than creating new initiatives.



2. What could a Labour Government do to encourage and support more people to volunteer?

- i. While more people volunteering is one measure of success, it is at least as important to ensure a better quality of volunteering happens. Both of these can be achieved if the Government promotes a climate in which volunteering flourishes. Volunteering does not happen in a vacuum. It needs an effective infrastructure to support it. That infrastructure can play a significant role in mainstreaming good practice, supporting and protecting volunteers and establishing a high standard of good practice in volunteer management. While many local infrastructure organisations are good, others have fallen away. A combination of cuts and changing demands from potential volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations has left large parts of the volunteering infrastructure under-resourced and, in some cases, irrelevant.

While it can now be seen as a reflection of the time, the Compact Code of Good Practice on Volunteering at least established a template for consistency in relation to how Government would work with the sector. TimeBank believes that it would be useful for a Labour Government to convene a working group to draw on the skills, knowledge and experience of representatives from the volunteering, volunteering infrastructure and volunteer-involving organisations. The primary output of the working group would be an agreement setting out how the Government would work with the sector to encourage and support volunteering. TimeBank believes that unlike the earlier Compact Code of Good Practice on Volunteering, any new agreement should be simple, practical, measurable, achievable and able to have a genuine impact when carried out by Government and volunteer-involving organisations funded or sponsored by Government.

- ii. TimeBank believes that in the current climate there is too much influence exercised by a small number of national umbrella/membership bodies that do not accurately reflect the views and opinions of those delivering programmes across England. Across the wider voluntary and community sector there is a perception that these umbrella bodies are too close to the current Government and too willing to deliver its agenda to champion any alternate view from members. The large voluntary sector membership bodies, usually London based, are not representative of the whole sector, and are often out of date/step with the reality of what's on the ground. TimeBank believes that a more reflective and responsive structure could be created at a regional level to gather information and communicate the views of volunteering, volunteering infrastructure and volunteer-involving organisations.



- iii. Review the Big Society agenda. The thinking behind it wasn't necessarily wrong but its execution was wholly inadequate. Many in the volunteering sector understand that if the volunteering sector wants the Government's support and resourcing, there needs to be closer links to the Government's policy – in particular around social inclusion, social cohesion and the provision of public services. However, there needs to be a more co-ordinated and consistent approach to this across Government departments. The 2010 Compact (the agreement between the Government and the voluntary and community sector) was redrafted by the Coalition Government and Compact Voice. The Compact is seen by many as a reflection of the Coalition Government's priorities rather than the agreement for partnership working this renewed. The Compact diluted previous commitments, deprioritised volunteering and removed virtually all references to how the Government and the sector would work together to improve the quality and quantity of volunteering. These earlier commitments to volunteering, although imperfect, should be reviewed.
- iv. Support a more consistent approach to employer supported volunteering within organisations in the private sector, local authorities and government departments. For example, while the Civil Service encourages employee volunteering, the approach is not consistent across all departments. It is often not skills based nor is there often an adequate budget or acknowledgement that sourcing volunteering opportunities, managing the day, undertaking health and safety and risk assessments and preparing briefing documents costs money. We believe that this could be changed so that all Government employees are supported to undertake five days paid volunteering leave, and by adopting a skills-based model – utilising employees' existing professional skill set in their volunteering. This could be made more meaningful if linked to the annual performance and appraisal cycle.

TimeBank works closely with businesses to engage their staff in volunteering. We deliver innovative skills-based employee volunteering programmes – from transforming unused corners of schools into inspiring reading corners (working with schools which are struggling financially and/or in Ofsted ratings) to delivering volunteering opportunities across London for the international company CEB as part of its Global Action Day. Having started working with T-Mobile in 2006 we continue to work with the newly merged company EE on its employee volunteering programme, enabling employees to share their digital skills through Techy Tea Parties to encourage older people to make the most of digital technology and access the many benefits of getting online. TimeBank would be happy to share our knowledge and experience with the Labour Party.



- v. Adopt and promote the consistent use of the terms volunteer and volunteering. The Coalition Government has used a number of terms and descriptions, often used interchangeably, to describe volunteering: 'active citizenship' 'citizen service' 'civic engagement' 'voluntary work' 'voluntary activity' and 'community benefit work placement'.

