# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Celebrating Trustees Week** |
| **DATE** | **05 November 2024** |
| **BY** | **Jane Hutt, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip** |

Trustees Week is a great opportunity to celebrate the breadth, scale and wonderfully positive impact of the many thousands of trustees supporting essential work across the whole of Welsh Society. As a truly vital part of the great body of volunteers in Wales, hundreds of thousands of them, give freely to lead and support the essential work of voluntary and community organisations.

**Helping where we can!** Volunteering is a fundamental part of the life and character of Wales and its people. It helps to define the kind of society we want Wales to be It is fundamental to quality of life and the wellbeing of our people, our communities and the environment on which they depend; and underpins the services on which we all rely.

Everyone can be helpful, in their own way. It may be about helping people facing the challenge of ill health or struggling with the cost of living. It may be helping to care for our environment, tackling climate change and restoring nature. Or it may be closer to home, working with others to tackle a local emergency, or supporting a friend or a neighbour needing care.

Voluntary action may be regular and organised, or it may informal, ‘as and when’ we see and take up an opportunity to do some good. It may be motivated by faith, personal or corporate principles or the simple impulse to help where we can. Voluntary action is not only for charities and voluntary bodies, it is something for the public and the private sectors, as well, for every individual and every organisation. To all the volunteers of Wales, my message is that whatever drives you to do something good, please give yourself the space and time to go with it....!

**Who benefits?** The beauty of voluntary action is that the volunteer benefits, as well as those who are helped. It’s not just about feeling good from doing good – it’s also about new experiences, developing skills, meeting people, and being a valuable part of a healthier and more resilient community and society.

When we help, we all know that feeling of satisfaction in a job well done and we can often see the good effects of what we do on the people and places we have worked to help. The whole of society benefits when we show our concern for other people and their environment, when we work together to make Wales a better place, giving our time and effort without seeking to be paid for it.

**Support the Volunteers!** Volunteers add enormous value to all our lives, indeed in innumerable ways, our way of living and often our lives themselves depend on them. In turn, volunteering needs to be safe, supported, and sustainable. We need to be able to find out about opportunities to give the help we’re best able to give, opportunities that match our skills and availability.

We have in Wales, through government and public bodies, but more through charities and voluntary bodies themselves, a well-developed infrastructure to support and sustain voluntary action of all kinds. Helping, where needed, to organise, recruit, train and support volunteers. But, more can be done, and volunteers could give much more if more of the right support was available. That’s something we want to tackle, in partnership with volunteers themselves and with the voluntary, public and private sector bodies and organisations in Wales.

**A Changing Landscape**. In recent years, volunteering in Wales, as in other countries around the world, has been changing. The people who volunteer, the kind of volunteering they do and their reasons for volunteering were changing before COVID, and then the pandemic created new opportunities and types of volunteering and engaged new volunteers both formal and informal. Since COVID, however, volunteering has been changing in different ways, even shrinking as we move on from the power and immediacy of the pandemic itself, and as mounting financial and other pressures take hold in many of our lives.

And there are other risks that we have to avoid. As public finances tighten and public services struggle to deliver, their problems are at risk of being “outsourced” to volunteers and the Third Sector organisations that support them.

**A New Approach.** All this calls for a New Approach to Volunteering, one that is rooted in helping volunteers to deliver more for their communities and for themselves.

In May last year I made an Oral Statement to the Senedd underlining that if we want to support the changing nature of volunteering (both formal and informal), to take advantage of the positive changes, momentum, learning and energy generated during the pandemic, and to fully unlock the potential that exists amongst the people, communities and organisations in Wales, we need a new, progressive and delivery focused vision to drive it. A New Approach, agreed by all, can provide and deliver that vision.

**Co-Design and Co-Deliver!** I want to build an active and determined approach to giving volunteers the conditions and the support they need and deserve, so they can grow and flourish in the vital work they do for all of Wales, its people, places and communities. In partnership with leaders of voluntary action from all sectors, we have made good progress in co-designing a Vision and a Framework to grow and strengthen volunteering in Wales. We now have drafts from that work to share and will soon, in close collaboration with the WCVA and County Voluntary Councils, be engaging and consulting with stakeholders in all sectors to help further shape and refine them.

This is not a theoretical exercise, or new plan or strategy. Our New Approach will enable all sectors and all the major policy areas in which voluntary action is involved to see how they can more practically and effectively support volunteering - and fully realise its immense value.