

Volunteering for All?

Exploring the link between volunteering
and social exclusion



An initiative of



in association with



this project was
funded by



Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the people who have been involved in this research project.

First of all, we would like to thank our funders, the Community Fund, without whom the project would not have been possible.

We are especially indebted to all the individuals - volunteers, non-volunteers and organisational staff - who were involved in the research. Special thanks goes to those who took part in the case studies and focus groups - thank you for speaking so honestly and openly about your experiences and perceptions. The help of staff at the case study organisations (who in order to maintain confidentiality we won't list) was invaluable.

We are also grateful to the staff at the volunteer development agencies in the three regions where most of the research was based – Voluntary Action Sheffield; East Devon Volunteer Bureau and Council for Voluntary Service; and Voluntary Action Haringey. Your help, particularly in the early stages of the research – hosting regional advisory groups, helping to identify organisations to work with, and commenting on the research methodology – was gratefully received.

Our thanks also go to the members of the project steering group, who helped us to establish the research framework, and provided invaluable comments on our research focus and methodologies.

Finally, we would like to thank Alan Dingle for his editorial skills and Kathryn Samson for her excellent design work. We would also like to thank all our colleagues at the Institute for Volunteering Research and the National Centre for Volunteering – in particular, to Jane Heath and Nicola Ponikiewski. Your help and support kept us going throughout!

The contents and conclusions of this report are, however, the sole responsibility of the authors.

The team involved at different stages in this research project included:

Justin Davis Smith

Angela Ellis

Steven Howlett

Jan O'Brien

Foreword

This research project is a timely, relevant and welcome initiative. It is timely because of the current emphasis by government on reducing social exclusion. It is relevant because of the role – sometimes a central role – ascribed to volunteering in contributing to this goal and to a number of related policy goals such as building civil renewal, achieving social and community cohesion and promoting active citizenship. It is welcome because it helps to illumine the complex relationship between volunteering and social exclusion and because it offers practical suggestions on how the potential of volunteering might be further increased in this area.

We know from research that some groups are under-represented in the volunteering population. We also know from research that volunteering benefits both the individual volunteer and the wider community. But volunteering, as a key mechanism by which people engage in their local communities, is not yet an inclusive activity in which people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse skills can participate. How do we make volunteering more inclusive? How do we reach and unleash the potential of people who for various reasons may be at the margins of society, facing social exclusion in other aspects of their lives, and who may not see the relevance of volunteering to them or may feel – or have been made to feel - that they have nothing to contribute? What are the barriers that discourage some potentially socially excluded groups from volunteering? What socially inclusive practices are being used by organisations and individuals to overcome such barriers?

The report deals with these issues, adding significantly to the research evidence on the barriers to volunteering faced by disabled people, people from black and ethnic minority groups and ex-offenders, on how these barriers might be overcome and on how people have benefited from their involvement. The findings, conclusions and recommendations are evidence-based, rooted in the practical experiences of people – both volunteers and non-volunteers – in these groups and of organisations and staff working with them. The report has implications for policy-makers, practitioners and researchers. The complementary leaflets that have been compiled for each of the three target groups as part of the initiative will be a valuable source of information on what they might get from volunteering and how they can get involved.

I congratulate the authors of the report and the Institute for Volunteering Research on this initiative and commend it as an important contribution to the debate on how volunteering might become more inclusive for all.

Professor Jimmy Kearney OBE
Centre for Voluntary Action Studies
University of Ulster.

Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Foreword	4
Contents	5
Executive summary	7
Chapter One: Introduction	13
The aims of the research	13
The methodology of the study	14
The results of the study	15
The themes of this report	15
Chapter Two: Social exclusion and volunteering: theories and ideas	19
Understanding social exclusion	19
Volunteering and social exclusion	20
The business case	21
The philosophical/ethical case	21
Chapter Three: Is volunteering itself too exclusive?	23
Psychological barriers	24
The public image of volunteering	24
Fear of over-commitment	28
Lack of confidence: “Would any organisation take a chance on me?”	30
Other people’s attitudes	30
Fear of losing welfare benefits	32
Practical Barriers	32
The difficulty of finding out about volunteering opportunities	32
Over-formal recruitment procedures	34
Poor follow-up of new recruits	36
A physically inaccessible volunteering environment	36
Inability to meet the costs of volunteering	37
Chapter Four: Making it work: How organisations have worked towards overcoming the barriers	39
Publicising the reality of volunteering	39
Building relationships	41
Capacity building	42
User-friendly recruitment	43
Creating an inclusive environment	44
Organisational ethos	44
Diversity training	45
Policies and procedures	45
Improving physical accessibility	46

Fitting the job to the volunteer	47
Providing meaningful support	48
An enjoyable experience	48
Training	48
Using existing skills and developing new ones	48
A route to employment	48
Recognition and incentives	49
Friendly, effective and efficient support from staff	49
Peer support	49
Variety of opportunities	50
Payment of expenses	50
Team spirit and ownership	50
Communication	50
Chapter five: The value of inclusivity and diversity: how volunteering can reduce social exclusion	53
Ending personal isolation	53
Empowering the individual	54
The value of taking action	54
Developing skills	56
Improving employability	56
Wider impacts	58
Chapter Six: Issues and debates	61
What are we striving for?	61
Pressures against inclusivity	62
Managing the contradictions – formality versus flexibility	62
Exclusion from volunteering is just the start	63
Chapter seven: Where we go from here: Conclusions and implications	65
The impact of volunteering	65
Implications and recommendations	65
Realising the potential of volunteering	66
Implications and recommendations	66
The bigger picture	67
Implications and recommendations	67
Valuing diversity in volunteering	69
Implications and recommendations	69
Bibliography and further reading:	71
Appendix A: Resources	75
Appendix B: Methodology	81
Appendix C: Terminology	83
Your feedback	85

