

Nesta...



CITIES OF SERVICE UK:

CAPTURING THE SKILLS AND ENERGY OF VOLUNTEERS
TO ADDRESS CITY CHALLENGES



October 2016

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report is designed to be a practical guide for councils across the UK who want to harness the energy, skill and enthusiasm of volunteers. It will be helpful for those who want to better understand the potential of impact volunteering in a local authority setting or better understand how being part of the global Cities of Service movement can help deliver impact locally.

It summarises the key facets of the Cities of Service model, the initiatives each council designed and the impact on local people they had.

It also covers lessons other councils could build upon if they were to replicate the approach, including:

- Have a central convening role to champion volunteering.
- Pick initiatives that meet local authority needs and residents' preferences.
- Choose partners well .
- Build in opportunities for review, feedback and adaptation.
- Recruit a critical friend and make use of the movement.
- Plan and resource your impact measurement.
- Leverage the Cities of Service and local brands.
- Ensure the volunteering infrastructure is purposeful and easy to use.

We hope that it will be used to inspire those seeking to transform public services so they mobilise the energy, talents and assets of residents alongside skilled public servants to improve outcomes locally. Authorities interested can register their interest and find out more through contacting CitiesOfService.Org.

Nesta...

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We are dedicated to supporting ideas that can help improve all our lives, with activities ranging from early-stage investment to in-depth research and practical programmes.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cities of Service is a city-wide model that recruits volunteers to help address key city challenges. Launched in the United States in 2009, by former New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, the movement has made a significant difference for millions of people across America, delivering projects that help children improve their reading, reduce loneliness for the elderly, cool cities and make them greener. The Cities of Service model is now achieving impact across seven UK cities, reaching a population of 1.75 million.

Nesta, the UK's innovation foundation, was attracted to the Cities of Service model for its potential in achieving impact across the UK and in 2013 teamed up with Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Cabinet Office and the Cities of Service Organisation to test whether the success of the Cities of Service model could be replicated in the UK.

In 2013 we selected seven councils from across the UK, and gave each two years' grant funding and support to adopt Cities of Service in their local area.

The results of the pilot are encouraging. Close to 10,000 people were mobilised to volunteer with 18,500 people directly helped. The initiatives are starting to have impact, for example:

- In Plymouth, 23,000 parcels of fresh fruit and vegetables have been grown and given to families in need.
- In Barnsley, local residents have transformed their neighbourhoods through street cleaning and communal planting, picking up over 4,000 bags of litter.
- In Bristol, over 250 children have benefited from weekly one-to-one sessions to improve their reading, with over half improving their reading age by six months over the ten to 14 week period.

But perhaps more importantly the model has helped to elevate the significance and status of volunteering for the councils involved. Cities of Service has prompted councils to rethink the role of social action in designing services and in mobilising volunteers to complement and enhance core public service provision. For example, considering the role impact volunteering can play in meeting local authority needs is now an integral part of service design across Kirklees Council.

All councils involved in Cities of Service UK are continuing to embed the model and working together to build the coalition across the UK and Europe.

Cities of Service UK has demonstrated the opportunity for volunteers to make a difference to how local authorities work with residents to improve the places they live in and the lives people have.



2.

WHAT IS CITIES OF SERVICE AND HOW WAS IT PILOTED IN THE UK?

WHAT IS CITIES OF SERVICE?

Cities of Service is a national nonprofit organisation that supports mayors and city chief executives in their efforts to engage local communities and residents, identify challenges, and solve problems together. Founded in 2009 by Michael Bloomberg, then mayor of New York City, Cities of Service has built a coalition that includes more than 215 cities in the United States, representing more than 55 million people in 45 states. Cities of Service is changing the paradigm of how government and its citizens work together to bring tangible change, build a community of trust, and create stronger and more vibrant cities with bright futures.

For example, Phoenix, Arizona, used the Cities of Service model to create and maintain community gardens at three housing centres for low-income residents. Working in partnership with a number of local partners, Phoenix engaged volunteers to grow and give food to 210 individuals and families living in housing centres. Volunteers have also led educational gardening and cooking and nutrition classes for residents.

Cities belonging to the coalition share successful strategies and programmes, which are published in a series of blueprints that ensure the most effective approaches can be replicated by others.

The mobilising power of the Chief Service Officer (who reports directly to the Mayor) and the focus on impact of volunteers as opposed to numbers alone means Cities of Service is a powerful social action model.

THE CITIES OF SERVICE MODEL CONTAINS FOUR CONSISTENT CHARACTERISTICS:

1. Strong leadership within the city/local authority.
2. A clear set of objectives linked to priorities within the city/local authority.
3. A feasible set of actions that can be practically carried out by volunteers that responded to the identified priority.
4. A keen focus on impact relating to the objective rather than just volunteer numbers.

THE OPPORTUNITY OF A UK CITIES OF SERVICE

There is universal agreement that public services, as we have inherited them, are not fit for the future challenges we face. An ageing population, living in increasingly isolated circumstances, with more long-term conditions, will require more support than the state alone can provide. Our existing models - where public services are commissioned on people's behalf - will not survive these increasing demands and rising public expectations, especially given the reduction in the public purse.

Pioneering councils are therefore charting a new course - where public services are designed and delivered in partnership. This move away from a transactional model of public services, allows local government to make the most of the time, energy and skills of residents. In adult social care, many are exploring how volunteers can support isolated older people, thereby improving their wellbeing and leaving paid professionals to focus on those with the most acute needs. In some park departments, such as in Burnley Borough Council, experienced staff are working alongside residents to improve and maintain these valued community assets.

The shift towards greater community-designed and delivered services (a core principle of the localism agenda) provides the space for rethinking the role of volunteers to address local challenges.

Against this backdrop, Nesta and the Cabinet Office were drawn to the Cities of Service model.

In particular we wanted to test whether its core principles would be an effective model for reforming UK public services to make the most of social action. We were drawn to:

- Its clear call to action - for a new relationship between state and resident where problems are tackled together.
- Its focus on impact volunteering. Volunteering is already well embedded in communities across the UK, from school governors to Special Constables, sports group leaders to elderly befrienders. But how do we know which initiatives make the biggest impact on the outcomes that matter? Cities of Service has a strong emphasis on testing and evaluating social action initiatives, so that they can be improved or discontinued if they don't have their intended effect.

"I was very keen for us to bid for this to help us achieve our vision of engaging more local people in city life. Everyone knows times are tough and through [Cities of Service] we explore[d] ways to pull together and help tackle some of the city's biggest social and economic issues."

Mayor George Ferguson, Bristol City Council

The model had already inspired UK movements such as Team London, and we saw the potential for Cities of Service to enable councils across the UK to achieve similar impact in areas that mattered most to communities.



■ LAUNCHING CITIES OF SERVICE UK

In 2013, Nesta launched Cities of Service UK, as part of the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund, in partnership with the Cabinet Office. We invited councils to apply, adapt and implement the Cities of Service model in their own location to mobilise residents to work with paid professionals to meet their area's most pressing challenges. Following a competitive application process, seven councils were invited to take part in the programme and awarded grant funding over a two-year period to make it a reality. These were:

- Barnsley Borough Council
- Bristol City Council
- Kirklees Council
- Plymouth City Council
- Portsmouth City Council
- Swindon Borough Council
- Telford and Wrekin Council

A council-by-council spotlight on the priorities areas, initiative pursued and advice for other is included in Section 7 of this report.

Two different approaches for adapting the Cities of Service model were tested. Bristol, Kirklees, Plymouth and Portsmouth were Partners, and given funding to recruit a dedicated Chief Service Officer who reported directly to the local authority Chief Executive, consistent with the core US model. They were awarded £150,000 for the new positions and £30,000 to pump prime new initiatives to mobilise volunteers.

Barnsley, Swindon and Telford and Wrekin were granted Associate status, with the responsibility for delivering Cities of Service initiatives within an existing senior position. These authorities were awarded £30,000 to pump prime new initiatives to mobilise volunteers.

In addition, Nesta also provided each council with significant non-financial support such as independent advisors to help develop impact measurement plans, evaluate initiatives, opportunities to share learning as a cohort, and ongoing one-to-one support. Cities of Service Org (based in New York) also connected each Chief Service Officer in the UK with an experienced serving US Chief Service Officer to offer advice and support.

All councils were expected to secure significant match funding, whether in kind from the local authority or grants from local agencies, to deliver the work and secure its future.

CITIES OF SERVI



MATTHEW BARZUN
US AMBASSADOR TO THE UK

■ ADAPTING THE CITIES OF SERVICE MODEL TO THE UK

The Cities of Service model has four defining characteristics: leadership, clear objectives, purposeful action and focus on impact. Each characteristic is brought to life in a similar way in the US, but it became clear that in order to replicate the model in the UK we would need to adapt some of the approaches to suit our context.

For example, in the US each city appoints a Chief Service Officer, charged with spearheading delivery, who reports to the directly elected mayor. In the UK, where there are few directly elected mayors, a Chief Service Officer, (who reports directly to the Chief Executive of the Council and/or the elected Leader), was more appropriate.

