The British Red Cross Volunteering Strategy
A Discussion Paper

1. Our Needs

1.1. Volunteering is part of the life blood of the Red Cross – so asserted the Board in September 2003 and the Business Unit Heads in October 2003.   But is that true? Do our actions indicate a commitment to volunteering? Are they fine words that are undermined in the reality of the contract culture? How can we balance a commitment to volunteering and comply with the needs of a contract? How can we apply management principles to a group of people who help us out of good will? This changing perception of volunteering has left some of our supporters and staff ambiguous about volunteering or a least luke-warm about the long term use of volunteers – they are too difficult to find and a problem to manage.

1.2. Our strategy should perhaps be based on recognition of those contradictions. Resolving the dichotomy is not an aim in what follows; rather, we have to embrace it. We have to see the tension between volunteers and paid staff as essential; not as an argument, but a solution to achieving our mission. We have to manage that relationship, making decisions about how best to provide our services either by staff or volunteers or a mix. Seeing that "mixed economy" as a unique contribution to the satisfaction of need and the preparedness of the community to respond in crisis.

1.3. This approach demands a lot of our staff and volunteers (who of course manage other volunteers – they have to embrace the skill to manage effectively). Our managers have to understand the skills of resource management (planning, need identification, resource management, review and audit). It means we have to recognise that the needs of volunteers change and, in the concept of resource management, sensitive to those changes and flexible in response.

1.4. In this approach, there is no distinction between fund raising and service delivery volunteers. Every volunteer has the potential to raise money; some spend more time on it than others. Those that specialise in this way require the assistance from their managers to encourage the discreet skills that raise money.

1.5. Volunteers are an incredible resource who expect to be managed well.

1.6. So what are the needs we have to satisfy for us to embrace the new paradigm?

- To have a flexible definition of volunteering to incorporate people able to give both large and small amounts of time;
- To have flexible volunteering opportunities and training that is appropriate to the type and level of service/activity being undertaken embracing classroom based activities, distant learning, "buddying", coaching and mentoring;

- To increase the numbers of volunteers consistent with the needs of service delivery at a local level as well as seeking to increase the number of hours given by existing volunteers;
- To recruit volunteers as quickly as possible whilst following procedures and standards;
- To ensure our records for all volunteers are reliable and up to date;
- To ensure our selection processes are easy and efficient and capable of sifting unsuitable volunteers;
- To have a younger, more flexible and adaptable volunteer base whilst always supporting and enthusing all of any age;
- To have developed imaginative ways of communicating with volunteers using all available technology;
- To increase our volunteers by developing partnerships with other charities;
- To have removed barriers to volunteering by an inclusive, flexible and rapid recruitment process and strategy that inspires confidence about the way volunteers will be respected and appreciated.
- We aim to have a volunteer body that reflects the community in terms of age, ethnicity and gender and can accommodate people with particular needs, such that our volunteers are as diverse as the community we serve;
- Volunteers need to know they are part of the organisation and supported in a way that their skills ar*e* appropriately recognised (in the context of Accredited Prior Experiential Learning), developed and professionally line managed;
- To give some credence to the monetary value of volunteering and promote this;
- To ensure volunteers feel their voice is heard and represented through the volunteer*s'* councils and forums;
- To ensure all volunteers sign up to the volunteer, staff and delegate charter and the value base and fundamental principles;
- To ensure managers of volunteers better understand and develop their role and skills in managing volunteers and they have the tools to perform this role effectively;
- To make use of new and innovative ways of training both staff and volunteers particularly thorough electronic technology;
- To have a register of volunteers with special and advanced skills that can work in this country and abroad;
- To continually monitor and audit the way we manage volunteers and the support they receive and ensure our staff are correctly deployed and trained
- To ensure all Departments in the UKO include volunteers and lead by example on how to manage volunteers;
- To ensure we are aware of and support government initiatives that develop volunteering as a way of combating social exclusion, and ones which do not conflict with our Fundamental Principles or interfere with our neutral status;
- That managers recognise and understand that volunteers seek a rewarding experience when giving their time. This may be by acquiring skills or

satisfying a need to "give" – it is not a gift or "without consequences" relationship, volunteers will have an expectation of return on their investment.

- That we accept identifying volunteering as a resource for managers is not without cost – successful management demands financial backing to invest in their development and maintenance and the infrastructure to ensure we make maximum use of new technologies;
- To influence the Government agenda focused specifically on the regeneration of communities. Emphasis will be placed on the promotion of Humanitarianism as a binding principle which embraces the concept of volunteering and emphasizes the need for innovative ways to encourage the regeneration of communities to work and think together.
- To draw upon the experience of other National Societies through the Western European Network for the Development of Volunteering (WENDOV) and the Federation European Reference Centre to extend and share our knowledge and experience of volunteering.