Executive Summary

Introduction

The question of whether volunteering is inclusive, and the broader link between volunteering and social exclusion, has been a key theme for the volunteering movement in the recent past. It has caught the attention of practitioners, researchers and policy-makers alike, particularly in the light of the growing realisation that while all types of people volunteer, some people are more likely to volunteer than others - at least as far as formal volunteering is concerned.

This report summarises the findings of research, undertaken by the Institute for Volunteering Research with financial support from the Community Fund, which set out to explore this issue. It looked at what volunteering can do to reduce social exclusion, the challenges faced in making volunteering more inclusive and the steps taken by organisations in overcoming these barriers.

This report highlights the barriers to formal volunteering faced by individuals from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, disabled people, and people with a record of offence - all of whom have been identified as being under-represented in formal volunteering and as being at risk of social exclusion.

Methodology

The research was conducted in a number of phases, and used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods:

- A review of the literature;
- Consultation and interviews with key stakeholder organisations;
- Questionnaire surveys with volunteers, non-volunteers, and organisations in three regions – one urban, one rural and one inner-city borough. In total, 98 organisations, 203 volunteers, and 40 non-volunteers responded;
- Case studies with selected organisations in the three regions, including 78 in-depth interviews with staff and volunteers;
- Focus groups with volunteers and non-volunteers from the three target groups.

Key findings from the research

Is volunteering too exclusive?

- Fewer than half of the organisations surveyed said they had enough volunteers. Sixty-two per cent of organisations said that members of BME groups were under-represented among their volunteers, 52% that disabled people were under-represented, and 57% that ex-offenders were not well represented among their volunteers.
- The organisations, volunteers and non-volunteers identified a range of psychological and practical barriers to volunteering. While the organisations focused more on the practical barriers, the individuals felt the psychological barriers were more damaging.

- Most of the barriers identified were crosscutting; they were common to all three groups. Some, however, were more pertinent to certain groups and regions than others.

Psychological barriers

- Volunteering still appears to have something of an image problem, which puts some people off getting involved. In particular, myths exist that equate volunteering with: activities undertaken by certain “mainstream” groups within society; and a narrow range of activities within formal organisational settings.
- There were, however, variations in the views of volunteering held by our respondents:
 - Among people from BME groups volunteering was common, but was often undertaken on an informal basis. It was not volunteering itself that was exclusive, but certain kinds of formal activity.
 - Some of the disabled people we spoke to had chosen to reject what they saw as the “traditional” model of volunteering based on a “helper and helped” power relationship, which they felt had cast disabled people as passive recipients of help, rather than as active volunteers in their own right.
 - Rather than offering an alternative model of volunteering, the ex-offenders we spoke to were generally more vague about what volunteering entailed, or felt that it had little relevance to their lives.
- This stereotypical image of volunteering, however, is increasingly being challenged as organisations become more successful in involving volunteers from previously under-represented groups, and as alternative (often informal) forms of volunteering gain in visibility and recognition.
- People’s perceptions of time – both of the amount of their “spare” time available and the time demands of volunteering – created barriers to involvement. This was particularly problematic for some disabled people when the nature of their impairment made committing to regular schedules difficult, and for some ex-offenders who found it hard to sign up to regimented activities.
- Lack of confidence was found to be a key barrier. It was exacerbated for individuals who had experienced exclusion in other areas of life, and when volunteering took place in unfamiliar environments.
- Other people’s attitudes also created barriers. The perception (rightly or wrongly) that organisations would not welcome them puts some people off volunteering; this was particularly true among ex-offenders. Prejudices and stereotypes held by staff, other volunteers and service users put some people off staying involved.
- A fear of losing welfare benefits was found to be a significant barrier to volunteering.

Practical barriers

- Many people still did not know where to go to find out about volunteering, or had simply never been asked to volunteer.

- Over-formal recruitment and selection procedures were off-putting to some people, particularly to those whose first language was not English, for people with visual impairments, and for people with low levels of literacy.
- Delays in the recruitment process were particularly discouraging – without a prompt response it was apparent that some potential volunteers would simply walk away.
- A physically inaccessible environment created an obvious barrier, particularly for disabled people with mobility-related impairments.
- Eighty-one per cent of the organisations we surveyed offered to pay expenses; a lower number of volunteers claimed them. The failure of organisations to fully reimburse out-of-pocket expenses meant that some people could not afford to volunteer – this was particularly problematic among disabled people and ex-offenders who were often unemployed or on a low wage.

How organisations have worked towards overcoming the barriers

Among the organisations we spoke to, a number of methods to overcome the barriers to volunteering had been tested or at least mooted.