Following we describe the characteristics of the model that remained the same and those that were adapted to suit the UK context.

MODEL COMPONENT	US CITIES OF SERVICE	UK CITIES OF SERVICE
LEADERSHIP		
● FIXED	Leadership buy-in exists in both elected and official spheres exists. One point person coordinates and corrals volunteering efforts.	
● ADAPTED	<p>Often the Mayor in US Cities is both the managerial and ambassadorial champion.</p> <p>Cities achieving greatest results have a Mayor who commits and gets involved in the planning and implementation of service strategies and dedicates a senior-level staff member to oversee the work.</p> <p>The Chief Service Officer reports directly to the Mayor and is part of the Mayor's office.</p>	<p>Within the UK managerial and ambassadorial roles tend to be separated between elected (Mayor/Leader) and non-elected (Chief Executive) roles.</p> <p>Partner councils' Chief Service Officers were new posts, sitting within Chief Executive's office, dedicated to the Cities of Service movement. In Bristol, the role reported to the directly-elected Mayor.</p> <p>In Associate councils, the City Lead was appointed from within a service delivery directorate - rather than sitting within the Chief Executive's office.</p> <p>In the UK elected officials were less directly involved in the implementation of service strategies, but did play an ambassadorial role.</p>
CLEAR OBJECTIVES		
● FIXED	Cities of Service identify the most pressing priority areas of need/s where volunteering might make an impact, and confirm them through stakeholder engagement.	
● ADAPTED	<p>Cities may choose to focus on as many or as few priorities and initiatives as works.</p> <p>Chief Service Officers are involved in selecting priority areas of focus.</p>	<p>In this pilot, Partner councils identified two to three priority areas within the pilot. Associate councils focused on one priority area.</p> <p>Chief Service Officers were recruited after priority areas were identified because of the time constraints of the programme.</p>

PURPOSEFUL ACTION

● FIXED

Cities of Service develop plans to address identified priority areas. Cities may draw on ideas from existing service initiatives set out in Cities of Service Org blueprints or develop their own.

● ADAPTED

In some cities, the Mayor selects priorities and then the citizens are engaged to create the plan as well as implement. In other US cities, volunteers are mobilised around existing action. The Cities of Service organisation and collation encourage cities to engage residents in the planning of the programme as well as in implementation.

Authorities leveraged input from within and beyond their local authority to create a plan, as well as in implementation stages.

FOCUS ON IMPACT

● FIXED

A clear focus on impact (e.g. meaningful difference made to beneficiaries) metrics over and above outputs (e.g. number of volunteers recruited). SMART targets are reported quarterly and informs progress of initiatives.

● ADAPTED

Cities of Service Org works with each city to identify the outputs and outcomes. Depending on the timeframe of the initiative either output (e.g. trees planted) or outputs and impacts (e.g. urban cooling from trees planted) are measured.

A Theory of Change (a rationale that sets out the intended link between the activities undertaken and outcome desired) was required for all initiatives.



BEYOND THESE FOUR CORE COMPONENTS OF THE MODEL, THE UK CITIES OF SERVICE DREW ON THE FOLLOWING INPUTS:

BRAND

The provenance of the Cities of Service brand was helpful for councils in communicating the potential of the model to executives internally and partners externally. Different local branding was used to advertise opportunities for volunteering (e.g. Team Bristol), and impact for beneficiaries, to residents. Cities across the United States that are part of the Cities of Service coalition also utilise this dual branding approach.



MATCH FUNDING

All councils obtained match funding to deliver their initiatives, from both within and beyond the council. Match funding came from a mix of council budgets, partners' funds and in-kind contributions.



NETWORKS AND EXTERNAL SUPPORT

The cohort of teams received ongoing involvement from Nesta, the Cabinet Office and peer support. The Cities of Service Chief Service Officers/ Leads met together on a quarterly basis to share insights and gain expertise on designing initiatives, recruiting and retaining volunteers and measuring impact. Experienced Chief Service Officers in US cities acted as mentors to UK councils involved - receiving similar mentoring support as those within the wider Cities of Service Org coalition do. The UK Cities of Service were also part of a wider Centre for Social Action cohort, making strong and valuable connections with other organisations involved.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Councils involved also trialled volunteering software to better coordinate and measure their volunteering. These platforms smooth the pathway for volunteers to sign-up and contribute and ease the administration cost or burden. A common volunteering platform for use was paid for and created by the Cities of Service Org, who created the platform for use by anyone who is part of the movement.



3.

THE IMPACT OF CITIES OF SERVICE UK INITIATIVES

The Cities of Service UK pilot has demonstrated the potential of volunteers to make a marked impact. The first step for each of the seven councils was to develop a service plan - including an over-arching vision for the relationship between residents and public services locally and some specific areas of action. The Service Plans were the culmination of horizon scanning, analysis and engagement to identify initiatives and set out the intended impact they would make for the city.

Each area started by asking “What are the most pressing needs facing our council, that volunteers and public servants could tackle together?” Priority areas were selected in different ways in each city, but all used data and engaged local residents, senior public servants, elected members and a range of local partners (such as the police, local health service and the voluntary and community sector).

Once priority areas had been selected, impact volunteering initiatives were identified. Some councils adapted successful initiatives from the US Cities of Service blueprints (published ‘how to’ guides for social action projects), like Plymouth which adapted the Let’s Grow initiative from the US. Some replicated locally proven approaches at a new scale, like Barnsley rolling out initiatives under the Love Where You Live banner across the city. A few designed new initiatives to meet their local needs, drawing from components of other impactful models, like Swindon’s befriending (Swindon Circles) scheme.

And some took the opportunity to rethink the place of social action within the council altogether, like Kirklees who focused on creating the conditions for volunteering to be successfully integrated across all local authority functions.

The initiatives can be broadly categorised into four areas - Food and Fuel, Ageing, Education and Neighbourhoods - each discussed in more detail below. Some initiatives landed as intended, and got off to a flying start. Others (e.g. Bristol’s Aging initiative) needed adapting or reworking once better information about how an initiative would be delivered, and who could volunteer, was known.

■ FOOD AND FUEL

Barnsley, Plymouth and Telford and Wrekin designed initiatives to improve access to healthy foods in low-income neighbourhoods where research indicated consumption of fresh produce was low. The teams drew on existing US Cities of Service ‘Let’s Grow’ blueprints to inform their plans.

Volunteers helped transform wastelands into local gardens and gave produce to people in need. Food growing was complemented with cooking lessons for recipients so they were more confident in preparing vegetables. The initiatives achieved encouraging results. For example, 64 per cent of people involved in the Barnsley Let’s Grow programme reported an increase in their consumption in fruit and vegetables, whilst

Plymouth mobilised enough volunteers to grow and distribute thousands of bags of seasonal vegetables.

Plymouth also sought to reduce the amount of money people spend on fuel by training volunteer energy champions. Volunteers provided people with energy information and advice in community settings and their homes.

The volunteers helped people identify cost savings (e.g. by switching suppliers) and implement energy saving measures. The Plymouth Energy Champions reached 2,769 people across the programme, representing an estimated savings of £191 per person, based on research indicating 50 per cent of people implementing the advice given.

CASE STUDY

CREATING POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS: PLYMOUTH'S GROW SHARE COOK

Plymouth City Council used the Cities of Service model to focus on improving access to healthy food for people with poor nutrition in the city. Their initiative involved listening to, and partnering with existing volunteer and community organisations involved in food growing and sharing, resulting in an impressive and ongoing programme.

"The most rewarding thing about ... the Grow, Share Cook project, has been seeing the big difference it has made to people's lives. The people that have taken part in the cooking sessions with us have become much more confident through having the access to more fresh vegetables by receiving free veg bags, and the knowledge of how to cook them."

Tami Skelton, Nutritionist and Director of Food is Fun, Plymouth

Plymouth Foodbank had seen an increase in the number of people using its services – from 5,671 people in 2012-2013 rising to 8,428 in 2013-2014 (a 49 per cent increase). Over the same period, the number of people accessing soup runs had increased by 100 per cent.

Plymouth developed a programme that would provide cheaper and easier access fresh fruit and vegetables and develop cooking skills to make use of the produce.

Volunteers have assisted local project partners Tamar Grow and Food is Fun with:

- Growing fruit and vegetables in community settings (e.g. allotments, orchards, community gardens)
- Distributing fresh produce – providing a free 5kg food bag to people most in need, as well as delivering to the food bank and soup run, and
- Helping people prepare and cook the produce (e.g. via a mobile kitchen).

With just shy of 100 people involved, over 1,900 food bags have been produced and distributed to people in need, with any surplus being distributed to food banks and soup kitchens and sold at low cost to generate funding for the programme.

In the first year of operation, 103 people attended regular cook sessions and received a free fortnightly food bag. Eighty-three per cent of people surveyed reported their cooking skills had improved; 84 per cent that they ate better food; and 79 per cent that they had a healthier household diet.

The concept of Grow, Share, Cook also aligned with Plymouth City Council's 'co-operative council' approach of delivering services in creative and innovative ways. Mobilising volunteers reflects their objective of Plymouth becoming a fairer city where everyone does their bit. The Council provides match funding through public health and its Family Intervention Project.