At best this has led to confusion, and at worst, in the case of the JSA, the Mandatory Work Activity Programme and the Help to Work Scheme, a perception that volunteering can be a compulsory activity.

The Government should clearly advocate that volunteering is an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or communities (of faith or place) or individuals or groups. It is generally accepted that volunteering activity takes place in the not-for-profit sector and statutory sector. It is freely undertaken and not for financial gain. The principle of non-payment of volunteers is central to wider sector and society's understanding of volunteering. Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Freedom to volunteer implies freedom not to become involved.

3. How do we encourage volunteering in areas of deprivation?

- i. As outlined in 1 (iii) TimeBank believes that the silo/new initiative approach – for example, developing specific new approaches for communities of faith, place or consequence is not the best solution.

A more effective approach would be to consult and engage with those living in areas of deprivation, perhaps through an intermediary body, about the type of volunteering they want to participate in. Time should be taken to explore with the volunteering sector why these particular groups continue to be under-represented in volunteering, and what barriers, perceived or actual, that these groups face to volunteering.

Any opportunities offered or developed should be done collaboratively, and in the communities where potential volunteers live and would benefit from the volunteering. As described earlier, greater efforts should then be made to work with existing volunteering organisations to integrate opportunities into the mainstream volunteering rather than creating new initiatives.



4. How effective is the National Citizen Service? What more could be done to increase its impact and deliver value for money?

- i. While there is nothing wrong with the aspirations of the National Citizens Service Programme, there was no need to reinvent the wheel or duplicate existing services. There are a significant number of opportunities, both formal and accredited, and informal, for people to be actively involved in their communities. The money would have been better spent raising awareness and improving access to these opportunities. While the National Citizens Service programme has laudable aspirations and a significant budget, it is not clear what impact it is having on the ground, or how those who participate will go on to contribute towards civil society, particularly among a group of people who are already more likely to volunteer.
- ii. To increase its impact and deliver better value for money the programme should invest in attracting more young people who are socially excluded – in particular those with no GCSEs and those who were not born in the United Kingdom. TimeBank would also like to see closer partnership between the NCS programme and those organisations that already provide volunteering opportunities, be they front-line delivery organisations or Volunteer Centres.

5. What role should schools play in encouraging and supporting young people to volunteer?

- i. TimeBank has been at the forefront of promoting youth-led volunteering – and have been particularly successful in schools. We would be happy to share our learning. We have been particularly successful at identifying the barriers to volunteering for young people, creating innovative outreach campaigns, and developing accessible, inspiring and relevant volunteering opportunities to engage those aged 11 to 25. Since we launched our youth programmes in 2002, TimeBank has worked with over 5,000 schools, youth groups, community organisations, colleges and universities; and engaged over 150,000 young people with volunteering.
- ii. One of our most successful projects working with schools was Young TimeBank. This used the concept of volunteering to give young people aged 11 to 19 the opportunity to develop core skills and build confidence outside the classroom. This innovative project enabled young participants to identify, create and implement community projects based upon their own interests – supported by fully trained volunteer facilitators.



Young TimeBank worked in partnership with schools and colleges in London, Swindon and Hertfordshire involving over 2,450 young people in peer-led community activity.

TimeBank also piloted Young TimeBank with young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN). We undertook two youth-led projects with 20 children with SEN in the London boroughs of Waltham Forest and Lambeth, focusing on the issues that matter most to them and helping them to increase their confidence and social and emotional skills. The young people chose their own activities including making an anti-bullying DVD and designing a newsletter for young people.

- iii. TimeBank also created and ran Junction49. Junction49 tapped into the phenomenon of social networking, providing a forum for young people to create and share ideas for social change; set up collaborative peer networks to run community projects; and access information and resources from a dedicated website. Over 8,500 young people registered on the website, and they ran projects from supporting young fathers, to mental health projects in schools.