- By promoting volunteering in ways that individuals from excluded groups could identify with, and by running targeted recruitment campaigns, some organisations had been successful in countering the stereotype of volunteering as being restricted to certain types of people.
- Building relationships and partnerships with community groups and specialist organisations had enabled organisations to access, and subsequently involve, people from under-represented groups.
- Some organisations had taken steps to build individual capacity amongst people who lacked the confidence or skills to volunteer. This process was often facilitated by partnerships between volunteer-involving organisations and support agencies.
- By ensuring that recruitment processes were user-friendly – minimising form filling and asking new recruits in for a chat rather than an interview, for example – some organisations had successfully made the volunteering experience seem less daunting.
- Creating an inclusive environment – including running diversity, disability and cultural awareness training, and improving physical access – had enabled organisations to create a more diverse and welcoming environment.
- By recognising individuals’ “capabilities” not “disabilities” and turning the traditional approach of fitting the volunteer to the role on its head by matching the role to the volunteer, organisations had become more flexible and inclusive.
- Volunteers’ wish lists for volunteering included many items with support implications. They wanted: an enjoyable experience; training; the opportunity to use and develop skills; a route to employment; recognition and incentives; support from staff and

peers; a variety of opportunities; team spirit and ownership; and good communication. When organisations had put these in place, some of the barriers to involvement had been overturned.

How volunteering can reduce social exclusion

Where the barriers to involvement had been overcome, individuals were benefiting considerably from their volunteering. Through volunteering, various aspects of social exclusion were being addressed:

- Volunteering was helping to combat feelings of personal isolation, which for some people can be a key factor in their experience of social exclusion.
- Volunteering was empowering individuals, giving them the confidence and the skills to change their environment and themselves.
- Getting involved and making a contribution to society through volunteering enhanced people's sense of self-worth.
- People were acquiring a range of hard (vocational) and soft (interpersonal) skills through their volunteering.
- For some people volunteering provided a route to employment, for others it provided an alternative to employment.
- By providing services, in many cases to socially excluded groups, by challenging stereotypes, and by bringing people from different backgrounds together, volunteering was having a wider impact on the symptoms and causes of social exclusion.

Conclusions and implications

What can we conclude about the relationship between volunteering and social exclusion? And where do these conclusions lead us?

- Volunteering is an effective way for many people to alleviate the symptoms of social exclusion, and can help to address some of the causes. The implications of this are that policy-makers must not underestimate the potential of volunteering to help address social exclusion, but at the same time they should be realistic about what it can achieve without more fundamental changes in society. Practitioners need to do more to measure and promote the benefits of volunteering. Researchers need to carry out more comprehensive studies of the impacts of volunteering.
- Volunteering is not yet fully inclusive. There is a number of underlying psychological and practical barriers that are stopping people getting into volunteering. These barriers need to be addressed, but it needs to be acknowledged that the volunteering movement alone cannot address the structural causes of exclusion. The capacity of organisations to involve volunteers from marginalised groups, for example, needs to be considered more seriously, by policy-makers, practitioners and researchers.
- There is also a need, in the jargon of the day, for more joined-up thinking. The micro-policies of volunteering and the macro-policies for tackling social exclusion need to be working together in unison. For example, Access to Work legislation could be extended to

include volunteering, as could all anti-discriminatory legislation. Benefits regulations need to be made clearer and promoted better. Tackling the bigger issue of our work-life balance could also open up access to volunteering.

- Finally, while this report has focused on volunteering within organisational settings (as Government has tended to do), it is apparent that if this is the only form of volunteering which is promoted and recognised then, rather than combating social exclusion, "volunteering" could arguably reinforce it. We need to understand more about the myriad ways in which people are participating in formal and informal ways in their communities and the links between different forms of participation.



Chapter One: Introduction

Voluntary activity is the cornerstone of any civilised society. It is the glue that binds people together and fosters a sense of common purpose. It is an essential building block in our work to create a more inclusive society. It contains the principles of commitment and engagement that are the foundations of democracy. A strong culture of volunteering brings with it confident individuals, empowered communities which are safe and friendly places to live, better services, local and national government which is more responsive and a more vibrant economy

David Blunkett, 2001

The link between volunteering and social exclusion, and the question of whether or not volunteering is 'inclusive for all', has been a key theme for the volunteering movement over the past few years. It is a question that has caught the attention of practitioners and policy makers alike.

This publication reports on the key findings of a research project, undertaken by the Institute for Volunteering Research and funded by the Community Fund. It sought to provide answers to this question by looking at what volunteering can do to reduce social exclusion, at some of the reasons why it hasn't so far fulfilled its potential in this area, and at some of the attempts made to do so. The research focused on the experience of volunteering among disabled people, people from black and minority ethnic groups, and ex-offenders. Of course, not all disabled people, ex-offenders, or people from a BME community are socially excluded, but people from these groups are more likely to suffer exclusion from certain areas of public life (SEU, 2000), including volunteering.

The aims of the research

The 1997 National Survey of Volunteering (Davis Smith, 1998) suggested that, although nearly 22 million people were involved in formal volunteering in the UK each year, certain groups were under-represented. These included young people, unemployed people, older people and members of BME groups. Subsequent research tended to reinforce these findings (see, for example, Obaze, 2000) and also highlighted the under-representation of other groups, such as disabled people (RSVP, 2000).