The partnership approach has also influenced Plymouth Council across other programmes, and effective partnership working is now an approach which is being used across the council in order to address other challenges the city faces.

AGEING

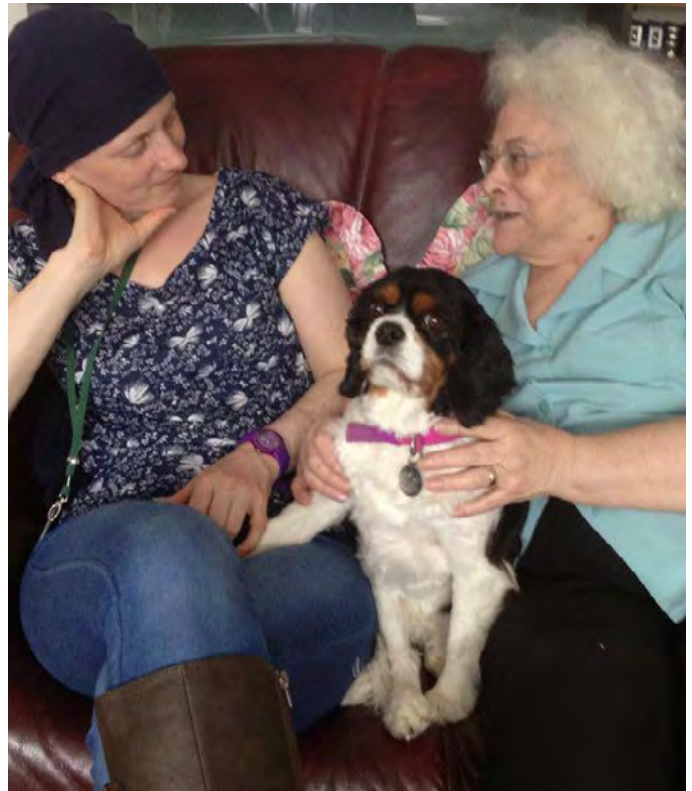
Swindon, Kirklees and Bristol designed initiatives to reduce loneliness of older people. Volunteers offered companionship and support to older people around their daily tasks, helping them to get out of the house and feel less lonely. Approaches to address loneliness can be tough to get right and measure the impact of, but when done well they can have very meaningful impact for beneficiaries and volunteers.

"I don't go out on my own, as I'm not good on my feet. My volunteer is helping me feel more confident. I feel better knowing they are with me."

Swindon Circles participant

Recruiting and matching volunteers with beneficiaries takes careful planning and time to get right, both because of logistical as well as more personal considerations. For example, in Bristol the targeted area for befriending was not in the location where suitable volunteers were based so the team needed to revisit their original assumption and approach to delivery.

In Kirklees, the focus was on early intervention and prevention: supporting older people at risk of isolation to increase their personal resilience to loneliness, by engaging in physical activity, mental activity and doing something that brings them enjoyment. The volunteers supported participants to find their own ways to get 'out and about', leading to a more sustained impact. This included support to identify suitable activities as well as exploring different methods of self-directed transport.



CASE STUDY

CREATING LASTING NETWORKS: SWINDON CIRCLES

It is estimated that 10 per cent of people aged over 65 in the UK are lonely either all or most of the time, and that an additional 11 per cent are in contact with family, friends and neighbours less than once a month.

Swindon Circles paired volunteers with older people who were likely to need low levels of formal care and were at risk of isolation. The intent of the approach was to support older people to be more independent for longer. The role of volunteers was carefully designed to complement, rather than duplicate, any existing support from carers and families. The scheme revealed the importance of matching suitable volunteers with beneficiaries, and the level of churn given the changes occurring for people targeted (e.g. older people move from Swindon or go into residential care). Across the course of the programme, over 100 volunteers were recruited for 130 targeted clients, with 50 sustained matches being made.

"We are really proud that we have been able to create and deliver a project which has been able to adapt and refocus depending on the needs we have locally. We have definitely created a volunteer programme that fits into people's busy lives whilst also finding time for older people in our community"

Patrick Weir, Cities of Service Service Lead, Swindon Borough Council

EDUCATION

Mobilising local people to volunteer in schools can significantly improve the life chances and educational attainment of young people, if volunteers are placed in impactful roles. Examples include academic tutoring, some mentoring schemes and basics, like hearing children read.

A number of councils developed education initiatives focused on one to one mentoring for young people or reading support. For example, Bristol Reading Partners built on an existing reading mentor programme that had shown good signs of impact. Volunteers gave ten one-to-one reading sessions to primary pupils who need extra help with reading. One hundred and ten volunteers from Bristol City Council and beyond were recruited, working with a total of 210 children. Over half of the children involved have had their reading age improve by six months or more after the sessions (which ran for ten to 13 weeks).



Rob Wilson
Minister of Civil Society uk

CASE STUDY

CREATING VALUABLE EXCHANGES: PORTSMOUTH ACTIVATE

The Activate mentoring pilot ran during the academic year 2014/15 and was based on the 'graduate coaching' blueprint from the US Cities of Service programme. Business mentors were trained to coach young people who were from disadvantaged backgrounds towards educational success. The initiative encouraged young people to get the skills and qualifications they need to find work.

The council brought together partners and the initiative was managed by Education Business Partnership (EBP) South Ltd. Sixteen students from King Richard School, all from disadvantaged backgrounds (receiving the pupil premium) and identified as at risk of not achieving their required results at GCSE, were matched with volunteer mentors from the local business community. Hourly one-to-one mentoring sessions took place, once a week, over the course of a year in the run up to the students' final exams.

The evaluation showed that:

- Students increased their level of attainment at GCSE, outperforming other students who had not received support.
- Students increased their level of attendance at school and also reported increased levels of motivation and self-confidence.
- Volunteers benefited from coaching skills development, and were highly committed to the project, which had a ripple effect on recruiting others.

Activate is now self-funding and growing, with the model being explored by three new schools under the stewardship and management of Education Business Partnership (South).

NEIGHBOURHOODS

Barnsley, Portsmouth and Telford and Wrekin all designed neighbourhood initiatives engaging residents - often from hard to reach groups - in revitalising their neighbourhoods. The councils sought inspiration and practical plans from the existing 'Love your Block' blueprint developed by Cities of Service US.

Telford and Wrekin and Barnsley focused on environmental improvements, such as litter picks or garden clear ups, and encouraging better reporting of issues like fly tipping or pot holes. These approaches saw large numbers of volunteers getting involved. In Telford and Wrekin, over 650 volunteers from the city's most deprived neighbourhoods took part.

Volunteers help to spread the word about the importance of looking after the local environment and helped to increase resident's sense of pride in their local area. Residents were supported to develop their skills and knowledge and to access the tools and resources to improve their local area.

Portsmouth asked residents to design their own projects to make their areas a better place to live. Mini grants (totalling £20,000 from a local business) were made available to provide the necessary funds to make these local plans a reality.



CASE STUDY

CREATING BUY-IN AT ALL LEVELS: BARNSLEY'S LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE

Barnsley's Love Where You Live initiative took inspiration from the US Blueprint for Love Your Block and existing street scene initiatives locally. Small grants of up to £10,000 were made available for community groups to meet the capital costs of organising neighbourhood clear-up or improvement projects.

The local authority used the initiative as a way of coordinating volunteering efforts in a more efficient manner, inspiring residents to think about where they live. Volunteers identified how they wanted to get involved and what problems they wanted to tackle, these ranged from community clean ups, renovation of parks and community gardens, to providing lunch clubs for the elderly.

Over 11,500 volunteers participated, and 90 per cent of those surveyed reported an increased sense of pride in their place.

4. HOW HAS CITIES OF SERVICE UK INFLUENCED LOCAL AUTHORITY PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL ACTION?

“There are lots of programmes about volunteering but this is the first one which feels like we are moving towards true partnership between public services and volunteers. We think it has the potential to transform our council and ensure the role volunteers play is recognised in all our strategies and plans.”

Rachael Loftus, Chief Service Officer, Kirklees Council

The councils involved in Cities of Service reflect that it has had a transformative influence on the wider organisation's mind-set and recognition of volunteering. Council's reported that adopting the Cities of Service model has:

- Highlighted the potential of social action to help address city challenges.

- Brought a new perspective and rigour to measuring the impact of social action.
- Created the opportunity to “work with”, rather than “deliver to” communities.
- Catalysed new partnerships within and beyond the voluntary sector.

Each of these is highlighted below in more detail.

CITIES OF SERVICE HAS HIGHLIGHTED THE POTENTIAL OF SOCIAL ACTION TO HELP ADDRESS CITY CHALLENGES.

The Cities of Service model can help elevate the role of volunteering in addressing council-wide priorities and challenges. The status raised the profile of volunteers amongst senior staff, elected members and partner agencies.

A significant part of this was due to the deliberate positioning of a Chief Service Officer or City Lead, who report directly into the Chief Executive or senior leadership team.

