

Welcome

Essential Skills for Volunteers

Online Launch

Wednesday 11 February 2026

Digital Education



Lifelong Learning Centre

Introducing Essential Skills for Volunteers: a Partnership Project

Olivia Garvey

Lifelong Learning Centre, University of Leeds



Schedule

- 13.00** Welcome & introducing Essential Skills for Volunteers -
Olivia Garvey, Lifelong Learning Centre, University of Leeds
- 13.10** Leeds Volunteer strategy; collaboration and cocreation - Andrina Dawson,
Volunteering and Capacity Building Manager, Voluntary Action Leeds
- 13.20** City and regional skills strategy, volunteering, adult education and employment -
Dawn Hall, Executive Manager Employment & Skills, Leeds City Council
- 13.25** Design Thinking for inclusive cocreation: Course development and demo -
Olivia Garvey, Lifelong Learning Centre, University of Leeds.
- 13.40** Lifelong Learning Centre community engagement - Fiona Chapel, Community
and Partnership Manager, Lifelong Learning Centre, University of Leeds.
- 13.45** Q&A (Event ends 2pm)

What is Essential Skills for Volunteers?



The Lifelong Learning Centre and Digital Education at the University of Leeds have worked with Voluntary Action Leeds & local VCS partners to create a short, online course for volunteers.



The course is free and open access. It aims to equip adults in Leeds and West Yorkshire with a foundation to begin or develop their skills in volunteering.



Learners can self-enrol online and work through a variety of activities.

OR

A worker could run it in person for a small group as an initial induction activity.



Strengths based approach, emphasising accessibility, reflection and confidence building to support marginalised groups to engage in volunteering, education or employment.



Lifelong Learning Centre

Multi-disciplinary
school & service
supporting mature,
part time and
foundation learners

Support student
diversity and work
with community
partners

Create opportunities
for adults from low
participation areas to
access HE

Strengths based
approach to teaching
& learning; valuing
knowledge and
experience

Start where people
are at and take an
inclusive approach to
build confidence

Student centred,
trauma informed,
equitable. Social
justice ethos

Strengthening volunteering & reducing barriers to learning



Build VCS capacity by offering a single resource to train volunteers. Reduce need for each organisation to develop and sustain separate volunteer training.



Strengthen links between community organisations and the University of Leeds and expand the LLC's partnerships and community engagement.