There was, however, little information about why certain people were volunteering less and about what benefits they might derive if they did get involved. Volunteering by young people (Gaskin, 1998), older people (Forster, 1997) and unemployed people (Gay, 1998) has since received some research attention, and we now have a good idea of why these groups are under-represented. But there was only a limited amount of research evidence on the barriers that discourage disabled people, members of BME groups and ex-offenders from volunteering.

Our research set out to redress this balance, by exploring why three groups of people that were apparently under-represented in volunteering and also potentially socially excluded – members of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, disabled people, and ex-offenders – were less likely to take part in formal volunteering than other groups. It set out to identify the barriers to volunteering, how those barriers were being challenged, and how people were benefiting when the challenges had been successful. It did this by listening to the experiences of both volunteers and non-volunteers who identified themselves as being from these three groups and to the organisations that involved them as volunteers.

During the course of our research, however, new information on volunteering was being generated. For example, the 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey (Attwood et al, 2003) showed that people from BME groups do get involved in formal volunteering in large numbers. It also showed that a great deal of informal volunteering goes on in BME communities. This raised questions about choice and access, and whether similar “alternative” forms of volunteering may also be prolific among other groups that are under-represented in formal volunteering.

We were, however, focusing on **formal** volunteering within **organisational** settings; a specific form of volunteering. Also we were not specifically looking at volunteering within exceptional schemes that had been set up specifically to address issues of social exclusion, inclusion, or diversity among volunteers. Rather, we were focusing on the way in which volunteer-involving organisations had involved volunteers from the three target groups as part of their ‘everyday business’.

The methodology of the study

For our study we adopted a mixed methodology (see Appendix B for full details). We began with a literature review. We then consulted widely with key stakeholders and organisations representing the groups we were focusing on; this enabled us to identify the major issues and form partnerships with key volunteering development agencies in the three areas in which the study was based (one rural, one urban, and one inner-city borough – Devon, Sheffield and Haringey).

Subsequently, we carried out a questionnaire survey with organisations, volunteers and non-volunteers in Haringey, Devon and Sheffield; 98 organisations, 203 volunteers and 40 non-volunteers responded.

The next phase of the research involved qualitative methods, in the form of case studies of organisations. We identified the organisations via the questionnaires and through working with local volunteering infrastructure agencies. Each case study involved in-depth interviews with staff and with volunteers from the three target groups.

The final stage of the research involved a series of focus groups with ex-offenders, disabled people and members of BME groups – there were separate focus groups for volunteers and non-volunteers.

The research was not straightforward. It raised a variety of difficult questions: for example, how to ensure that the research process itself

was inclusive, and how to obtain the views of non-volunteers from marginalised groups. These difficulties had a number of implications: firstly, it took us a lot longer to do the research than we had initially intended, secondly, the lower than anticipated response rates mean that we can not claim to be representative. The limitations of the research should be kept in mind when reading the report.

Despite the difficulties, we were able to assemble a rich collection of personal accounts, which between them yielded detailed information about the link between volunteering and social exclusion.

The results of the study

It soon became clear that ex-offenders, disabled people and people from BME groups encountered a series of barriers to volunteering, and many of these barriers were the same for each group. Indeed, research we were carrying out elsewhere (Ellis, 2003) suggested that these problems affected many more people than the three groups we were studying. So although some of the barriers may have had more impact on certain groups (and on certain individuals within those groups), there were many crosscutting issues. In the same way, although individuals from the three geographical areas we studied reported many similar experiences, certain barriers had more impact in some places than others: for example, transport was more of a problem in rural areas than in the inner city.

Our research makes it clear that several key lessons need to be learned if volunteering is to become more inclusive. The solution is not to narrow our focus to ensure equal opportunities for certain groups or in certain areas, but more broadly to ensure that diversity and inclusivity are valued and managed.

The themes of this report

This report draws on findings from all stages of the research. It uses the experiences of individuals and organisations to show some of the barriers that prevent people from volunteering, how these barriers can be overcome and how people had benefited from their involvement. In doing so it hopes to answer the demand made by many of the people involved in the research not for “another good practice guide”, but for a chance to hear about other people’s experiences, practices, and ideas. It also draws out implications for practitioners, policymakers and researchers. It does so through the following themes:

What is social exclusion and why is it of relevance to volunteering?

Chapter two outlines some of the key definitions of social exclusion and how the social exclusion debate links to volunteering. It also introduces a number of philosophical and business reasons why inclusivity is of central importance to volunteer-involving organisations.

Is volunteering itself too exclusive?

Chapter three looks at the barriers to involvement in volunteering. It highlights how, for example, excluded people may be discouraged by the image of volunteering and the ethos of volunteer-involving organisations; by the attitudes of other people; and by a whole series of practical barriers.

Making it work – what have organisations done to overcome the barriers?
In chapter four, we look at practical measures that organisations had tried to encourage people to get into volunteering, and at what volunteers and non-volunteers said was needed in order to make volunteering more inclusive.

Can volunteering reduce social exclusion?
Chapter five discusses the evidence on what volunteering can do to tackle social exclusion. It highlights, for example, the role of volunteering in improving people's skills and employability and in enabling people at risk of exclusion to make a contribution to society, thus reducing their sense of dependency and isolation.

What wider issues are at play?
Chapter six discusses a number of issues and debates that emerged throughout the research with wider relevance for volunteering and social exclusion.

What can we conclude about the relationship between volunteering and social exclusion, and what are the implications?
In chapter seven we draw together our findings to make a number of conclusions and recommendations on how volunteering can be made more inclusive.