Councils found senior staff were therefore more likely to consider the skills and time that could be contributed by local people alongside public servants when designing new interventions or strategies. In Kirklees, for example, volunteer contributions are in front and centre of the Council's strategy to build economic resilience and do more early intervention and prevention work.

Having a Chief Service Officer or City Lead also created a simple communication channel for staff and elected members across the council to engage with. Some elected members reported that the approach “captured their imagination”.

“Without Cities of Service it is likely that working with volunteers would have significantly slipped down the agenda and been marginalised... whereas having a service lead at the heart of the Communities, Transformation and Change directorate has meant being able to place the agenda for working with volunteers appropriately as part of our overall transformation.”

Rachael Loftus, Chief Service Officer, Kirklees Council

CASE STUDY

EMBEDDING VOLUNTEERING IN COUNCIL SERVICES: KIRKLEES

At the heart of its vision for a 'New Council' in Kirklees are three tenets: enabling people to do more for themselves and each other; keeping vulnerable people safe and helping them stay in control of their lives; and focusing on what only the council can do. Impact volunteering helps bring all three of these tenets together.

Kirklees Council had a number of existing services that involved volunteers. The Cities of Service methodology has helped transform these services to focus more sharply on impact engage volunteers more effectively in the programme. For example, teams across the council are now identifying new opportunities to work with volunteers to enhance and extend the existing services on offer, focusing on improving quality of life and preventative approaches. This new approach to volunteering means that teams "now think of volunteer hours at the planning stage, as a priceless resource that we have access to, and it is our job to support and direct those hours to where they will add most impact".

One council officer summed up the difference saying: "lots of services and organisations often consider how best to manage volunteers, and that inevitably leads to thinking about processes and bureaucratic hoops. Impact volunteering, with its uncompromising focus on beneficiaries and 'difference made' has led us to much more creative solutions, working with a greater range of partners and importantly, being an attractive place for volunteers who want to make a big difference to people's lives."



■ CITIES OF SERVICE HAS BROUGHT A NEW PERSPECTIVE AND RIGOUR TO MEASURING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL ACTION

“The most brilliant thing about Cities of Service is it has...been a fantastic vehicle for us to up the ante around using the word impact.”

Di Robinson, Service Director: Neighbourhoods,
Bristol City Council

One of the key elements of the Cities of Service model is the focus on impact; the emphasis on measuring the difference volunteers make to people's lives as opposed to the number of volunteers involved or initiatives delivered. This focus has helped councils better understand the potential and actual benefit volunteers have in helping to address pertinent challenges, and how to go about this so measuring impact is meaningful, accurate and informative. For some, this meant stopping ineffective interventions where the impact was not clear enough and instead encouraging volunteers to take on roles with a more proven track record of success.

This approach revealed for Kirklees, for example, that an initiative around snow clearing was not well suited or viable, but thinking instead informed wider service design in the area.

The rigour that an impact focus has brought has stretched beyond the Cities of Service initiatives. Kirklees and Swindon have both started using the impact measurement framework and Theory of Change tool across a wider range of initiatives, so that the link between activities and impact of other volunteering initiatives to help older people is better understood.

■ CITIES OF SERVICE HAS CREATED THE OPPORTUNITY TO ‘WORK WITH’, RATHER THAN ‘DELIVER TO’ COMMUNITIES.

“It’s about understanding what [communities] think is important, and building bottom up approaches with them. This will inform placed based work that we do in future - this is stuff that is a recent development.”

Dr. Janet Maxwell, Director of Public Health,
Portsmouth City Council

Cities of Service has created an opportunity for the councils to be more directly involved with co-designing solutions to address local needs, with local residents. For example, Telford and Wrekin's Pride in Your Community initiative engaged residents in identifying how to rejuvenate problem areas in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods and then paired local volunteers with paid staff to implement the plans - from community gardening to graffiti removal and clean ups.

In Plymouth the council connected directly with communities to design initiatives. Those involved reported that it they had often perceived their role at the council as a funder at arm's length, but the Cities of Service model had created the framework for a different form of relationship. The Council therefore felt more connected with local residents and how they might give their time, alongside public servants, to address issues of concern.

Many councils used Cities of Service as an opportunity to embed some new ways of working with residents. Skills and tools for co-production and collaboration were built, leaving a lasting legacy for councils involved in working with residents. And some councils tried out some of the theories behind behaviour change to promote positive social behaviours, such as Plymouth's Grow Cook Share where opportunities to learn with others about how to grow and cook vegetables were offered.

CASE STUDY

TELFORD & WREKIN PRIDE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

"We're getting back our power. I think, for a long time, people have been frightened or apathetic of doing things, because they think they're going to get knocked back...There's so many places where you just feel it doesn't belong to you, it's done to you."

Telford and Wrekin Resident

Telford & Wrekin Council identified six target neighbourhoods to take part in Cities of Service. All six were amongst the 10 per cent most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK. Between 2013-2014, the council spent £1.8 million a year clearing litter, 50 per cent in these target areas.

Pride in Your Community was designed to increase residents' sense of pride in their neighbourhood and was designed to be as bottom up as possible and hand ownership over to local residents.

Residents identified what they wanted to do in their local areas and how they wanted to do it. This ranged from picking up litter, planting flowers and trees or cleaning up community centres, to being a snow warden. The team worked with schools and community groups to carry out awareness raising campaigns and train residents to conduct street audits (where the residents could report problems they saw – from graffiti and pot-holes to fly tipping and faulty street lighting). Residents were trained in gardening and health and safety, and a tool hire scheme was developed so they can carry out their own community clean ups.

One of the greatest successes has been the significant increase in resident involvement in areas where engagement was previously very low. This is providing a fantastic platform for other community and volunteering initiatives. Community ownership is a key feature of this. For example, one group is setting up a project to help others in their community maintain their gardens. Of their own accord, residents have also begun to share opportunities, skills and time with other residents groups in different areas.



CITIES OF SERVICE HAS CATALYSED NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Chief Service Officers and City Leads from councils built strong partnerships with the voluntary sector, universities, across council teams and, in some cases, with businesses too. Involving different partners in steering groups meant the right range of experience, interests and skills could contribute to initiative development and delivery at the right points. For example, Plymouth's Chief Service Officer worked with nine different design and delivery partners across their Energy Champions and Food initiatives. Local contacts and knowledge, expert skills, and a more diverse set of ideas and perspectives all brought invaluable resources to the table:

"I deliberately chose small not-for-profit organisations to assist me with volunteer recruitment and coordination and they have delivered far more than I could ever expect. We now have more partners who promote the programme as a result of their historical relationship. This has embellished the programme and the positive reputation of the council as a cooperative partner."

Darin Halifax, Chief Service Officer, Plymouth

Conscious of not wanting to replace, duplicate or compete with existing services, Chief Service Officers and City Leads were careful to involve the voluntary and wider sectors in the early stages of development. For example, Barnsley brought in their Hospital Trusts, Citizens Advice Bureau, Neighbourhood Watch and a host of other local organisations and community groups in developing their Love where you Live and Let's Grow initiatives.



5.

REPLICATING CITIES OF SERVICE IN THE UK: ADVICE FOR OTHER COUNCILS

Cities of Service has proved a useful and impactful model for the seven UK councils involved. Others are welcome to join the movement, adapting the model to fit the UK context as the councils in this programme have, or simply making the most of the lessons of the programme in their local approach. Chief Service Officers and City Leads involved in Cities of Service UK recommend the following advice for others keen to replicate the model:

1. Have a central convening role to champion volunteering.
2. Develop initiatives that meet both local authority needs and residents' preferences.
3. Choose partners well.
4. Build in opportunities for review, feedback and adaptation.
5. Make use of the movement's networks.
6. Plan and resource your impact measurement.
7. Leverage the Cities of Service and local brands.
8. Ensure the volunteering infrastructure is purposeful and easy to use.

■ HAVE A CENTRAL CONVENING ROLE TO CHAMPION VOLUNTEERING

Each council appointed a City Lead (from their existing staff) or a Chief Service Officer (a new role reporting to the Chief Executive) to champion the work. This role proved to be fundamental to the success of the model - giving extra capacity to consider volunteer-led approaches internally, acting as a visible communication channel for external stakeholders and raising the profile of volunteering across the council and city.

Interestingly, councils have reflected that neither the title itself, nor the exact line management and reporting structure in which the role sat,

were as important as simply having a visible and named champion of the approach. What remains important, however, is the need for this lead to have convening power across and beyond the council, and a seniority of post to influence decisions and allocation resources. Some councils are continuing to employ Chief Service Officers after the end of the programme funding from Nesta and the Cabinet Office, but others are nominating a central champion for volunteering to fulfil the same role.

CASE STUDY

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER: BRISTOL CITIES OF SERVICE

“Having the Chief Service Officer working strategically with the mayor’s office and his vision, it’s also brought the level of awareness in the city about our work to a much higher position.”

Bristol Cities of Service Voluntary Sector Stakeholder

Bristol was the only UK council involved in the programme that has a directly elected Mayor. With the support of the Mayor and the Chief Service Officer, their Better Reading Partners has had a useful impact for all involved.

