**Film transcript**

**Introduction webinar**

A very warm welcome to our webinar about the new digital volunteering platform currently in development by RVS.

My name's Fiona Longhurst and I'm Chief Knowledge Officer at RVS.

I'm going to provide a 15 minute overview of the platform.

Before we outline the features of the platform, I wanted to take a step back and explain why RVS has decided to take this work forward.

As some of you all know, for the last 80 years or so, RVS has been one of Britain's biggest volunteering charities.

Over the years, we've worked with thousands of volunteers who give their time to help make communities stronger and to improve health and wellbeing of others.

From our work, we know that volunteering changes millions of lives for the better every year.

There's a huge appetite for volunteering and many people are eager to help where they can.

But despite this, Britain is currently facing something of a volunteer shortage and many charities are struggling to recruit the support that they need.

There are many reasons for this, not least changing demographics.

But we know that a key factor is that people can struggle to find the right volunteering opportunities, roles which match their interests and align to the causes they care about.

But they're also flexible enough to fit in with how they live their lives today.

We also know that people are keen to give their time to a range of charities and causes, but few have the time to apply and register multiple times with different organisations.

At RVS we believe there's huge potential to be unlocked if we can find a way to provide access to volunteering roles which are suited to modern lifestyles and interests.

To help grow volunteer participation and mobilise the next generation of volunteers, RVS has secured £5,000, 000 worth of funding from players of the People's Postcode Lottery to develop a major new digital volunteering platform.

The ultimate aim of the platform is to inspire the next generation of volunteers by providing seamless access to volunteering roles and to enable charities to recruit and retain the support that they need.

It will build on and enhance the vital work already happening at a local and national level.

It will do this by showcasing opportunities from charities large and small.

The platform is not a VMS system but will link to them.

It also aims to support local platforms and providers by amplifying their volunteering opportunities to a wider audience, a sort of right move for volunteering.

It will also build on the learning RVS has gained through our work as a major provider of volunteering opportunities enabled by digital, including the NHS and Care Volunteer Responders scheme and the Big Help Out.

We're in the final stages of confirming the name for the platform.

The platform will have its own name, distinct from RVS, as we hope the whole sector will feel some ownership of it.

The platform is currently being designed in house by a team of specialist developers who are working to deliver a range of key features.

First - A key ambition for the platform is that we'll offer a simple and innovative onboard once process for volunteers if partner charities are happy to work with us in this way.

This will mean that once registered, volunteers will be able to choose to give their time to a range of different charities and causes without having to re register multiple times.

We aim to put control in the hands of the volunteers, enabling them to search for opportunities and click and connect seamlessly to live volunteering opportunities linked to the causes and organisations that they care about.

Through the platform, charities will be able to offer opportunities beyond traditional volunteering roles including one off opportunities, team based sessions, corporate volunteering, skilled roles, providing remote support and flexible micro volunteering.

We are committed to understanding and reducing barriers to volunteering and accessibility standards are core to each part of the development.

The platform will adhere to AA accessibility standards and will aim for AAA where possible.

We have and will continue to consult with people with lived experience to ensure we're getting this crucial aspect of the platform right.

Lastly, the platform will be designed with a simple and intuitive interface to make sure the user experience is inspiring, simple and fun.

As I mentioned earlier, a major purpose of the platform is to support charities of all sizes to recruit new volunteers quickly and easily.

The platform will enable quick and easy volunteer recruitment and mobilisation, helping charities recruit new task ready volunteers and to effortlessly build their volunteer pipeline.

By offering flexible volunteering alongside traditional regular volunteering roles, we hope that charities will attract a far more diverse group of volunteers and they'll benefit from the support of volunteers across more areas of their work.

The charities of the platform will be completely free to use.

This will include the cost of performing identity checks through the system.

Later we'll enable criminal records checking as part of the system and this will also be offered free of charge.

They will also gain from a reduced administrative burden as the platform is being designed to be simple, intuitive and easy to use.

We're currently building towards the integration of the platform with charities' existing ways of working, including the use of volunteer management systems, CRMS or spreadsheets, enabling charities to easily synchronise their opportunities and add volunteers into their existing systems rather than looking to create new ones.

Clear outcome measurement will be built into the system, meaning that charities will be able to quickly and easily demonstrate impact for their organization through accessible reporting data.

There'll also be benefits to charities which go beyond volunteering through the platform.

Charities will benefit from more exposure to partners and the supporters.

I thought I'd share some early prototypes with Platform design.

You can see that the interface will be clean, simple and easy to use.

We will give volunteers a few ways to search for opportunities which suit them.

This may mean searching for roles close to the areas they live, or it may involve looking for opportunities which match the causes they care about.

Charities can use the platform to help expand their portfolio of volunteering opportunities, offering more flexible roles alongside traditional regular volunteering opportunities.

The platform will allow charities to mobilise the support they need quickly and easily.

A version of the platform will be available for charities to test.

Charities will begin to be invited to upload roles to test the platform from June.

From July onwards, registered charities will be invited forward in stages to upload their roles.

The platform will not go live with access to volunteers in until autumn 2025 and there'll be a phased roll out of the platform's functionality.

We anticipate that at launch the main functionality of the platform will be in place.

This will include volunteer identity checking, linking volunteers with suitable opportunities and the ability of volunteers to give their time flexibly to support different charities and causes.

Later, criminal records checking and integrations with existing volunteer management systems will be enabled.

We'll be inviting registered charities to come on board as early adopters from June.

We're working into how we can accredit organisations who are not registered as charities and hope to welcome them on board at a later stage.

A major public launch will take place in the autumn, ensuring that the public is inspired to visit the platform and connect with participating charities to begin their volunteering journey.

There are several things you may do now to make sure your charity is ready to start uploading the roles in the summer.

If you haven't already done so, make sure you've registered your interest on our website so that we can send you updates about the project as it progresses.

Start to identify the sorts of roles you'd like to make available through the platform.

This can include the volunteering opportunities you already offer, but you should consider if you'd like to try and offer a wider range of roles such as micro volunteering, corporate opportunities and skilled volunteering.

If you don't already offer these, start thinking about how the platform could work with your existing volunteer management systems processes and identify if there are anything you need to do to get ready to join the platform.

Support us to refine the functionality of the platform by taking part in online user testing or a focus group with our development team.

You can register to do this via the form on our platform website.

Finally, do spread the word about the platform to your colleagues and charity partners.

We want as many charities as possible to be able to benefit.

We're hugely grateful to all the charities who've given their time already to help us to understand their volunteering needs to inform the design of a platform.

We're still at the start of our volunteering journey and there's still plenty of time for charities to collaborate with us to help develop and test the platform.

So please do think about supporting us in this way.

I hope you found today's session useful.

This is the first of a series of webinars we'll be running over the next six months, which will focus on how charities can prepare to get the most from the platform.

Visit our website for more information and to view other webinars.