Chapter Two: Social exclusion and volunteering: Theories and ideas

Before we discuss the main research findings, this chapter looks briefly at the theory behind social exclusion and how it relates to volunteering.

Understanding social exclusion

Since the 1990s the concept of ‘social exclusion’ has become increasingly popular. It emerged from debates that took place in France as early as the 1950s, but has since developed along a number of different lines. Social exclusion has been subjected to a wide variety of interpretations by commentators and politicians of all shades of opinion (for an good summary of the theoretical background to social exclusion, see Levitas, 1998).

The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), set up in 1997 by New Labour under Tony Blair, defines social exclusion as:

A shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown (SEU, 2004).

These are the so-called “structural” problems that cause people to be excluded from full participation in economic, social and political life.

Levitas’s (1998) analysis of social exclusion identifies three different discourses which reflect different interpretations and understandings of the concept – one that emphasises inequality in society, one that attempts to frame the issue in moral and behavioural aspects of the lives of the excluded, and one which focuses on integration with a central focus on paid work.

Levitas argues that the response of government to social exclusion meanders around all three of these discourses. It has, however, tended to focus most on the third definition - arguing that unemployment is a root cause of social exclusion and that paid work is the surest way out of it (see for example, DSS, 1998). With the aim of reducing dependence, it has attempted to improve the employability of certain groups within the population – young mothers, for example – through initiatives such as the New Deal Welfare to Work programme.

But social exclusion is not simply about lack of paid work. People who don’t have paid employment are not necessarily socially excluded. Conversely, many of the people who are in work earn low wages, which can put them at risk of exclusion. So even if full employment were achieved, social exclusion would not necessarily disappear.

There are other types of exclusion too, such as exclusion from services, exclusion from social relations and exclusion from social participation. Irrespective of how rich or poor they are or whether they are in paid work or not, people who, for example, work long hours, are disabled, or have caring responsibilities may suffer from these kinds of exclusion.

The root cause of social exclusion is, in fact, inequality: the inequalities of power, status and resources that are at least partly a function of a person’s gender, race, disability and social class. It is a

dynamic process, emphasising relations – inadequate social participation, lack of social interactions, and lack of power (Room, 1997). As Giddens (1998:104) puts it, social exclusion is about the “the mechanisms that act to detach groups of people from the political mainstream”.

Our purpose here, however, is not to discuss the relative rights and wrongs of these discourses, but to see what implications they have for how volunteering is, and should be, working in practice.

Volunteering and social exclusion

It is possible to see how supporting volunteering addresses all three understandings of social exclusion. In the first instance it is about volunteering enabling people to actively engage with inequalities, in the second volunteering teaches ‘citizenship’ and helps people understand further ‘rights and responsibilities’, and in the third volunteers learn skills ready for the paid labour market. But, in practice (and perhaps because this is the easiest way to ‘sell’ volunteering) there has been a tendency to present the main potential of volunteering as preparing people for the paid labour market.

The government, for example, has been particularly keen to highlight the role of volunteering in addressing social exclusion (see also, for example, speeches by David Blunkett, 2001, Alun Michael, 1998, and Gordon Brown, 2000). Against this background, government is placing increasing emphasis on finding new ways to promote volunteering, and on encouraging participation by groups traditionally regarded as under-represented in volunteering (Seyfang, 2001).

But some commentators have argued that government’s emphasis has been too strongly on the link between volunteering and employment (Howlett, 1999). Others have argued that the government’s current approach to encouraging volunteering focuses too much on formal activity, thus privileging a form of volunteering that is biased towards more affluent sections of the population (Williams, 2003).

The narrow focus on employability (along with the tendency to emphasise individual responsibilities) within the social exclusion debate, and the narrow vision of volunteering within wider policy discourses, has significant implications for volunteering. In particular, three key issues have been neglected:

- How far the under-representation of some groups of people as volunteers is another dimension of social exclusion – do some people face particular barriers to volunteering that reflect broader experiences of exclusion?
- The true extent of volunteering within “socially excluded” communities – are people from these communities participating as little as has often been assumed?
- The true potential of volunteering for showing people a way out of social exclusion – beyond providing a route to employment, that is.

For volunteer-involving organisations themselves, there are strong arguments why they are, or should, be looking seriously at the links between volunteering and social exclusion/inclusion.

Clark (2003) summarises the reasons why organisations should strive

for inclusiveness; although she is specifically discussing the involvement of people with experience of mental ill health, her arguments apply equally well to other excluded groups (see Mole and Harrow, 2003, for similar arguments on the importance of managing diversity within voluntary and community organisations). We have summarised and categorised the arguments into two camps: “the business case” and “the philosophical/ethical case”:

The business case

Firstly, involving volunteers from socially excluded groups arguably leads to better service delivery. The service users of many organisations come from socially excluded groups. If organisations involve their service users, or people from similar backgrounds, as volunteers, this helps them to serve their clients better.

Secondly, involving volunteers who have experienced social exclusion, and in doing so by contributing to their personal development, helps those organisations that exist to reduce social exclusion to meet their “business objectives”.

Thirdly, faithfully reflecting the community in which it works boosts an organisation’s credibility. Indeed, many funders require organisations to show how closely they reflect the local community. The organisation then becomes better able to identify local needs, and to seek ways of meeting them. This in turn may attract more people, both as service users and as volunteers.