Stakeholders also found that the convening and connecting role of the Chief Service Officer to be particularly useful in starting to change the relationship between partners and the council. One stakeholder commented “It’s more cohesive now. My impression was that it was competitive before. We are all sitting round the table, we are all working towards the same goals as a united group. That has really worked and it was necessary.”

DEVELOP INITIATIVES THAT MEET BOTH COUNCIL NEEDS AND CITIZENS’ PREFERENCES

Initiatives must be both a strategic priority for the local authority and resonate with residents. An alignment of the initiative with councils’ priorities will increase opportunities to tap into time and resources within a council, while buy-in from volunteers and beneficiaries is necessary to achieve impact.

Some initiatives had a stronger leaning towards residents’ preferences, such as the Let’s Grow initiatives, which helped address a clear communities’ interest but didn’t lead to a direct impact on contributing to core council service delivery. In contrast, Swindon led with a core council priority but ensured volunteering opportunities that met people’s preferences. In Swindon, health commissioners and the corporate board helped frame the area of focus for initiatives with the key design considerations for the Circles initiative, coming from work with the Older People’s Forum, a network organisation representing the interests of older people locally.

CHOOSE YOUR PARTNERS WELL

“The key to the success has been my selection of delivery partners....[Their] enthusiasm has become infectious and we now have more partners who promote the programme as a result...”

Darin Halifax, Chief Service Officer, Plymouth City Council.

Cities of Service has helped shaped councils’ thinking about effective partnerships. Leveraging the skills, resource and networks of wider partners has proved invaluable. Identifying how best to engage partners, and ensuring the expectations are well known and articulated to all is incredibly important.

In Plymouth, for example, the council identified local organisations with an existing presence and delivery record to partner with for their Grow, Cook, Share initiative - meaning that core infrastructure to deliver and knowledge about where opportunities to distribute produce to those most in need was already in place.

■ BUILD IN OPPORTUNITIES FOR REVIEW, FEEDBACK AND ADAPTATION

“Through the Theory of Change process it became clear that an idea we had had to mobilise volunteers during bouts of snow was not viable: it was difficult and expensive to manage and would only have provided a minor benefit. [However] the work and thinking contributed to a full rethink in how we engage volunteers in Emergency Planning.”

Rachael Loftus,
Chief Service Officer

Cities of Service UK provided an opportunity for councils involved to take a different approach to service design and delivery. Bringing in partners early, focusing on and collecting impact data at routine intervals, and having a wider network to feel part of, helped teams take on, and adapt to feedback. The tools and disciplines used, like the Theory of Change, also prompted councils to consider the relationship between activities and outcomes, and helped teams feel better able to set aside plans that had early promise, but on further investigation were better shelved.

In Barnsley, the Let's Grow initiative changed from an original focus on developing cooking and growing in a confined, predetermined geographical area to one which was more responsive, with volunteers identifying new growing initiatives such as foraging networks and community orchards. An openness to feedback and systems to review progress facilitated this adaptation.

■ MAKE USE OF THE MOVEMENT'S NETWORKS

“The opportunity to hear from and visit the COS in the US was totally inspiring, the learning from which has been embedded in our programme.”

Joe Micheli, Cities of Service Lead,
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Cities of Service councils have benefited from being part of a wider cohort, and an international movement.

The UK Cities of Service Councils found the opportunity to hear from and meet with US partners very beneficial. Experienced US Chief Service Officers acted as mentors, and the councils were also able to access support and resources like initiative blueprints from the US Cities of Service Organisation. The mix of inspiration, practical advice and access to the international movement's resources proved very useful in developing initiatives and building a local narrative.

Nesta acted not only as a programme instigator, but also as a critical friend in helping the councils shape their plans. The mix of external challenge, support and advice brought clarity and accelerated delivery. Nesta and the Cabinet Office were also able to make introductions to high-impact, regional social action initiatives - such as Code Club and VIY. A number of councils formed new partnerships with these organisations, bringing the initiatives to their areas to help tackle the most pressing needs of the area with structured impact volunteering opportunities for local residents.

Most importantly councils reported that being part of a cohort, where Chief Service Officers and City Leads could share their insights with peers navigating a similar course at a similar time, was crucial. The honest, sharing relationships helped ease the load for those tasked with creating a culture change in councils, and gave them a sense of being part of something bigger. These sort of peer networks have become scarce in local government in recent years and we're delighted that the seven councils will not only continue to meet and support one another in the future, but will also offer an open invitation for other councils wishing to adopt the model to join their network.

■ PLAN AND RESOURCE YOUR IMPACT MEASUREMENT

“The impact measurement information will hopefully influence how we develop new volunteering projects throughout the council. We are currently piloting some impact measurement in one of our other volunteering projects in relation to impact for the service, service-users and volunteers.”

Rachael Jones, Cities of Service Lead,
Telford and Wrekin Council.

Understanding the value of volunteering initiatives can only be assessed if good measurement data is designed and collected. Cities of Service councils received external support in designing data collection that would capture both output and impact information, to understand whether volunteers are being mobilised in the most meaningful ways possible.

The resourcing needs to be carefully considered to avoid any potential bias in data collection and ensure that adequate time, support and direction is provided to do this. Bristol, for example, initially struggled to get meaningful data from its Bristol Reading Partners initiative where the responsibility for data collection lay with teachers. This proved to be complicated as teachers had limited capacity in terms of time (as well as skill in some cases). In Swindon, case workers rather than volunteers had responsibility for conducting interviews with beneficiaries. This approach avoided any bias of volunteers in assessing the difference they had made about the impact of their older people's support model, and meant that professional expertise of the worker could be drawn on for assessments.

Because of the approach to impact measurement that each council took, they can now confidently report both the impact of their work, but more importantly communicate with residents that giving their time and energy to one of these initiatives really will make a difference.

■ LEVERAGE THE BRAND TO GALVANISE SUPPORT AND SHARE STORIES

“Love Where You Live has been adopted as a brand across Future Council in reflecting how the Council needs to work differently with communities, be more enabling, take a step back and create space for change.”

Joe Micheli, Chief Service Officer,
Barnsley Borough Council

Cities of Service UK councils found both the Cities of Service and their local brands - like Team Bristol or Portsmouth Together - helped convene political, administrative and public interest. Elected officials, council staff and partners were pleased to be part of the wider Cities of Service brand and international movement.

Local branding helped volunteers respond more readily to local branding they could identify with. For example, Barnsley's 'Love Where You Live' brand was a successful tool in consolidating buy-in to the initiative. The brand provides a common, and neutral banner for local authority, voluntary and business partners to get behind. For volunteers and residents, the brand creates a sense of momentum.

Making use of both the Cities of Service and local brands can help mobilise residents and create an enthusiasm that might otherwise be lacking.

■ ENSURE THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR VOLUNTEERING IS PURPOSEFUL AND EASY-TO-USE

Cities of Service provides a new model for volunteering within a council and for a city. This change meant a rethink for some councils of their infrastructure, culture and communications to be well placed to support social action. For example, all councils worked with partners to use or set up reliable, easy-to-use and maintain volunteering platforms, and councils benefited from having access to the purpose-built volunteering platform supported by Cities of Service Org. The promotion of initiatives also required thought - with the best initiatives tapping into local and hyperlocal means of promotion, whether that be local newspapers

or having a physical presence in locations where volunteers or beneficiaries were.

Making better use of the media also became an important component for some teams in recognising the role of volunteers, whether it be through press covering volunteer awards or reporting on personalised stories from beneficiaries. All of these components make up foundations of great volunteering infrastructure and are not new, but are worthy of consideration for councils reorienting the role of social action in their city.



6. WHAT NEXT? THE CITIES OF SERVICE UK LEGACY

“ We have developed a far more relevant, focused and impactful approach to mobilising community action than would otherwise have been the case, and is underpinning our planning in future years”.

Patrick Weir, Service Lead, Swindon Borough Council

■ WHERE NEXT FOR THE SEVEN UK CITIES OF SERVICE?

The Cities of Service model has had a transformational impact on how councils consider the role of volunteers in addressing city challenges. The focus on impact, the centrality of City Leads/ Chief Service Officers to key decision-makers, the connectivity to a wider movement and the local brands to promote volunteering, have all had a particular resonance.

Following the end of the pilot programme in March 2016, and the end of seed funding from Nesta and the Cabinet Office, each of the councils is continuing their initiatives and their local brands in the coming year, all funded locally:

- Barnsley is continuing its initiatives, with a particular focus on existing and new schemes that assist young people and reduce social isolation.
- Bristol is expanding their Reading Partners programme to other schools and are piloting Code Club and Bristol Aging Better schemes.
- Kirklees will continue to scale their out and about and 'I'm In' campaigns. Funding has also been secured for the new Kirklees Cares initiative, providing mentoring for care leavers.
- Plymouth's Grow Share Cook and Energy Champions initiatives are doubling in size
- Portsmouth has obtained Service head, elected member and partners support to extend the Portsmouth Together programme for a further two years.