2. The Internal and External Environments

2.1. What might be included in our strategy that will enable us to satisfy those needs? We need to reflect the influences both internal and external that impinge the application of the strategy.

2.2. In the UK alone, volunteering is undertaken by 30% of the population, in comparison with the European average of 17%. Such figures would suggest a sustained interest in volunteering, but may also reflect an increased level of competition between organisations with more volunteering opportunities.

2.3. Results from the UK 2001 census highlight 'the magnitude and immediacy' of demographic changes. For the first time in recorded history, there are more people over 60 than there are children. With approximately 1.1.million people within the age range of 85 and over, more demands are placed upon health, social services and social security arrangements. This is both a demand upon services but also brings with it the potential to release those not in full time work into the volunteering market place, to enhance their skills base and even their career opportunities.

2.4. Also lone parents should not be ignored as they may seek company through volunteering, although this tends to be more apparent in less formalised networks - such as playgroups and informal self help groups. Another important factor in identifying volunteers is evident from the UN Population Division. This study estimates that in 2002 the EU required an annual inflow of 3million migrants to maintain the current support ratio of workers to those needing support. High immigration is both a challenge in terms of acculturation and a potential pool of people seeking ways of developing skills and familiarity with the host community.

2.5. The essential message is adaptability to meet demographic changes – our volunteering base must be increasingly diverse to reflect the new trends and complexities.

2.6. Many of our services operate in a way that is not flexible enough to fit the personal commitments of volunteers in general, and we face an ever- increasing level of competition from other charities whose flexible approach is more in keeping with that of the modern volunteering ethos. Trends in volunteering can have a marked effect on recruitment and training and "in a cash rich but time poor society" volunteers seek opportunities that match their life style.

2.7. A significant factor is the number of people who choose to work beyond sixty years of age and may seek both work and volunteering opportunities – preferring a mixed approach and achieving a balance of work/fun and or a sense of giving in their lives. The British Red Cross must strive to be flexible, creative and responsive to trends in employment, if it is to be more diverse and reflective of the community in which it serves.

2.8. Within the context of the increasing competition, are the difficulties of recruiting and retaining volunteers and halting the decline in numbers. Volunteers in the British Red Cross have declined from around 80,000 volunteers in 1998 to 40,000 in January 2004. Some of this decline is associated with a 'clean up' of the database such that the lower figure is more realistic of active contributors. Nevertheless, there is a decline in volunteer numbers. Too few Areas adopt a resource planning approach that is recruitment based around evidenced need, ensuring that their services have enough volunteers to meet their obligations – not too many and not too few, are most successful.   Indeed it could be argued that, in some instances for example in Therapeutic Care and Home from Hospital, it may be better to have fewer volunteers initially, who have the requisite skills and who can be relied upon to meet the emergent need. Deciding how many volunteers are required demands planning against operational objectives.

2.9. Also, persons and Trusts donating money to the Red Cross want assurances about the use to which money is spent, confidence in the quality of services being provided and increasingly fair and open access to volunteering opportunities.

2.10.　　　　　Volunteers will continue to be the main strength and lifeblood of the British Red Cross, in line with our Fundamental Principles, but the need for service contracts and partnerships, in response to evidenced and emergent need, will invariably mean a closer working relationship between volunteers and staff which is more accountable and more transparent. We have a mixed economy – staff and volunteers working in an integrated manner to help those in need and one in which the balance between staff and volunteers is likely to be determined by the nature of the contract and the requirement for objective monitoring and accountability.

2.11.   In this context also we should seek to create a new type of emergency response volunteer who will be recruited with a similar ethos to that of 'retained firefighters' rather than providing on going service in other BRCS activities. It is possible that such volunteers may be recruited from higher education establishments, or may be work for an organisation which promotes volunteering, but with additional training and support. The skills of these 'occasional volunteers' will be focused and tailored to the needs of the local emergency planning arrangements and specifically geared to enhancing area capacity and capability.

2.12.   Investigation has shown that volunteers often remark their work is not recognised by the public and some have gone so far as to comment that constant re-organisation has left a demoralized work force unsure of the level of appreciation being shown to their personal commitment. Managers who respond to this disaffection retain more volunteers.

2.13.   On a more positive note we have a core base of 40,000 volunteers most of whom display a deep commitment to the principles and the humanitarian ethos of the Red Cross and many individuals give outstanding amounts of time and effort to sustain the Red Cross in their community. Our existing volunteer base wants to see the Red Cross flourish and in so doing, play an active role in its development. The Red Cross must capitalize on this level of dedication through the Volunteers' Councils and Forums. Less positively, some of our volunteers do not understand and have views that are inconsistent with the Fundamental Principles, a continuous objectives is to tackle that mismatch.