Fourthly, evidence suggests that staff and volunteers alike are more likely to get involved and stay involved in an organisation that is inclusive and manages diversity well (see for example, Mole and Harrow, 2003).

Fifthly, organisations may well find that in order to recruit enough volunteers to meet their commitments, they may have to become more inclusive. Quite simply, organisations cannot afford not to embrace diversity, as this will widen the pool from which they draw their volunteers.

The philosophical/ethical case

There is also a number of convincing philosophical and ethical arguments.

Firstly, if an organisation believes in the universal right to volunteer, it is ethically obliged to ensure that volunteering is inclusive for all.

Secondly, if volunteer involvement is part of its ethos, an organisation must give all potential recruits a chance to volunteer. This does not mean it has to accept everyone who volunteers – there are bound to be instances where volunteer and organisation are not right for each other – but an organisation that has volunteering at its heart will always “go the extra mile” to help develop volunteers and will see the particular value of involving people who have been excluded from other areas of life.

Finally, all organisations with more than fifteen employees will have to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act by October 2004. Although the Act does not explicitly cover volunteers, there is an ethical obligation to comply.

Despite these convincing arguments, however, the evidence that we now go on to discuss suggests that there is a long way still to go.



Chapter Three: Is volunteering itself too exclusive?

This chapter discusses the evidence on the barriers to volunteering, and in doing so addresses the question of whether volunteering is itself exclusive.

Fewer than half of the organisations that responded to our questionnaire said they had enough volunteers, and a majority felt that it was becoming more difficult to recruit volunteers. Sixty-two per cent of organisations said that members of BME groups were under-represented among their volunteers, 52% said the same about disabled people, and 57% said ex-offenders were under-represented among their volunteers. They all identified barriers that they felt were making it difficult for these people from these groups to get into volunteering; in particular they highlighted practical barriers such as physical access and costs.

Speaking to volunteers and non-volunteers confirmed the existence of the barriers identified by organisations, and highlighted additional issues. The individuals we spoke to emphasised a series of psychological barriers to volunteering. More than a quarter of the volunteers who responded to our questionnaires had been put off by other people's attitudes. Many of the individuals also identified practical barriers, but generally the psychological barriers to volunteering were presented as being more damaging than the practical ones.

Bringing the perspectives of the organisations and the individuals together, we identified a range of factors, both psychological and practical, that inhibit members of our three target groups from volunteering. Many of these factors were common to all three groups. In many cases, the factors overlapped and reinforced each other. While these barriers affect all the under-represented groups and were evident in all the geographical areas we studied, their impact is particularly severe for certain groups or individuals and in certain regions. So although the main focus of this chapter is on the crosscutting issues, we highlight where these are particularly pertinent to certain groups or regions.

In summary, the barriers discussed in this chapter are:

- Psychological barriers
 - The public image of volunteering
 - Perceptions of time and fear of over-commitment
 - Lack of confidence
 - The attitudes of other people
 - Fear of losing welfare benefits.

- Practical barriers
 - Difficulty of finding out about volunteering opportunities
 - Over-formal recruitment procedures
 - Poor follow-up of new recruits
 - Physically inaccessible volunteering environments
 - Inability to meet the costs of volunteering.

Psychological barriers

The public image of volunteering

In the UK, a long-standing stereotype of volunteering has been that it is a formal, organisation-based activity carried out by white, middle-class, middle-aged people. (See, for example, the answers to the question “What kinds of people do you think are most likely to be doing voluntary work these days?” in the 1991 National Survey of Volunteering by Lynn and Davis Smith, 1992. See also Thomas and Finch, 1990; Handy et al, 2000; Lukka and Ellis, 2001). Although this stereotype has been challenged (see below) it is persistent; this means that many people continue to feel that volunteering is not an activity they can identify with.

We asked the participants in our survey what they understood by the term “volunteering”. A significant minority expressed a negative view of it; some stated that they felt volunteering was only for a “certain group” of people.

For some respondents, their perception that there was generally a negative public image of volunteering meant that they did not view their volunteering as something to be shouted about, but as something to be concealed. As one respondent said:

Let's face it, we live in a society that values people by how much they earn, and how most people get their money is through what they do. If people ask you what you do and you say “voluntary work”, they look at you as either you are incompetent or that you are not capable of getting a proper job (non-volunteer, disabled).

Amongst our respondents, volunteers and non-volunteers, the most common perception of volunteering was “work without pay”. Some remarked that not paying someone could be interpreted as not valuing them. Additionally, “working” without payment was clearly regarded as a misnomer for some people:

I don't see the point of doing voluntary work. At the end of the day it isn't going to pay your bills, is it? (non-volunteer, ex-offender).

The second most common perception was “offering time or help to others”. Taken together with the perception about working without pay, this suggests that volunteering is seen more in terms of its “costs” to the volunteer than as a mutually beneficial activity. Similarly, Handy et al (2000) found that a key criterion for whether an activity is regarded as volunteering by members of the public is that “the costs to the individual must clearly outweigh the benefits”.

However, the third most common response from our volunteer respondents was that volunteering is “something that provides benefits to the individual, be it enjoyment, skills, or the sense of having given something back”. Volunteering was seen as a mutually beneficial exchange relationship.