- Swindon is currently working on expanding its original cohort of older people for Swindon Circles. It will begin to work with older people in residential care and social housing as well as carers.
- Telford and Wrekin will be continuing to scale their Let's Grow and Pride in your Community initiatives, with resource been secured through to 2017 from the Public Health and Environment teams.

The coalition formed between the Chief Service Officers and City Leads across the seven Cities of Service UK councils is strong. The cohort has now formed an ongoing City of Service Network links with Cities of Service. Org. and continues to collaborate - sharing best practice and acting as a peer-support network. They are also connected with associated efforts like Team London and are exploring the role they can collectively have in spreading the movement across the UK and Europe.

Powerful connections with a wider set of organisations have also been forged as a result of networking opportunities through Nesta and the Cabinet Office's social action programmes. Introductions to organisations such as Step up to Service, Code Club, and VIY have all led to ongoing partnerships between these social enterprises and councils - enabling not just a greater sharing of values and acknowledgement of the role of social action, but also in sharing of resources, skills and networks to achieve greater impact and reach.

WHERE NEXT FOR THOSE THAT WANT TO TRY CITIES OF SERVICE IN THEIR LOCAL AREA?

We hope the insights in this report will prove a useful springboard for all who wish to embed a more structured city/council-wide approach to social action into their own localities. As well as this guide, the US Cities of Service Organisation offers a wealth of further resources and information about the core model and is well placed to provide further advice on joining this international network.

And the seven councils are each open to sharing their insights with other councils keen to replicate the approach. Their contact details can be found at info@nesta.org.uk

WHERE NEXT FOR THE SOCIAL ACTION AGENDA?

But what about the wider impact on social action? Enabling people to help others is not yet a central organising principle for public services in many areas. Its transformative potential remains underdeveloped and there is much more that could be done.

Nesta and the Cabinet Office are both long-time champions of people helping people, of social action. This programme has created a useful evidence base for the impact not only of specific initiatives, but more importantly is a test case for councils across the country to reframe their offer to residents, transforming public services from 'delivered to' to 'designed and delivered with' residents.

Cities of Service UK has shown that carefully considered initiatives can mobilise a raft of skills, time and energy simply not available to public servants, to help transform local places. Through the programme people who have never volunteered before have given their time. Others have started volunteering regularly rather than as a one off and others have been involved in the design of solutions to meet their neighbourhoods' most pressing need for the first time.



7.

A SPOTLIGHT ON THE CITY-BY-CITY INITIATIVES





WWW.VOLUNTEERINBARNSELEY.CO.UK

"The ownership and traction of the Love Where You Live campaign with citizens has been amazing; enabling a genuinely new social movement of volunteers to develop across the borough. Cities of Service enabled the Council and partners to explore how we might work alongside volunteers more systematically, in addressing local challenges and to celebrate together our achievements".

Joe Micheli, City Lead, Barnsley

■ CITIES OF SERVICE FOCUS

Barnsley used the Cities of Service programme as model to convey, consolidate and mobilise greater levels of volunteering activity across the city. The model allowed existing initiatives to reach more volunteers and communities, and acted as a catalyst for considering the role of social action more broadly.

Barnsley pursued two complementary initiatives, Love Where you Live and Let's Grow. Both initiatives responded to local priorities and took inspiration from US Cities of Service resources for exploring how these areas might be addressed. Love Where you Live mobilised over 11,500 volunteers in social action projects while the Let's Grow initiative encouraged nearly 700 local people to become actively engaged in community growing. Sixty-four per cent of people surveyed reported an increase in consumption of fruit and vegetables as a result of being involved in Let's Grow, and 83 per cent reported an increase in their physical activity.

■ INITIATIVE AND IMPACT SPOTLIGHT: LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE

The Love Where You Live campaign (inspired by the US Blueprint for Love Your Block) unified neighbourhood improvement schemes, and expanded opportunities into new areas.

'Pride in the environment' and the development of local environmental projects were identified as key priorities for local residents working alongside elected councillors through Ward Alliances. The ability to maintain local environments was also identified as an area where social action could help address given pressures on local authority budgets. To assist with capital costs involved, small grants of £10,000 linked to neighbourhood plans were made available for community groups to help implement neighbourhood clear-ups or improvement projects.

Around 4,100 unique volunteers were involved, including reaching over 1000 new volunteers. Ninety per cent of those surveyed reported an increased sense of pride in their place.

LESSONS LEARNT

Joe Micheli, Barnsley's Cities of Service Lead, summarises the key lessons as follows:

- Celebrate and say thanks. This has been done at a local ward level through volunteer award ceremonies, Area Council level celebrations and the borough-wide high profile Proud of Barnsley awards – which saw Love Where You Live volunteers swamp all award categories. Ensure you take time to celebrate and link neighbourhood awards with the strategic goals of the city.
- Enabling residents to volunteer in a way that fits with their other commitments is important to ensure they sustain their volunteering.
- Capture case studies and share these with key audiences, making use of social media.
- Engage all political parties. Love Where You Live has helped Councillors to fulfil their 'political community leadership' role in a different way working alongside community groups and volunteers on social action.

BARNSELEY'S SOCIAL ACTION LEGACY

Barnsley is continuing both Let's Grow and Love Where you Live initiatives. It is also expanding the range of impact volunteering opportunities with a particular focus on initiatives that assist young people and reduce social isolation.

The impact volunteering approach and promotion of place-based social action has been embedded in the Council's Corporate Plan and Future Council Strategy. Barnsley has also commissioned a comprehensive review of the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise Sector, which has identified nine strategic recommendations to support the continued growth and development of the sector and investment in volunteering.

Love where you **Live**

PROGRAMME
FUNDING
RECEIVED:
£30,000

MATCH
FUNDING
LEVERAGED:
£1,184,650

9 per cent INCREASE
IN PRIDE IN THEIR
COMMUNITY FOR
PEOPLE INVOLVED IN
LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE



TEAM BRISTOL BRISTOL

WWW.VOLUNTEERTEAM.BRISTOL.GOV.UK

"Everyone knows times are tough and through this scheme we'll explore ways to pull together and help tackle some of the city's biggest social and economic issues. This has to be a real partnership between the council, local organisations and citizens right across the city. It's all about facing up to the issues and working together as good neighbours."

Mayor G. Ferguson (2014)

■ CITIES OF SERVICE FOCUS

Bristol focused on improving outcomes for young people, and on reducing loneliness for older people. These areas were identified as priorities within the City Corporate Plan and Mayor's Vision for the city. Cities of Service also served as a catalyst to build collaboration and coordinate volunteering activities within and beyond the local authority. There was a very clear remit to work across the city with the express objective of making volunteering and social action as effective as it can possibly be and focusing action on issues of importance to the city as a whole.

Bristol's Reading Partners initiative mobilised over 100 volunteers who made a weekly commitment over several months. Bristol also used the Cities of Service model to emphasise volunteering opportunities for older people, recognising the benefits of social interaction and sense of purpose for wellbeing, and the potential of over 50s to volunteer. Over 80 older volunteers are supporting city priorities, such as tree planting or first aid assistance whilst at the same time improving their own wellbeing.

■ INITIATIVE AND IMPACT SPOTLIGHT: BRISTOL READING PARTNERS

Bristol Reading Partners, paired 110 volunteers with 210 primary school children to improve their reading skills. The Better Reading Partners was an existing programme that provided one-to-one support in reading for primary aged children. Cities of Service enabled this programme to reach more children through training volunteers to offer this one-to-one support. Ablaze, an education charity, had previously found it hard to engage volunteers to support children in the south of the city. Through Cities of Service, resource has been available to have volunteers train. The promotion by the council means a wider cohort of volunteers, who are able to reach this area in need, has been recruited.

The early impact is encouraging. Over 200 students have been supported, with over half having their reading age improve by six months or more in the ten to 12 week period of support. The programme is now being expanded to reach more children across more schools.

LESSONS LEARNT

Dominic Murphy, Bristol's Chief Service Officer, summarises the key lessons as follows:

- The key to our Bristol Reading Partners success has been bringing the organisations that recruit reading volunteers together, using evidence about performance and past access to volunteers, creating a 'buzz' around the initiative using PR and city leadership, and listening to feedback from volunteers and teachers.
- Make sure there is really a demand/need for the initiative.
- Your chosen initiative needs to have clear appeal to the public to recruit (potential volunteers).
- There's great value in considering the links to existing policy and bringing in existing organisations.
- Plan a good publicity campaign.
- Ensure that volunteers have the information they need to say 'yes' or 'no' from the outset - or they will drift away.

BRISTOL
LEARNING CITY

BRISTOL'S SOCIAL ACTION LEGACY

Cities of Service Bristol has helped bridge the collaboration and communications from existing and new volunteering providers and the council.

Bristol Reading Partners is being scaled to benefit more students. Bristol is also brokering in Code Club - where volunteers teach school children how to code in after school clubs - across 106 primary schools in Bristol. This scheme has given pupils new skills and put coding tools in the hands of some of the most deprived students in the city, who may not have had an opportunity to do so otherwise.

A new piece of code that will link existing citywide volunteer platforms is under development through Cities of Service. This will link citizens to the full range of volunteer opportunities available in the city.

