

Volunteering for the Future

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An analysis of my recent experience at Cats Protection.

Outline of the multi-pronged approach we are currently taking to look at how volunteering could exist in the future.



Introduction

My role

Trends in volunteering

Micro Volunteering

A new relationship

A new partnership between volunteers and employees, working together to create meaningful ways to make a difference.

Getting off to a great start

Developing efficient and effective ways to begin the volunteering journey, warmly welcoming volunteers into the Cats Protection community.

Making it easier to deliver a great volunteer experience

Supporting volunteer managers to create a hassle-free, positive and joyful volunteer experience.

Integrated people planning

Everyone at Cats Protection working together to optimise volunteer involvement across the organisation.

Sustainable local services

Developing optimal models for local services for cats and people, in a way that's best for them and the organisation, including by supporting branches to thrive.

Connect Communities

Developing greater and deeper relationships between Cats Protection and local communities to create more valuable and rewarding experiences for people, and more impact for cats.

Changing Trends in Volunteering

- **Decline in formal volunteering participation** (27% to 16%)
- **Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic** (decrease in traditional formal volunteering, increase in community-based and informal volunteering)
- **Demographic shifts in volunteering** (increase in those who are retired wanting to volunteer)
- **Emergence of Remote Volunteering** (31% online by 2023)
- **Challenges in volunteer satisfaction and diversity** (slight decline, with 92% of volunteers expressing satisfaction in 2022, down from 96% in 2018)

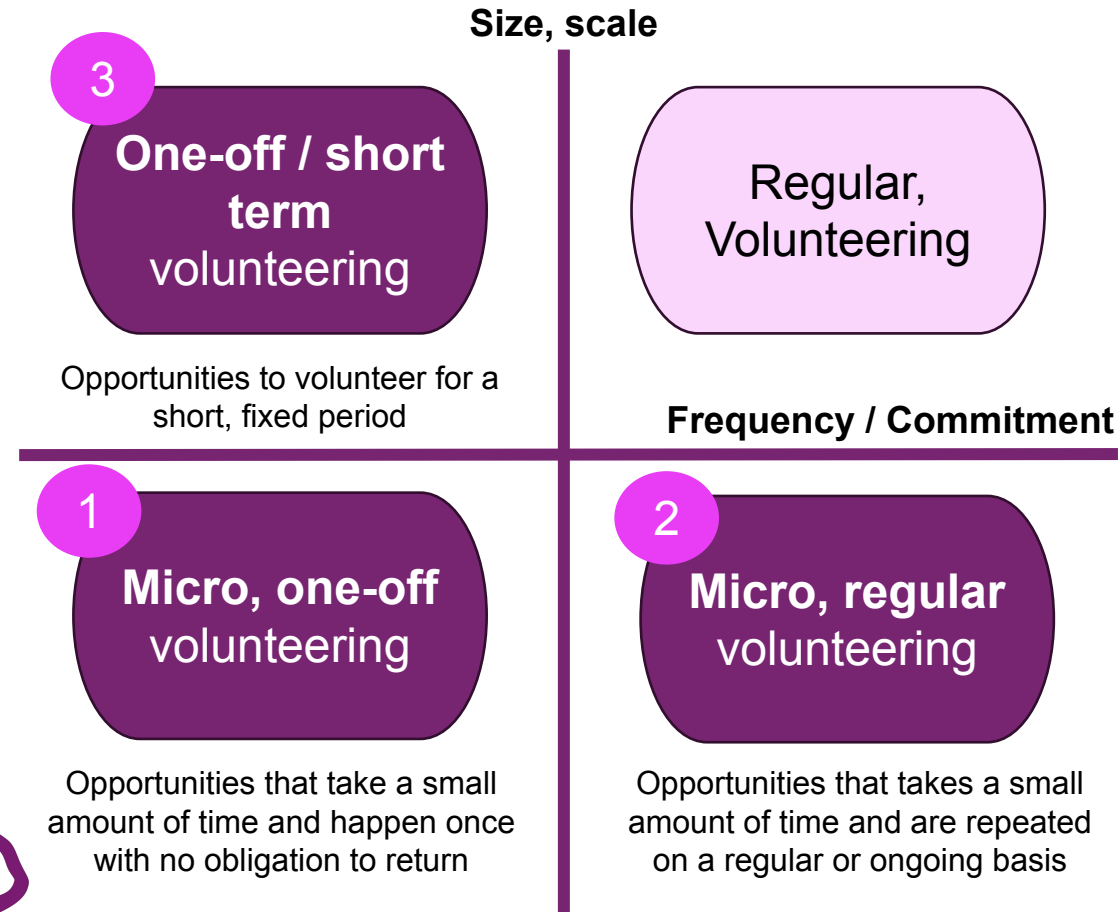


Micro & One-Off Volunteering: Where the sector is heading

Gaining strategic importance

Barriers: Risk, data, language systems

Types: One-off / short-term, Regular, Micro one-off, Micro Regular



Understanding the Problem



Visited sites to understand issues



Skills: Listening, empathy, honesty



Issues: Training overload, admin burden, disconnect from core mission



What is next?



Sustainable and affordable



Attracts diverse volunteers



Expands reach



Reduces admin burden



Embraces local flexibility

New Approaches

01

Operating Areas

Trial in Northern
Ireland

02

**Community
Teams**

Informal, flexible
roles

03

**Branch
Improvements**

Flexible roles,
reduced training

01 – Operating Areas

New Structure:
Teams grouped into
Operating Areas for
collaboration and
resource sharing.

Trial Success –
Northern Ireland: 65
volunteers under
'Cats Protection
Northern Ireland'.

Centralised admin
(finance, reporting);
local teams retain
identity and focus.

Hard-to-fill roles
(e.g., Treasurer) now
easier to recruit
across the area.

Expanding trial to
London to grow
volunteer base and
impact.

02 – Community Teams

Traditional branch model in decline; formal structures deter volunteers.

New Model in Flintshire: local staff manage admin, central teams support finance.

Micro-volunteering introduced: 'Community Advocates' do focused, short-term tasks.

Younger demographics prefer informal terms: 'Helpers', 'Team Members', etc..

Challenges: perception of centralisation, reduced focus on local fundraising.

Expansion planned in Liverpool and Nottingham.

03 – Branch Improvements

Branches maintain local autonomy and governance; vital for legacy income.

Improvements: flexible roles (deputy/split), micro-volunteering, streamlined training.

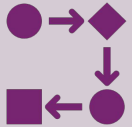
Fosterer onboarding time reduced from 90 to 30 days.

New branches opened in Pembrokeshire and Woodhall Spa.

First growth in branch numbers since the pandemic.

Modernising within current governance (AGM approval needed).

Next Steps & Lessons Learned



Balance Improvement & Innovation

Combine refinement of existing models with exploration of new approaches.



Rethinking Volunteering

Focus on opening meaningful pathways, not just filling hours.



Tailored Strategies

One size doesn't fit all - adapt for different communities.



Program Continues to 2026

Drive impact where traditional models underperform.

Final Takeaways



Align

Align roles with volunteer motivations

Simplify

Simplify training and communication

Embrace

Embrace flexibility and innovation

Reconnect

Reconnect with mission: helping cats

Our vision

At Cats Protection we want to create a society where every cat has their best possible life because they are protected, cared for, understood and valued by everyone.

Our mission

We are a movement of people championing the welfare of cats.

We lead society in a richer understanding of all cats and care for those that need our help.

Our purpose

To help people see the world through cats' eyes.