People who were not currently volunteering were far less aware of the reciprocal nature of volunteering than other respondents. As one person said, there was a “lack of understanding that they can enhance their own lives and broaden their interest”, and this was putting people off volunteering.

Public awareness of the full range of roles available to volunteers was also often limited. People tended to assume that most volunteers raise funds or carry out tasks of the “social services” type. Some people thought that volunteers are simply given the jobs that paid staff do not want to do.

Over a third of respondents to both the volunteer and non-volunteer surveys said that they were not sure what would be expected of them as volunteers and that this had put them off getting involved.

The persistence of these stereotypes and myths meant that many people felt that volunteering was not an activity they could identify with. As Little (2001) argued and our study confirmed, the image of volunteering alienates some people. Indeed, some respondents in our study suggested that these misconceptions about volunteering were to some extent exacerbated by the failure of organisations to promote volunteering among certain sections of the community:

I don't promote volunteering in ethnic groups [because it] can be daunting, due to stereotypes of what is a volunteer – for example, the middle class, retired lady. That can be daunting for people from BME and disabled groups, to see themselves as volunteers (member of staff).

Our study revealed some variations in the views of volunteering held by different groups of people and to some extent by individuals within those groups (for example, age often seemed to affect people's views).

Volunteering in BME communities

Within BME communities, volunteering is often predominately seen to be informal – not carried out within mainstream organisations and groups but between individuals and households. The people involved do not always describe what they do as “volunteering” – indeed, some languages do not have a word for it. People are simply doing what comes naturally. As one respondent said:

In the black community we're literally brought up to care for our own (volunteer, BME)

It is not volunteering itself (in its broadest sense) which is the problem – it is defining volunteering or formalising it that alienates some people.

So does it really matter how people are participating? If members of BME groups are volunteering within their communities, why worry about whether they are doing it within organisations? We feel that the critical question here is choice: are people free to choose where they volunteer, or do barriers limit their choice?

Formal versus informal volunteering: Discussing the nature of volunteering in black and minority ethnic communities

It is a very nice feeling – it is a very nice relationship – we help each other in everything. For example, one person is ill and people will go around and take on all her responsibilities – so it is the same as being at home but now the support comes from within the community, as people don't have their extended families (volunteer, BME).

I help a lot of people in the community with translation. Among people in the Yemeni community a lot of them are illiterate, they need help with forms and letters etc so they come and ask me to help. I am like a mini-Citizens Advice Bureau, but I don't get paid (volunteer, BME).

People undervalue what they do – acts of kindness that they wouldn't see as volunteering – it is the definition of volunteering (member of staff).

For example, within the Somali community it is all informal volunteers, so the formality is a barrier to them and that is proving quite difficult to overcome. For example, we have only got one Somali volunteer, but we have got many Arab speaking and Pakistani volunteers . . . We are now beginning to target women who want something out of it, as they are prepared for the formality of it... The activities may be the same, or even less, as they do informally, but it is making the switch (member of staff).

Over the years some cultures don't have much of a concept or idea of volunteering as they do informal voluntary work within their own communities. So actually formalising it makes it into a job – they think that they should get paid for what they do at the end of the day. It is hard to shake that off and to formalise volunteering (member of staff).

Volunteering by disabled people

We also found alternative forms of volunteering among disabled

The comments below give some of the reasons why people are volunteering within their own communities rather than in mainstream organisations. Many of them are positive reasons, focusing, for example, on shared identity and solidarity, but some of them suggest that formal volunteer-involving organisations are not genuinely valuing diversity and that this is restricting people's choices:

They relate to me because they know me. It is easier when you know someone (volunteer, BME).

Within the Asian women's group they were varied in age, ranging from 19 to 30s and we learned so much from them. For example, we learned that women are still troubled and are still struggling really hard, and so they are more likely to stick together when they volunteer as they are entrenched in their own issues (member of staff).

Prayer time for some is important, and Ramadan for others. This creates problems. Organisations want to be flexible for volunteers, but they also must meet the needs of their clients. That is why it is easier for Muslims or Sikhs to volunteer within their own communities as all these things are taken for granted. It can be very tiring to have to explain yourself all the time. It is hard to be the first person to go somewhere (member of staff).

people. Many of the disabled people we spoke to were well aware of the breadth of volunteering: several of the “non-volunteers” had volunteered in a formal capacity in the past, or had been in contact with groups that involved volunteers. For some of the disabled respondents, it was not so much a question of being unaware of volunteering or of what volunteers could do; it was a matter of rejecting a traditional model of volunteering that was implicitly unequal.

The traditional “helper and helped” model of volunteering cast disabled people as the recipients rather than the providers of volunteering (see also Skill, 1999; RSVP, 2000). In reaction to this, several respondents said that they had decided not to associate themselves with “volunteering”, which for them only served to reinforce the unequal power relations within society. One respondent spoke of the preference among some disabled people for terms such as “activism”, implying a more politically directed and less passive form of volunteerism that, instead of reinforcing unequal power relations, directly challenged them.

This suggestion that volunteering is neither apolitical nor a wholly positive force was paralleled in other areas of our research. The following comment suggests that the issue also exercised people from BME groups:

It is about power, subtle power. It is fine for BME people to be on the receiving end but it is hard for white people to be on the receiving end (member of staff).

