# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Celebrating Volunteers** |
| **DATE**  | **4th June 2024** |
| **BY** | **Lesley Griffiths MS, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice** |

Wales has an army of volunteers and a tradition of volunteering that is second to none. Volunteers are at work around Wales every day and night of the year, so Volunteers Week is one important opportunity for us all to reflect on all their hard work. I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who gives up their time to help others.

Voluntary sector organisations who help the most disadvantaged in Wales are facing real challenges to recruit and retain volunteers. At the same time, many of these organisations are facing increased costs and increased demand for their services. These vital services, which often complement public sector delivery and contribute to filling some of the gaps created by years of austerity, are at risk in many places. Volunteers who we’ve relied upon hugely in recent years are not themselves immune to the effects of increased costs and demands for their time.

This is why Welsh Government remains committed to sustaining the infrastructure of support we have created around volunteering. Our Third Sector Support Wales partners, which includes our local Volunteer Centres and teams around Wales, our Volunteering Wales Grants and our newly upgraded Volunteering Wales Portal, are all designed to make things easier, both for those who want to volunteer and the organisations that need them.

We want to encourage more people to volunteer, because there are countless ways in which we all depend on the simple acts of kindness and mutual help that we call “volunteering”. Stacking the shelves of foodbanks, driving minibuses for community transport, acting as trustees, volunteering in hospitals, picking up litter, running self-help groups, fundraising – the list could go on almost without end. Every day, in every part of Wales, the anxieties, fears and suffering, of so many of our citizens are eased by the unselfish actions of volunteers.

We take so many of these simple acts for granted. Perhaps only when either we or a loved one benefit directly do we fully understand the extent to which we rely on volunteers and voluntary organisations.

We should also remember the act of volunteering also benefits the volunteer. Evidence shows volunteers have better health, stronger social networks and are happier.

However, volunteering is changing – how and why people want to volunteer has been shifting, since even before the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Voluntary organisations are now facing real challenges to recruit and retain volunteers who are vital in their community at a time of increasing demand for their services.

In response, we need innovative approaches to help third sector organisations attract and retain volunteers, underpinned by a new and progressive vision to drive volunteering in Wales. A clear, new approach, supported by all sectors of Welsh society, will mean we can take advantage of the positive changes and energy generated during the pandemic and fully unlock the potential that exists.

Providing this vision and helping to make it real for the long-term is exactly what our Volunteering Cross-Sector Leadership Group, established through the Third Sector Partnership Council, will be doing over the coming 12 month. The group will co-design a new approach to Volunteering in Wales to give us a unifying and uniquely Welsh vision for volunteering in Wales and a framework for delivering it.

Over the coming month the co-design process, through surveys, workshops, interviews and other methods, will give everyone who wants to the opportunity to help shape the future of volunteering. Because everyone’s voice is crucial in shaping such a fundamental and important part of our life in Wales.