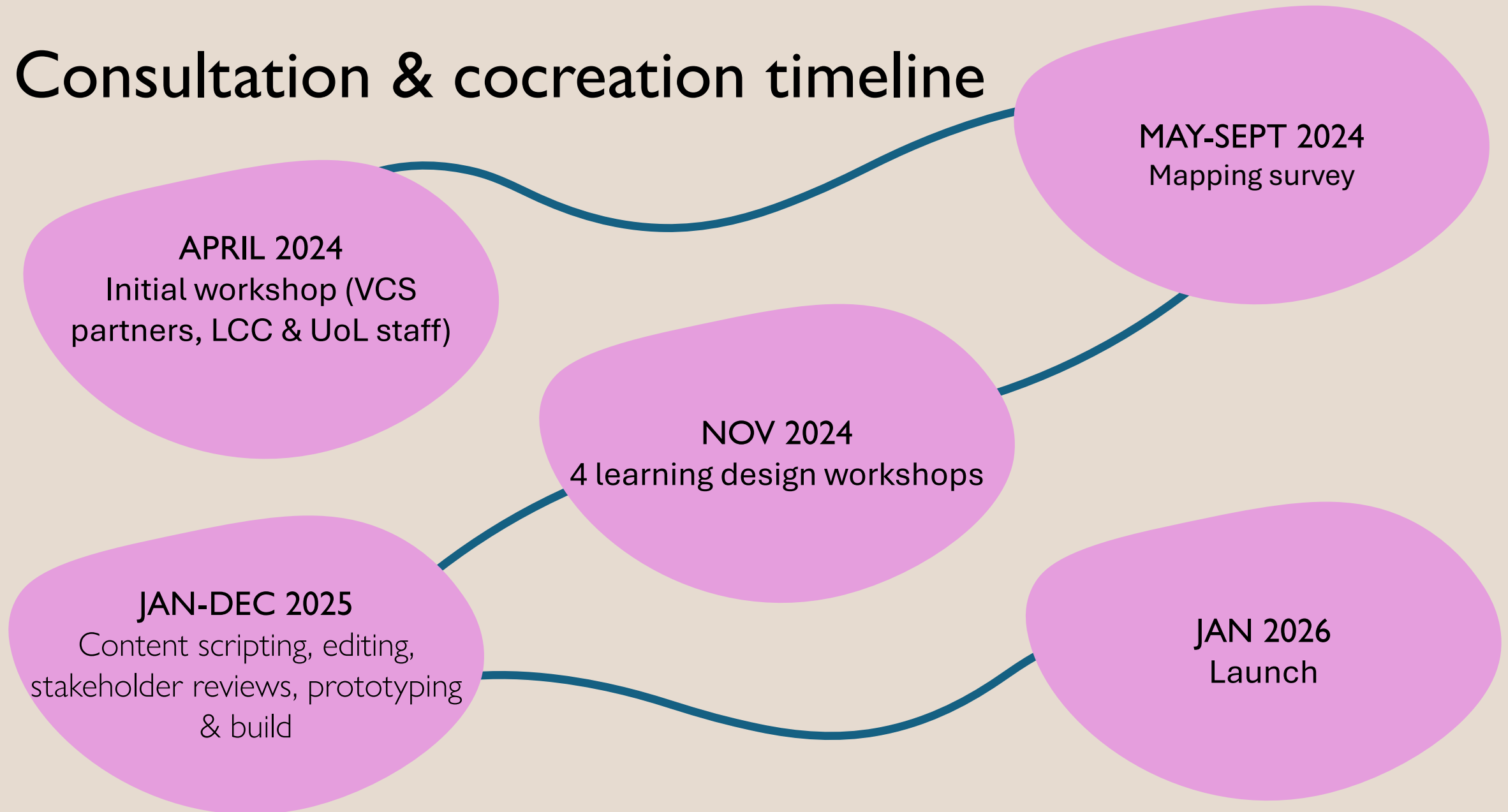


Provide a free learning opportunity and a positive education experience for adults from areas of low participation in higher education.



Signpost to adult education provision and encourage progression to higher education.

Consultation & cocreation timeline



Course structure



Some contributing partners



Capturing the diversity of volunteering

Course includes a range of resources including videos, case studies and podcasts featuring volunteers and workers from local organisations.



Partnerships for volunteer recognition



Volunteers in Leeds

35,00 Volunteers!

3,400 voluntary and
community organisations

Volunteers of
Leeds



Tessa Francis
Anti Stigma Champion - Being You Leeds

Leeds Volunteering Strategy

Making Leeds the best city for volunteering.

Our vision

Leeds will be the best city for volunteering. A city that celebrates volunteering in all its forms, where it's easy for people to find ways to make a difference and get involved.

All partners work together to support an innovative and diverse volunteering environment.



Our values



Enabling people to grow



Collaborative



Inclusive and accessible



Supportive



Innovative



Ambitions



1: Volunteers are at the centre of volunteering in Leeds, they shape and influence volunteering and are valued and recognised.



2: The Leeds volunteering offer is inclusive and creates equity. Our volunteer base is diverse and represents the communities we work with.



3: There are a greater number of volunteers who lead on innovative social action for the benefit of communities in partnership with organisations.



4: Volunteering is well resourced and resources are shared, resulting in strong and effective volunteer management.



The needs of volunteers and charities:

