

YouthNet, Registered Charity Number - 1048995

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As the UK's first exclusively online charity founded in 1995, YouthNet's impartial and entrepreneurial approach is to harness the power of new technology, to enable 16-25 year olds to learn, support each other, and participate in society on their own terms. We work collaboratively both with our users and partner organisations as we strongly believe that together we can do more to reach out to all young people and provide high quality content and opportunities, when and how they need them.

We do this through three public facing websites, TheSite.org, Lifetracks.com and Do-it.org.uk (please see appendix for further background). Do-it, underpinned by the National Volunteering Database, provides over 1.3 million volunteering opportunities attached to over 40,000 local community organisations, across the UK. 80% of these opportunities are posted on Do-it by local Volunteer Centres, managed by Volunteering England, who provide key infrastructure support to local communities looking to engage volunteers.

By working with local Third Sector organisations and with Volunteer Centres in their area, we believe that there is immense potential for libraries to reap the benefits of strong partnership working to ensure that their services are well integrated into other public services within their local community.

We strongly welcome the consideration given to volunteers as discussed in **Q19** and believe that volunteers are able to play an integral part to the delivery of a strong 21st century library offering. Volunteers bring a vast array of skills and experiences to libraries. Good volunteer management together with modest investment in appropriate resources (including time and staff training) to create roles and support volunteers can unleash a huge return and increase the variety of services offered within libraries.

Do-it has a successful track record in enabling Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIO's) to reach the hard-to-reach. Presently 26% of Do-it registered users are from BME and refugee communities, a high proportion when you consider the BME groups account for only 7.9% of the overall national population. Furthermore, 74% of our registered users are under 35 years of age. We believe that Do-it, as the electronic infrastructure for volunteering in the UK, can add huge value to the role of libraries as a centre for visitors to search and apply for local volunteering opportunities, as well as giving library services themselves access to a more diverse volunteer support base to sustain their work. By joining up the library network with Do-it, this will give each library a focal point for the public to search for local volunteering opportunities created by charities, community groups and civic teams in their own

communities. A local Volunteer Centre will help smaller community groups wishing to involve volunteers in their work by posting their opportunities onto Do it, on their behalf. This will help libraries to make inroads into those individuals outlined in **Q11** who you wish to target.

If libraries are to fully meet the demand of local communities in becoming the centre of the community and a site to access learning resources and information, then playing a central role as part of the Digital Inclusion agenda, as described in **Q7**, is essential.

Using volunteers to help drive local digital participation projects forms a vital element of delivery for the Race Online 2012 (led by the Champion for Digital Inclusion), as well as the new National Plan for Digital Participation (being created by Ofcom with the support of the Digital Participation Consortium). These national programmes require local sites for individuals who want to get online to do so, and for those interested in volunteering to participate in the programme. Libraries would provide the perfect setting for this, with the support of Do-it and the National Volunteering Database.

In summary, YouthNet greatly welcomes the consultation document and the collaborative approach taken in looking to tackle the broad challenges that the library service faces in the coming years. Encouraging more people to experience and benefit from library services whilst broadening their appeal to individuals is something we fully support. We feel the proposals, if adopted in a flexible, considered and thoughtful way will bring about real change to how people use, interact and engage with libraries, and public services, more widely.

www.TheSite.org is designed to be the first place all young adults turn to when they need support and guidance through life. We provide an inclusive social environment when and where our users need it most: the dynamic and participative online community, breadth of topics, editorial integrity, expert advice partners and peer support make us the essential trusted guide and allow us *to tell it like it is*. Young people are able to come up with self-help strategies to tackle the everyday challenges they face, including drink and drugs, sex and relationships, money and financial management, health and well-being, travel and free time. Over **500,000** users visit TheSite.org every month, creating **2.2** million page impressions in their search for advice and support.

www.do-it.org.uk is volunteering made easy. We connect people, communities and organisations to inspire positive change, providing a central place on the internet for finding out about volunteering. As the digital backbone of volunteering, do-it.org.uk holds over **1.3** million opportunities to volunteer, searchable by postcode and provided by over **550** partners representing 40,000+ volunteer-involving organisations through Volunteer Centres and hundreds of national charities. Partners upload opportunities directly onto the National Volunteering Database and manage their volunteering opportunities, using bespoke software known as V-Base. This volunteer management software tool is uniquely developed by YouthNet for this purpose, and V-Base is now recognised as the industry standard within the volunteering sector.

Lifetracks.com - YouthNet is working collaboratively with Rathbone, The Foyer Federation and Skill. The aim of this flagship programme is to empower and equip 720,000 young people to make informed life choices about their work, study or training. This consists of bringing together 5 key areas of activity:

- Engagement – reaching young offenders and the most disengaged 16-25's by taking Life Choices to them: in parks on the streets, and in estates (Rathbone)
- Workshops – engaging and inspiring young people at risk of homelessness through intensive coaching, face to face support and peer advice (Foyer Federation)
- Helplines – giving 16-25's in need, or those with any kind of disability, a wealth of information and advice through bespoke telephone/SMS/online/email support (Skill)
- Website – inspiring and informing all 16-25's to make informed choices about work, study and training and help them to achieve their ambitions and dreams through an inclusive online space, created by young people for young people (YouthNet)
- Volunteering – inspiring a UK-wide network of young people who will develop, support and share Life Choices with, and for, their peers (all partners)