3. **Truth and fiction – our struggle to match aspiration and reality –a possible vision**

   3.1. Some myths that need dispelling

       3.1.1.   That we can only recruit through centres – or buildings that are within easy reach of the community. This is no longer the case for example the medical loan services are increasingly being developed on the basis of delivery and collection, responding to telephone or e-mail requests. In addition Home form Hospital volunteers are recruited from within or around hospitals – sometimes individuals wishing to thank hospitals for past care and treatment;

       3.1.2.   That it is ideal to recruit from within families or amongst friends. Whilst we should never deny the importance of family links, this does mean we recruit from a similar population. We need to recognise that people volunteer because others do it, friends respond to friends or in an emergency (such as the destruction of the World Trade Towers), there is a spontaneous, mass confluence of volunteers wanting to give their time and services;

       3.1.3.   That most volunteers will undertake only one activity. The contrary more often than not occurs, a well articulated specific request enables

volunteers to understand what is being asked and judge their own commitment;

3.1.4. That we can require volunteers to undertake emergency response if they work in shops;

3.1.5. It is difficult to recruit to some volunteer tasks and it is easier if staff fill the gaps. This is a difficult balance and not solved quickly. There is a lack if staff investment in recruitment, more time has to be spent on finding volunteers than staff filling the gaps of a volunteer absence. In reality we do not try hard enough to find volunteers, or making roles appealing, we are comfortable with an occasional enthusiastic individual who may have responded to an international crisis or has a long standing affection for the movement;

3.1.6. That we actively resource plan for volunteering roles;

3.1.7. That young people are not attracted to the Red Cross proposition;

3.1.8. That volunteering is free.

4. Possible vision of what we want

4.1. Examples

4.1.1. We want to increase the diversity of volunteers by for example:

- Developing partnerships with other, particularly ethnic minority, charities;
- Offering first aid training
- Workshops on humanitarianism
- Offering the chance to join a network of emergency responders

4.1.2. We should consider students as potential volunteers for Emergency Response, offering an opportunity to develop transferable skills in first aid and enhancing career opportunities through inclusion of voluntary work on CVs.

4.1.3. Increasing the number of volunteers by working co-operatively with other charities such as the Neighbourhood Watch, the Scouts, Guides – were offering First Aid Training, their in Emergency Response, twice yearly support via existing volunteers.

4.1.4. Increasing the range of companies who wish to be involved in employee volunteering programmes. For example The BBC advertises our ongoing service volunteering opportunities on their Intranet site.

4.1.5. Keying into to all major company pre-retirement training

4.1.6. We need to create the opportunities for people to learn new skills and develop their confidence in caring for others when they themselves may be faced with the prospect of becoming a "family carer" in the future.

4.1.7. Engage more actively with ambulance trusts in support of their Community Responder schemes and third person crewing, thus providing an "attractive" alternative, especially for younger volunteers.

4.2. Our key themes

4.2.1. *Resource Planning*: Encourage managers to resource plan for their volunteering needs. To assess needs, plan numbers, design role descriptions, segment and understand potential markets, advertise appropriately, target best options, work in harmony with the Communication and Human Resources Divisions, drive national campaigns and provide local support.

4.2.2. *Fit for task*: organizational arrangements in place and trained personnel to deal with campaign responses and casual volunteer enquiries – linking vacancies, interviews, matching, training and involvement times.

4.2.3. *Training and Development* : Volunteers have to acquire a set of skills to complete their task successfully, this could be less complicated office tasks to the more challenging first aid with enhanced skills. Successful training is predicated on a variety of techniques – coaching, mentoring as well "chalk, talk and examine" and careful matching.

4.2.4. *Motivation*: sustaining the commitment of volunteers is crucially linked to the quality of their management – including good role description, recruitment and selection procedures, accredited prior learning, induction, supervision, training and reward.

4.2.5. *Diversity of our volunteer base*, particularly younger volunteer bas*e* using a national campaign based on the identification of different volunteer opportunities to attract volunteers under 40 years of age;

4.2.6. *Engagement*: Volunteers know they are involved through their Volunteer Councils and Forums.

4.2.7. *Data management*: good management relies on the accuracy and usability of information that captures the details of volunteer personal information but also their skills, involvement and commitment.

4.2.8. *Mixed economy*: The provision of services is reliant upon a creative mix of staff and volunteers who understand their roles and the structures they operate within.

4.2.9. *Short and long term* volunteering tasks devised that respond to the amount of time potential volunteers have available and these are flexible in terms of location and times of the day;

4.2.10. *Service users:* we have as standard practice the views and opinions of service users, supports and donors views are sought, captured and influence the review of all income generation activities.