Organisations

- Sustainability and resourcing
- Share volunteers
- Skilled volunteers

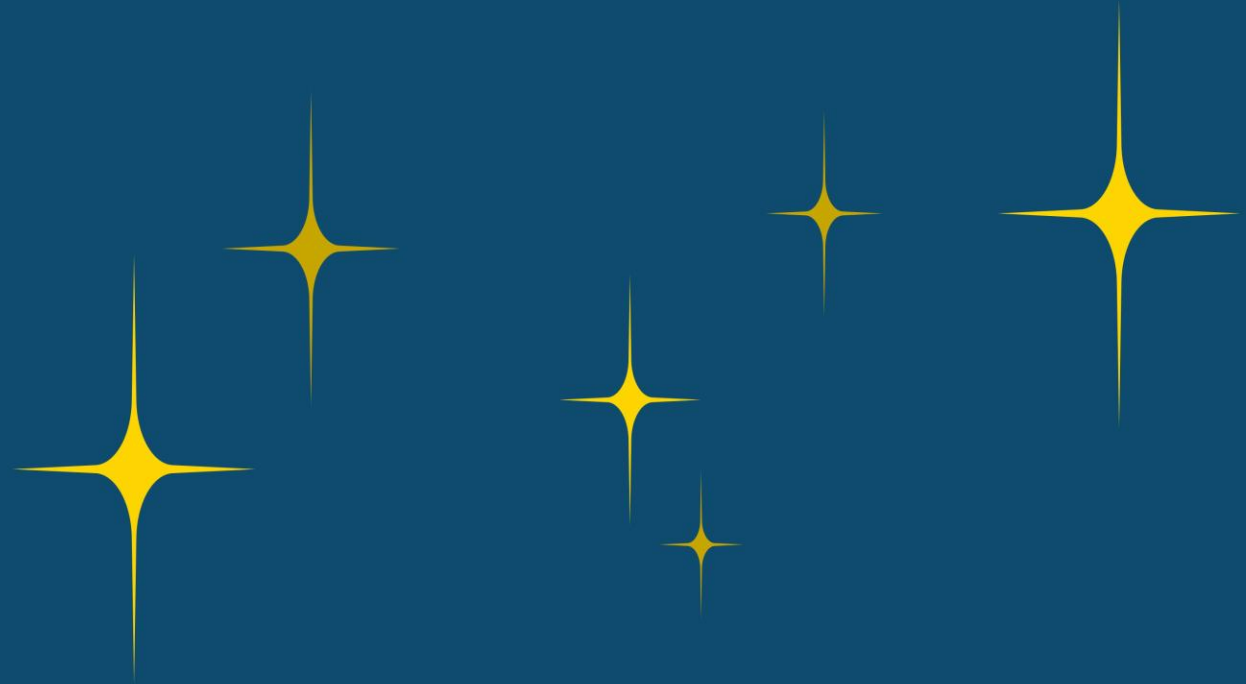
Volunteers

- Lasting charities
- Flexible roles
- Training for confidence and skills development
- Progression routes

“ For me
it's been wonderful
I've learned a lot, it's
taken my career in
a new
direction ”

Thanks!

- lifelong Learning Centre
- Design team
- Volunteers
- VCSE
- Leeds City Council





Dawn Hall OBE

Executive Manager Employment
and Skills at Leeds City Council

Commitment to volunteering

We believe volunteers are at the heart of our city. From the pitch to the streets, and across our communities, our city is full of passion for helping out and giving back. With Volunteer Team Leeds we're hoping to get even more people signing up to share skills, meet people and learn new things. As a key part of our city's Volunteering Strategy, we want Leeds to be a city that is the best to volunteer in and that celebrates volunteering in all its forms, where it's easy for people to find ways to make a difference and get involved.

Councillor Mary Harland, LCC executive member for communities, customer service and community safety, and champion for volunteering

VOLUNTEER TEAM LEEDS



The Adult Skills Tailored Learning offer funded by WYCA aims to:

- *"Develop stronger communities with more self- sufficient, connected and proactive citizens, leading to increased volunteering, civic engagement and social integration."*

Leeds City Council, VAL & the University of Leeds have worked in partnership to develop a framework of digital badges to recognise and support volunteers progressing through various levels of learning, skill development, and leadership.

A Volunteering Standard for Leeds

#TEAMLEEDS



Volunteer - Team Leads



Explore

Completed a Video or face to face Introduction and filled in an application.



Deepen

Successfully completed introductory training and signposted to further skills training.



Apply

Engaged with a minimum of 3 volunteering opportunities and reflect on experience.



Teach

FACILITATOR
Train volunteer coaches.

COACH
Mentor and support volunteer coaches.



Lead

Lead and speak at events and expand the programme.



'Design Thinking' approach for inclusive cocreation

What?



Why?

To create learning:

- With learners as partners - not as consultees or testers.
- Inclusively - learners with diverse lived experiences designing alongside us.

How?

Using Design Thinking to lead:

- A workshop to explore whether an online course was the right solution.
- 4 Course Design workshops.
- A prototyping workshop.

Online Course Demonstration

[Essential Skills for
Volunteers Course Link](#)



Lifelong Learning Centre

Community-engagement through negotiated outreach, a graduated approach



Community development approach: initial engagement with communities



Negotiated, supported, taster courses & sessions in communities, on campus and online



Bridge the gap between level 2 adult/community education and university

Impartial, confidential, free education advice and guidance

Our context, our community engagement principles and ethos



- Aim to develop mutually beneficial partnerships
- Take a long-term, community development approach – engage with communities and people in a way that's meaningful to them
- Strengths-based
- Be clear about our values, consider ethics & equity
- Social sustainability, consider long-term impact
- Enable participants to make an informed choice about higher education.

Our offer - examples

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JUMPSTART

Not sure if university is for you?

Try this **FREE** course for a fun and immersive experience of Higher Education.

Jumpstart runs on **Wednesday evenings, 5:00pm - 7:00pm, for 8 weeks.**

There are **2** additional Saturday morning sessions within this 8 weeks, making it **10 sessions** in total

Plus optional extra maths sessions **4-5pm**



SIGN UP NOW

Next course starts **February 2026**

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

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Education Advice & Guidance



- Thinking about your future?
- Interested in returning to education as an adult?
- Looking for flexible education opportunities to fit around your commitments?

Get **FREE** confidential and impartial advice and guidance from the Lifelong Learning Centre!

Choose an option that works for you:

Face to face	
Telephone call	
Video chat	



Feedback

Please add any feedback on this resource to the chat:

- *What are your thoughts on Essential Skills for Volunteers?*
- *How could this course be used by volunteers and organisations?*





Any questions?

Please do get in touch if you would like any further information.

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Lifelong Learning Centre, University of Leeds