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Government's own data shows no upward trend in volunteering since 2001

- No evidence that targeting of young, old or other priority groups has been successful
- “Disappointing, given significant public funding”; “better research needed into what does and doesn't work”, **vies Saxton**

Levels of at-least-once-a-month volunteering – the frequency deemed most relevant by Government - were steady across 2001-2008, with no discernable trend up or down, according to the Government's own latest figures (*slide 4, attached*). During this period, overall volunteering levels fluctuated within 47%-50% (27%-29%, “formal”; 34%-37%, “informal”).

This is the key finding of a new analysis from leading not for profit sector think tank and research consultancy nfpSynergy, following examination of the most recent figures from the **Government's ongoing *Citizenship Survey***, used to officially gauge the fluctuating levels of volunteering in England & Wales since 2001. This same data will soon be used by the Government to assess part of its National Indicator 6 (NI 6) – whereby volunteering is deemed important for “empowering individuals, contributing to strong communities and adding value in the delivery of public services”.

Other significant points arising from the analysis include:

- Overall trends in **at-least-once-in-the-last-year volunteering** (*slide 5*) have fluctuated within 72%-76% 2001-2008, most recently registering 73%.
- For many **priority, ethnic and disadvantaged groups** (*slides 8-10*) there was an increase between 2001 and 2003 but also a drop between 2005 and 2007 – with the net result that volunteering in these groups is now at the same level, or below, where it was in 2001.
- All **socially excluded groups** (*slides 8-10*) show lower levels of volunteering and civic participation than the population as a whole; and these levels are relatively flat.
- **Those with no qualifications** (*slides 8-10*), who might most potentially benefit from the skills learned through volunteering, remain the least likely socially excluded group to volunteer.
- **White** (49%), **black** (48%) and **mixed race** (52%) ethnic groups show the highest levels of at-least-once-a-month volunteering (*slides 12-15*).
- At-least-once-a-month volunteering levels (*slides 12-15*) are lowest among **Asian** groups (36%) - particularly amongst **Bangladeshi** people (32%).
- **Women** (51%), in general, remain significantly more likely than **men** (44%) to volunteer at-least-once-a-month (*slide 18*).
- Since 2005, some of the traditional **age** bulwarks of volunteering show either static or falling at-least-once-a-month levels (*slides 22-23*) – eg static vis-à-vis 65+ year olds, decline vis-à-vis 55-64 year olds.

nfpSynergy's Driver of Ideas, Joe Saxton, said:

“Disappointingly, given the significant public funding, levels of volunteering have remained broadly static in England & Wales since 2001 – even according to the Government's own figures. Notably, there is singularly no evidence that the targeting of young, old and other priority groups - such as ethnic minorities, or those out of work or with no qualifications - has been successful. The Government's own latest data thus clearly demonstrates the urgent need for better research into, and evaluation of, precisely what does and doesn't work when it comes to getting more people to volunteer.”

- ends -

MEDIA INTERVIEWS: To interview nfpSynergy's Joe Saxton about the Government's own data on volunteering and its attempts to boost volunteering levels in England & Wales:
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Notes to editors:

- **nfpSynergy**

nfpSynergy (www.nfpsynergy.net) is the UK's *only* think-tank and research consultancy dedicated to the charity sector and not for profit issues. It provides ideas, insights and information to help voluntary and community organisations thrive in an ever-changing world. Regularly harvesting the social and charity-related views of public and parliament, media and business - not to mention not for profit organisations themselves - nfpSynergy has a vast and ever-growing knowledge pool from which to extract and deliver insights.

- **Joe Saxton**

As well as being Driver of Ideas at nfpSynergy – the leading not for profit sector think tank and research consultancy he founded back in 2002 - Joe Saxton was a longstanding chair (2005-2008) at the Institute of Fundraising; is chair at student environment and development campaign group, People & Planet; and is chair of CharityComms, the new professional body for not for profit communicators. Named by *The Guardian* (2003) as one of the 100 most influential people vis-à-vis UK social policy, Joe was voted the most influential person in UK fundraising by *Professional Fundraising* magazine in 2005, 2006, 2007 & 2008. In October 2007 the *Evening Standard* named him one of the 1000 most influential people in London. In 2008 he was named as one of *PR Week's* 500 most influential people in the UK communications sector.

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