In April 2016, as a direct result of Cities of Service, Bristol City Council updated its staff volunteering policy to add Employer Supported Volunteering and increase staff volunteering leave from one day per year to three. The council's ESV activities will address citywide priorities such as reducing the opportunity gap in the city, literacy, skills, work experience, loneliness and environmental quality.

PROGRAMME
FUNDING
RECEIVED:

£180,000

MATCH FUNDING
LEVERAGED:
£66,811
PLUS **£34,534**
IN KIND.

OVER **200**
STUDENTS HAVE BEEN
SUPPORTED, WITH
OVER HALF HAVING
THEIR READING AGE
IMPROVE BY
SIX MONTHS OR MORE



WWW.IMINKIRKLEES.ORG.UK

There are lots of programmes about volunteering but this is the first one which feels like we are moving towards true partnership between public services and volunteers – and it is making a real impact. Cities of Service is a vital strand of our overall vision for social productivity, where communities and individuals are able to do more for themselves and each other. “

Rachael Loftus
Kirklees Chief Service Officer

■ CITIES OF SERVICE FOCUS

Kirklees used the Cities of Service model to rethink the council's strategy and approach to social action and volunteering.

Kirklees also initially experimented with two specific Cities of Service initiatives. Out and About was aimed at increasing resilience to loneliness in older people and involved over 80 volunteers supporting over 100 beneficiaries in the initiative's first year. This initiative targeted the significant impact on happiness and health that loneliness can have, and that over 19,000 people in Kirklees reported feeling lonely "some or most of the time." The outcomes of this have now been fed into a large scale social prescribing programme.

Kirklees MENTors set out to pair young men at risk with mentors, to help them through a period of transition when evidence shows their vulnerability increased. The initiative encountered complexities for the young men to stay involved and to get the benefits of mentoring. The learning from this has been invaluable, as it enabled Kirklees to experiment, learn, refine and direct its resources to where it can be most effective.

■ INITIATIVE AND IMPACT SPOTLIGHT: KIRKLEES

Kirklees chose to take a comprehensive look at the integration of social action across the authority's future plans and activities. The approach was embedded in the Council's transformation programme where three of the core capabilities for the new approach directly related to the Cities of Service outcomes.

The Chief Service Officer also worked with all service directorates to explore involving volunteers and to design new ways for the Council and volunteers to work together to meet local needs. This work mobilised more than 1,000 volunteers to support local people. And the work had a real impact, for example:

- Of the 221 young people with complex disabilities supported by volunteers, more than 180 report they are having fun and enjoying life.
- Of the 80 looked after children supported by volunteers, 55 reported they are taking part in social activities improving their life skills.
- 117,000 acres of land have been conserved and beautified by volunteers through digging, cutting, pruning, mowing, planting, fencing, hedging – all whilst having fun and building community connections.

LESSONS LEARNT

Rachael Loftus, Kirklees Chief Service Officer, summarises the key lessons as follows:

- Have a very clear, well-articulated and researched challenge.
- Get partner buy-in and go beyond the usual suspects.
- Ensure all relevant stakeholders are on board as soon as possible to build consensus and a coalition around a priority area.
- Make sure there is clarity on who is doing what, how this will be achieved, by when and by whom.
- Ask if there is an in kind contribution a partner could make as well or instead of a cash contribution. You never know what you can get until you ask.
- Make sure you are talking volunteers' language when mobilising their efforts.
- Ensure permissions and support are in place to push the initiatives in the right place.

KIRKLEES'S SOCIAL ACTION LEGACY

Kirklees will continue with its impact initiatives. They are specifically focusing on fostering cross sector collaboration, developing innovative approaches to microvolunteering, pooling and streamlining volunteers and providing high impact grants to volunteers and charitable organisations.

The benefits of volunteers working in the community also continues with 300 older people in residential care engaging in gentle exercise and fun activities, 1,080 people with long-term conditions are regularly dancing, improving their physical and mental health.

Kirklees will continue to invest and innovate in creating the conditions that mobilise volunteers for impact:

- Retaining the Chief Service Officer to mobilise, co-ordinate and lead on transforming social action.
- Investing in smart technology for flexible, quality volunteer management.
- Utilising behavioural insights to target participants and volunteers.
- Transforming independent volunteer brokerage.
- Spearheading impact approaches to Employee Volunteering, in the council and beyond.



PROGRAMME
FUNDING
RECEIVED:
£180,000

MATCH FUNDING
LEVERAGED:
£163,500 PLUS
£70,930 IN-KIND.

97 OLDER PEOPLE
HAVE INCREASED
THEIR RESILIENCE
TO LONELINESS BY
REGULARLY TAKING
PART IN SOMETHING
PHYSICALLY ACTIVE,
SOMETHING MENTALLY
STIMULATING AND
PURSUING AN ACTIVITY
THEY ENJOY.



"We have had many stories from people who have told us what a positive impact the project has had on the diets of their families. Many people have gone on to grow their own food and many have formed community groups where they are both swapping food and recipes."

Darin Halifax, Chief Service Officer in Plymouth

■ CITIES OF SERVICE FOCUS

Plymouth implemented two initiatives through Cities of Service: Energy Champions and Grow, Share, Cook. Both of these initiatives recognised the need to help families in need have better information about how to reduce their energy bills, and improved access to, and information about healthy food. In particular, the city has observed a 237 per cent increase in the number of people accessing food banks compared to previous year.

Grow, Cook, Share mobilised 85 volunteers who produced and distributed over 1,900 food bags and supported 103 people who attended cooking sessions. Energy Champions recruited 54 volunteers and reached over 2,700 people across Plymouth.

The Our Plymouth website was established and found to be very useful in recruiting and promoting volunteering.

■ INITIATIVE AND IMPACT SPOTLIGHT: PLYMOUTH ENERGY CHAMPIONS

Energy Champions aimed to support households to reduce their energy bills by introducing saving measures and information to switch suppliers where relevant.

Volunteers were recruited and trained to go on one-to-one home visits and reach wider audiences at larger-scale events, achieving impressive results.

Fifty-three Energy Champion volunteers reached over 2,800 people in Plymouth, giving advice on saving energy and costs through switching provider, or implementing fuel efficiency advice. A sample of households involved found average savings of £234 from those who switched provider and £145 for those implementing energy savings.

Energy Champions is now a key delivery project for Thrive Plymouth – Plymouth's ten-year strategy to improve Public Health and it is also being used as an example of how the city is addressing the findings of the 2014 Fairness Commission.

LESSONS LEARNT

Darin Halifax, Plymouth's Chief Service Officer, summaries the lessons learnt as follows:

- Chose priority areas that affect everyone. We chose food and fuel because everyone has an opinion and viewpoint on both of these areas and know what they are signing up to in terms of an ultimate goal.
- Make the overall message for both simple and easy for people to understand.
- Think about making the delivery model as simple as possible, and have clear expectations for both the delivery partner and potential volunteers.
- Know your recipients. We used our previous consultation and engagement experience to guide which parts of the cities to concentrate on, and engaged with them in a way that has proved successful on previous occasions.
- Pick partners early and build on their strengths. For example, if they are strong at delivery, then let them focus on that so time is freed up for strategic work.
- Consider partners who have opportunities to bring in external funding.

PLYMOUTH'S SOCIAL ACTION LEGACY

Plymouth is now scaling both the Energy Champions and the Grow, Cook, Share initiatives and these are both now self-sustaining. A third initiative, Right to Read, has been rolled out and is already working in 17 schools involving 36 volunteers and 115 children.

The Council has also adopted and is implementing a new Employee Supported Volunteering policy within the Cities of Service programme.

#PledgePlymouth, an initiative for citizens to pledge how they will give their time to support six different areas, has also been launched with good buy-in from the community.



PROGRAMME
FUNDING
RECEIVED:
£166,000

£128,278 MATCH
FUNDING AND
£6,000 OF IN
KIND FUNDING

£196 IS THE ANNUAL AV-
ERAGE HOUSEHOLD ES-
TIMATED FOR THE **2,800**
HOUSEHOLDS REACHED



WWW.VOLUNTEER.PORTSMOUTH.GOV.UK

"There is starting to be recognition ...that Portsmouth Together provides a real opportunity to lay the foundations towards generating greater social action in the City."

Brian Bracher, Chief Service Officer, Portsmouth City Council

■ CITIES OF SERVICE FOCUS

Portsmouth focussed on two initiatives, both bringing together inspiration from US Cities of Service blueprints and local priorities.

The Activate initiative was identified to help address lower than average educational attainment by providing mentoring for year 11 students identified as being disadvantaged (in receipt of pupil premium), in the final year of their GCSE exams. Sixty-four pupils have been supported by 30 business mentors volunteers.

Love Your Street responded to a need to improve resident satisfaction with local neighbourhoods by providing mini-grants available to all neighbourhoods in Portsmouth. Thirty-seven projects were awarded Love your Street grants across 13 of the 14 city wards. The first eight initiatives that have completed have recorded more than 370 residents taking part, with an estimated 5,700 benefiting from improvements made and events held. The funding for the mini-grants was made available by a donation of £20,000 from The Southern Co-operative.