It provided an on-line community for socially-conscious young people (aged 16-25) and their ideas. Its goal was to inspire and support ideas of young people to engage in actions for their local communities. Volunteers registered on the website and posted up their idea, before receiving expert advice about how to get it set up by a volunteer youth-led helpdesk team. The team monitored and moderated diary entries, photos and videos posted by the volunteers. Other young people could become e-volunteers and comment on the content posted by others.

As with many of TimeBank's innovative ideas, when we had taken it as far as we could we passed it to another youth focussed organisation to take to the next level.

6. What role should businesses and the public sector play in encouraging and supporting their staff to volunteer?

- i. As in the response given in 2 (iv) the Government should support a more consistent approach to employer supported volunteering within organisations in the private sector, local authorities and Government departments.
- ii. TimeBank would be pleased to share the learning from our successful Leaders Together programme, our benchmark programme for volunteers from the business and public sector. Leaders Together matches leaders from small charities, social enterprises and community groups with senior professionals from the private and statutory sectors in London. TimeBank is well placed to upscale this project to meet need nationally.



According to the Charity Commission, 88% of 152,502 registered charities in 2012 had an income under £500,000 and 43% had an annual income under £10,000. The majority of charitable organisations operate on minute budgets. While small charities and community groups are typically passionate about their purpose, because of limited resources like time and money, they are not always in the best position to deliver it as well as they would like.

TimeBank assesses the needs of voluntary and community organisations and matches them with a mentor who has expertise in that area. By matching them with senior managers from the public, private and voluntary sector they benefit from extra support with things like writing business plans and developing strategy, as well as the opportunity to discuss leadership, fundraising, strategic and business planning. Once matched, the pairs will meet for 24 hours over six months, in addition many communicate by email and text in between meetings for advice on funding bids or situations that arise unexpectedly.

7. What support and protection is needed to ensure volunteers are well supported and do not face unfair treatment or exploitation?

- i. The next Labour Government should take, and advocate, the following positions:

Rewarded or incentivised volunteering

Volunteering is unpaid. Attempts to incentivise volunteering that go beyond the reimbursement of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, for example, the offer of discounts; tickets to events; honoraria, or the payment of other lump sums at the end of a period of full-time volunteering; council tax discounts; other rewards contradict the unpaid element of the definition of volunteering and are not, therefore, volunteering.

Reciprocal volunteering

Reciprocal volunteering (or timebanking) is not volunteering – as any time given is done so with the express intention of banking that time and subsequently claiming that time, in the form of a service from another, back.

Job substitution

The involvement of volunteers should complement and supplement the work of paid staff, and should not be used to displace paid staff or undercut their pay and conditions of service, nor replace staff who have been cut due to financial constraints.



The delivery of public services

Volunteers add value to the delivery of public services. The added value of volunteers should be highlighted as part of commissioning or grant making processes but their involvement should not be used to reduce contract costs. For example, TimeBank's The Switch programme matches volunteer mentors with young people who are living with mental health issues like depression, anxiety or self-harm. Mentors use their skills and experience to support these young people as they transfer from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to Adult Mental Health Services, or begin an adult life independent of mental health services.

A Switch volunteer mentor makes that crucial difference to a young person with a mental health problem simply because their time is freely given and they don't have to be there, unlike a therapist, doctor, or their parents. All too often friends may also have drifted away. By being there for the young person without requirement or obligation, the beneficiary receives a huge morale and confidence boost: that someone voluntarily wants to be there for them spend time with them and help them transition to the next phase of their life.

Compulsory volunteering

If an activity is subject to compulsion - whether as a requirement of a course of education or training, receipt of benefits or a form of national service - it undermines the principle of freedom of choice and is not, therefore, volunteering. TimeBank would not recognise as volunteering any activity that is accompanied by the threat of withdrawal of benefits if someone does not complete activity at an organisation.

We would also not accept as volunteering any activity that was as an obligation stipulated by law, contract or academic requirement.

Contact details.

TimeBank would welcome the opportunity to discuss how social problems can be tackled by supporting outstanding volunteering experiences and utilising people's skills.

If you have any questions about this response or would like further information about TimeBank please contact Helen Walker, Chief Executive at TimeBank, or Lady Deane Barron, Chair of the Trustee Board.

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