4.2.11. *Partnerships:* seeking partners with other charities to become champions of the Red Cross. For example training the Scouts in humanitarianism, First Aid, emergency response and enlisting their assistance in times of crisis.

4.2.12. *Mass participation*: Promoting the concept of supporters – members of the public who have "signed –up" to the Red Cross through individual giving, public or commercial training or through an education programme.

5. **What do we need to do to get there? What could a volunteering strategy look like? What are its elements?**

5.1. **Introduction:** Volunteering is part of the life blood of the Red Cross, but only if there is a commitment to it, revealed by a sound understanding and automatic use of the management techniques necessary to recruitment people such that they gain from their association with the movement. All volunteers must feel well inducted, supervised, trained and rewarded for their efforts.

5.2. The elements of the strategy are:

5.3. **Building individual manager and organizational** capacity via a sound understanding and application of **resource planning** that has the following characteristics:

    5.3.1. Needs analysis
    5.3.2.   The identification of roles that can meet the needs identified;
    5.3.3. The identification of volunteers and staff to complete a task
    5.3.4. Volunteer involvement (deployment)
    5.3.5. Targeted recruitment
    5.3.6. Working with partners where that would meet needs

5.4. **Recruitment**: Designing recruitment campaigns that are specific for identified roles in service or income generation. The local need would be reflected in a national campaign making use of nationally developed tools and reliant on national and local structures to ensure efficient and speedy responses. For example, the national response would be to develop a "one number" contact point that could default to Areas by automatic detection of the callers location. The local structure would ensure the caller could be processed.

5.5. **The continuing development of manager skills**: The application of the competencies and behaviors via a sustained management development programme and the production of Making it Happen and the Good Practice Guide.

5.6. **Brokering Partnerships**: At a national level developing partnerships with *champions* – "distant" volunteers who have undertaken our training in humanitarianism and first aid and can be called upon in an emergency or crisis. These will complement *supporters* who are members of the public who have donated money, participated in public or commercial training. We will know who they are and they can be approached as potential volunteers or as donors when necessary. Both groups can be kept informed of the Red Cross by limited but relevant communications. Our core partnerships will aim to:

- Increase diversity
- Promote the Red Cross
- Promote humanitarianism
- Provide a source of emergency response volunteers
- Provide a source of fund raisers

- Help us to build resilience
- Enable us to develop employee volunteering

5.7. Building engagement: Continuing to ensure that all volunteers have receive an induction that reflects the values of the Red Cross. In addition the Volunteer's Council and Forums are developed as a vibrant and relevant feature of the consultative process for the Red Cross. Running alongside these initiatives we develop new ways of recognizing and rewarding volunteer through motivation awards, Red Cross heroes. We need to ensure the volunteer body as a whole and the public at large knows those successful people.

5.8. Communication: We make maximum use of communicating with our volunteers through the exploitation of all communication mediums, paying particular attention to the mobile phone, texting, the intranet and internet.

5.9. Training: We ensure the standard of service delivery and successful fund raising by ensuring volunteers know what they have to do and can practice this as often as possible. We develop a range of techniques that are responsive to the needs of volunteers for example, coaching, mentoring "chalk and talk", electronic methods such as CD ROMs, internet and intranet.

5.10. Data Management: We ensure our systems have the capacity to cope with the records of "time giving " volunteers, champions and supports and that it supports the resource planning orientation.

5.11. Staffing Support: We use the Volunteering Advisers and Volunteering Support Managers to drive the strategy forward at their respective levels. That aspects of the strategy are development on the basis of projects devised in each Area.

5.12. Volunteering Department role:

    i. Promotion, support and implementation of the strategy via joint working with Territory and Area based staff and volunteers – seeking unique and original ways in which the strategy can be advanced;

    ii. Supporting and advising the VSM's on the design of projects, monitoring and reviewing their achievements;

    iii. Supporting and leading the development and use of Volunteer Councils and Forums as a key element in the re-engagement of volunteers and seeking ways in which volunteers can be consulted and feel part of the movement;

    iv. Identification of good practice via environmental scanning to ensure the Red Cross remains relevant and maximises all resources available to it;

    v. Design of policy/process and practice standards;

    vi. Produce and advocate guidance and support to all managers, driving the HR function in co-operation with HRM's and Area based staff;

    vii. Brokering partnership arrangements;

    viii. Managing some partnerships from the centre where necessary e.g. Account manger for the BBC and their employee volunteering scheme.

    ix. Managing relationships with key clients both internally and externally;

    x. Responding and contributing to central government initiatives on the role of volunteering both in the UK and the European Community.

    xi. Leading debate on volunteering in the charity sector.