■ INITIATIVE AND IMPACT SPOTLIGHT: ACTIVATE

In Portsmouth, fewer than one in four of Portsmouth's resident working age population are numerate to the equivalent of GCSE Grade A*-C. This lack of numeracy is a strong indicator of disadvantage and poorer life outcomes. The Activate initiative aimed to address this and paired young people with business mentors to help individual achieve their potential. Sixty-four pupils got mentoring from 30 volunteers.

Pupils attended weekly one-to-one mentoring sessions each over the course of the school year. The table following is an analysis of the group of students who participated in the mentoring.

	STUDENT AVERAGE (those who do not receive additional help through pupil premium)	STUDENT AVERAGE (those who have additional help through pupil premium)	STUDENT AVERAGE (those students who had mentoring and have pupil premium)
Average Point Score (APS)	332.92	278.89	337.43
Levels of Progress—Maths	68.75%	47.89%	78%
Levels of Progress—English	62.5%	50.7%	64.29%
Progress 8 Score*	+0.08	-0.43	+0.41

Activate mentoring is now self-funding and sustainable as it now forms part of the Education Business Partnership South (EBP South) offer to schools.

Brian Bracher, Chief Service Officer, summarises the key lessons as follows:

- The matching process is critical for mentoring projects. This requires considerable preparation and support from the broker (in this case our delivery partner) getting to know the cohorts of mentors and mentees and identifying likely successful pairings.
- Mentoring in the run up to important exams means that there is a good deal of focus on attainment. Think about the timing for projects. For example Activate pilot; the plans to start at least a term earlier to allow more time for the mentors to gain the trust of the students they are supporting.
- Taking time to work out the logistics around data collection and metrics is important - the needs and capacities of each school might be different. Be mindful not to overload teachers.
- Build in time to develop your relationship with potential partners (e.g. schools).

PORTSMOUTH'S SOCIAL ACTION LEGACY

Portsmouth has council and partners' support to extend the Portsmouth Together programme for a further two years with increased resources.

Activate are now working in three schools and expect to evaluate progress in September 2016, before seeking further funding to scale further. The lessons of the Activate Mentoring programme are also informing central Government thinking about mentoring.

Partners are also developing a Love Your School programme and a Community Energy Champion. Cities of Service has also influenced wider local authority thinking about social action, and opportunities that partnerships bring in mobilising volunteers around city challenges. This included the introduction of the Portsmouth Inspiring Volunteer awards, which are now in their second year and funded primarily by donations and support from local business.



PROGRAMME
FUNDING
RECEIVED:
£180,000

MATCH FUNDING
LEVERAGED:
£50,000 (£25,000
PORTSMOUTH CITY
COUNCIL, £20,000
THE SOUTHERN CO-
OPERATIVE)



WWW.SWINDONCIRCLES.ORG.UK

"We are really proud that we have been able to create and deliver a project which has been able to adapt and refocus depending on the needs we have locally. We are starting a new approach to volunteer recruitment and will be looking to energise local residents who live in close proximity to residential care settings to consider volunteering locally."

Patrick Weir, Service Lead, Swindon Borough Council

■ CITIES OF SERVICE FOCUS

Swindon Borough Council used Cities of Service as an opportunity to consider how social action could complement existing forms of support for elderly people who received four hours or less of social care each week. The Swindon Circles model was part of a wider change programme for Adult Health and Social Care. The key design considerations in the initiative came from work with the Older People's Forum, a network organisation representing the interests of older people in Swindon. The plan was developed in conjunction with Commissioning colleagues, approved by Corporate Board and by the leaders of all three political groups that make up the Borough Council.

■ INITIATIVE AND IMPACT SPOTLIGHT: SWINDON

Swindon Circles paired volunteers with older people to help with their daily tasks, transport and companionship that complements existing contacts people have with families, friends and carers. Fifty matches between volunteers and beneficiaries are active, with over 100 volunteers and beneficiaries having been identified and taken part.

Feedback from clients and their referees, and from a wellbeing questionnaire revealed beneficiaries experienced:

- Improved mood.
- A new social focus.
- Ongoing independence at home.
- Domestic support which makes a difference mentally and physically.
- Valued respite for their primary carer.

LESSONS LEARNT

Patrick Weir, Swindon's Cities of Service Lead, identifies the following insights about Swindon Circles for others interested in pursuing similar models include:

- Arranging and sustaining matches takes time.
- Not all isolated and/or lonely individuals were interested in joining the scheme, and interest in participation did not necessarily correlate with the level of participant need.
- Listening to and working with potential participants helped shape the programme design.
- Measuring wellbeing benefits comprehensively has proved difficult given the mental health status of some participants.

SWINDON'S SOCIAL ACTION LEGACY

The team is expanding through a year-long pilot employing overseas volunteers through the organisation Volunteering Matters. This means that Swindon Circles will deploy overseas volunteers to support clients currently also supported by additional social care. During 2016/17, the Swindon Circles team will be investigating the feasibility of creating Swindon Circles as a charitable entity.



PROGRAMME
FUNDING
RECEIVED:
£30.000

MATCH FUNDING
LEVERAGED:
£230,000 MATCH
FUNDING AND
£60,000 OF IN
KIND FUNDING

VOLUNTEERS HAVE
COLLECTIVELY INVESTED OVER
2,000 HOURS OF SERVICE,
PROVIDING A CUMULATIVE
AVERAGE OF 111 HOURS'
VOLUNTEERS TIME A WEEK.
BENEFICIARIES REPORT
FEELING THEY'VE MADE REAL
FRIENDSHIPS AND ENJOYING
THE INCREASED VARIETY IN
ACTIVITY.

VOLUNTEER TELFORD TELFORD



WWW.VOLUNTEERTELFORD.CO.UK

"There is a greater diversity of the volunteers that are participating in the programme, these are volunteers that it would usually be difficult to engage with so there is also added value in terms of the benefits to the volunteers."

Rachael Jones, Telford and Wrekin

■ CITIES OF SERVICE FOCUS

Telford and Wrekin focused on community-based initiatives that involved growing food and neighbourhood improvements. The need to focus on these priority areas was identified from previous consultation with the community on the council's vision and then through an internal meeting with colleagues to identify the most viable projects to deliver.

Let's Grow saw 318 people involved in community food growing to improve health and wellbeing of people who have limited access to fresh fruit and vegetables, and Pride in Your Community mobilised 682 volunteers to develop solutions to long standing environmental issues and transform their civic spaces through a variety of activities (e.g. developing a community garden, litter clearing).

■ INITIATIVE AND IMPACT SPOTLIGHT: PRIDE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Telford & Wrekin identified six target neighbourhoods to benefit from the Pride in your Community initiative. All six neighbourhoods were amongst the 10 per cent most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK. Between 2013-2014, the council spent £1.8 million a year clearing litter, 50 per cent in these target areas.

Pride in Your Community was designed to increase residents' sense of pride within their neighbourhood and was designed to be as bottom up as possible, handing ownership over to local residents.

Residents identified what they wanted to do in their local areas and how they wanted to do it. This could range from picking up litter, planting

flowers and trees or cleaning up community centres, to being a snow warden. The team worked with schools and community groups to carry out awareness raising campaigns and train residents to conduct street audits (where the residents could report problems they saw – from graffiti and pot-holes to fly tipping and faulty street lighting). Residents were trained in gardening and health and safety, and a tool hire scheme was developed so they can carry out their own community clean ups.

Hundreds of residents gave their time across 139 neighbourhood projects. Half of those surveyed also reported to have made changes to beautify their own gardens, which has both improved people's sense of pride in where they live and increased awareness of the importance in taking responsibility for the environment.

LESSONS LEARNT

Rachael Jones, Telford and Wrekin's Cities of Service Lead, summaries the key lessons as follows:

- Make sure there are resources in place to develop and manage initiatives, rather than tagging into an existing work programme without additional time or people to do this.
- Involve delivery staff early in the development of the project and the impact measurement requirements.
- Invest time to train people to collect useful impact information.
- One of the greatest successes has been the significant increase in resident involvement in areas where engagement was previously very low. This provided a fantastic platform for other community and volunteering initiatives.

TELFORD'S SOCIAL ACTION LEGACY

Community ownership is a key feature of this. For example, one group is setting up a project to help others in their community maintain their gardens. Residents have also begun to share opportunities, skills and time with other residents' groups in different areas of their own accord. Let's Grow will continue in the current format until March 2017 and funding bids are being submitted to continue to develop the project.

The impact measurement information will hopefully influence how we develop new volunteering projects within the council. We are currently piloting some impact measurement in one of our other volunteering projects in relation to impact for the service, service-user and volunteer.

TELFORD AND WREKIN
everybody has something to offer

PROGRAMME
FUNDING
RECEIVED:
£30.000

MATCH FUNDING
LEVERAGED:
£169,000 MATCH
FUNDING AND
£17,500 OF IN KIND
FUNDING

682 GAVE THEIR TIME
TO **139** DIFFERENT
PROJECTS TO BEAUTIFY
NEIGHBOURHOODS AND
REDUCE FLY TIPPING

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