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Managers of volunteers undervalued and underfunded New research published

A new report published today reveals the need for more training and development for managers of volunteers. It shows that nearly half of people who manage volunteers have not received any training that would help them in their work, despite the fact that volunteers are crucial to the government's Big Society.

The Minister for Civil Society, Nick Hurd, in the report's foreword, says: "This research highlights the skills needed and the importance of valuing them... It also highlights the need to think strategically about how volunteer managers are trained and supported. This is vital, whether they are engaged in work to empower and enhance their local communities or to deliver complex public services."

The report, *Valuing Volunteer Management Skills*, canvassed opinion from over 1000 third sector organisations, and was commissioned by Skills - Third Sector, the charity working to make it easier for people in charities and social enterprises to have people with the right skills. Despite identifying that there is much good practice in volunteer management in England today, it also reveals that volunteer management remains undervalued and underfunded in many organisations, including those with the largest incomes.

Research for the report was carried out by the Institute for Volunteering Research. It shows that although volunteer management is recognised as a distinct and vital role across organisations of all sizes, people managing volunteers in small groups need much more support than they currently get.

The report highlights that, despite the availability of training, advice and support, people who manage volunteers are not aware of how to access this. This is especially true of those managing volunteers in smaller organisations, as with low incomes or few members of staff they often exist in isolation..

Key findings:

- 42% of people who manage volunteers have not received any training that would help in their work with volunteers
- members of networks were considerably more likely to access training and support than those who weren't members - 74% compared to 49%
- there is strong demand for additional training and skills development across the range of functions outlined in the National Occupational Standards in the management of volunteers

- many organisations rely greatly on the local and national volunteering infrastructure for advice and support, particularly on local Volunteer Centres

Julie Wilkes, chief executive of Skills – Third Sector says: "The coalition government's Big Society agenda is about drawing on the goodwill of people across the country to respond to challenges facing Britain today. Central to this is the promotion of civic action and volunteering. *Valuing Volunteer Management Skills'* findings help us to see the picture from the point of view of those managing volunteers on the ground. Based on this, Skills - Third Sector is drawing up a skills strategy which gives top priority to creating flexible and affordable learning opportunities for these key managers."

Justin Davis Smith, chief executive of Volunteering England, comments: "Volunteer managers play a crucial role supporting the 17 million individuals who volunteer through an organisation each year. This report highlights the need for better access to training and development for volunteer managers so that the full benefits of volunteering to local communities can be realised."

The report also calls for further research to explore:

- the trend towards using volunteers to manage other volunteers
- the differing skills sets required for managing volunteers in different sizes of organisations

Georgina Brewis, Head of Research at the Institute for Volunteering Research, says: "Although this research focused on organisations in the voluntary sector, volunteering takes place across the public, private and voluntary sectors and we hope this will provide a valuable evidence base for those working with and supporting volunteers."

To view a full version of the report please visit:

www.skills-thirdsector.org.uk/research_policy/managing_volunteers_research/
(Online from 0001, Tuesday 31 August – embargoed hard copies available for journalists in advance upon request.)

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Notes to editors:

- The research report *Valuing Volunteer Management Skills* is based on a telephone survey with 1,004 people who manage volunteers across English voluntary sector organisations of different sizes, plus an additional ten biographical interviews. Fieldwork was conducted in February - March 2010.
- Skills - Third Sector makes it easier for people in charities and social enterprises to have the right skills to make a difference to people and their communities. For more information about its work please visit www.skills-thirdsector.org.uk
- The Institute for Volunteering Research (www.ivr.org.uk) is an initiative of Volunteering England in research partnership with Birkbeck College, University of London. For more information about Volunteering England and its work please visit www.volunteering.org.uk

- This report is a follow-up to the Institute for Volunteering Research's 2008 study *Management Matters*, which was the first national survey of volunteer management capacity.
- In line with recommendations made by the Commission on the Future of Volunteering in 2008, efforts have been made to focus the attention on volunteer support and management. Government's response has included investment in support for people who manage volunteers, most notably the £3 million Volunteer Management Programme.