We found that some disabled people volunteered within specialist disability organisations, as these were more politically proactive about the rights of disabled people, challenging stereotypes rather than reinforcing them. They also represented a safe environment – one in which people did not have to explain their impairments or their requirements:

I have tried to get in mainstream organisations but first they think of money and second, will other volunteers accept us. Then if we are sick, how will they cover? I would rather work in the disability sector – they don't look at my disability, they look at my needs. Mainstream look at money – can they afford the computer how you need it, your chair, whether you need a fan to cool you down (volunteer, disabled).

Volunteering by ex-offenders

Rather than offering an alternative model of volunteering, the ex-offenders we interviewed who did not volunteer were generally more vague about what volunteering entailed, or felt that it had little to do with their lives.

There was some recognition that it could help them to find paid work, but they assumed that once they had a job they would not need, or be able, to volunteer, as volunteering was an alternative to paid work – you did one or the other. Although some of the ex-offenders we spoke to cited a broad range of possible volunteering roles (such as helping to teach boxing in a gym), most focused on quite a narrow range of activities. Some felt that volunteering was too close to what they had experienced as part of the criminal justice system:

Gardening and pushing old biddies, that's community service (non-volunteer, ex-offender).

More specifically, however, some respondents simply did not understand the value of volunteering – it had very little relevance to their lives. Some of the organisations felt that ex-offenders might be suspicious of volunteering: they could have been at the receiving end of volunteering and disliked the experience. Or because they had been excluded from other areas of life (such as paid work), they were sceptical about the reception they would receive from organisations. As one respondent said:

Moving beyond the stereotypes

I am not so sure people were daunted. I have never encountered those barriers – but that had been a barrier historically. By the time I got here BME people were well represented. People are people, and lots of white people also shy away from volunteering (member of staff).

We are breaking away from the culture of white, middle-class women volunteering . . . There are more men coming into volunteering; young people are encouraged to volunteer more as they see the benefits of it on their CV; then people who've had long term illnesses, so are out of the working environment, they come to volunteer to get back into the work mode (member of staff).

Ex-offenders can be very suspicious of why we want volunteers (member of staff).

Moving beyond the image barrier?

Despite the persistence of the traditional stereotype of volunteering, however, our research also found that this image of volunteering was increasingly being challenged. This was partly

because some volunteer-involving organisations were being successful in attracting a more diverse group of volunteers and so the perception that volunteering is only for a narrow section of the population was being overturned. (See, for example, Attwood et al., 2003, for findings of the 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey, which shows relatively high levels of involvement in formal volunteering among BME groups). It is also partly because we have a greater awareness of the alternative forms of volunteering carried out by groups that have traditionally been under-represented in formal volunteering.

In fact, some respondents felt that this particular barrier had already been largely overcome.

Fear of over-commitment

In our study, no fewer than 56% of respondents to the volunteer survey felt that not having enough spare time put people off volunteering, or that volunteering would take up too much of their leisure time.

In other words, people's perceptions of time – how much “spare” time they have available and how much time they think would be demanded of them if they volunteered – created a barrier to involvement.

Respondents had a range of suggestions to make about the kind of time commitment expected, but the consensus was that volunteering automatically meant a regular commitment each and every week.

For example, a focus group of ex-offenders who were not volunteering thought that volunteers gave an average of 16–20 hours a week. Other respondents said:

Nine hours a week? (non-volunteer, BME).

It would be all of your Saturday or your Sunday (non-volunteer, BME).

To put this in context, the 1997 National Survey of Volunteering (Davis Smith, 1998) found that on average volunteers gave four hours per week.

Some of our respondents suggested that associating volunteering with onerous and inflexible time commitments might be particularly problematic for certain people. For example, some disabled people, depending on the nature of their impairment, might find it difficult to commit to a regular schedule. Some ex-offenders whose lives were generally unstructured might find it difficult to take part in an apparently regimented activity. Some members of BME groups have major commitments in the home that leave them with little time to volunteer. As one respondent said:

We have had lots of interest from Asian girls, but then we have had problems from their families – they have had things that they have had to do at home so have not been able to volunteer (member of staff).

Respondents were also concerned about volunteers being put under pressure to maintain their commitment. As one respondent put it, some people are put off by concerns about: “Lack of regular free time, worry about being able to keep to commitments, changing circumstances”.

Where organisations were being inflexible about the time commitment they require from their volunteers, this was exacerbating the situation. As one volunteer said:

I have done both volunteering in disability organisations and in non-disability. I've seen the subtle barriers. I was interested in training with [one organisation]. One [branch of the organisation] had a requirement that people had to volunteer for two full days a week. I was interested, I was accepted and everything – but I had to volunteer two full days a week. I said I can't work in the mornings, so that made it impossible to do two full days. Interestingly, another [branch of the organisation] was happy for me to do it in four afternoons. So even two [branches of the organisation] in neighbouring boroughs did not have a standard policy. Then the [organisation] I could go to had its information on the first floor and there was no lift . . . I'm not suggesting it is intentional and people do it on purpose, it's that people do not think (volunteer, disabled).

It is interesting to compare these findings about people's perceptions of time with the results of the Time Use survey conducted by the Office for National Statistics in 2000. The survey found that, on average, people in the UK spend just 4 minutes a day volunteering and 8 minutes helping others. This compares with 44 minutes spent socialising and 4 hours 33 minutes undertaking other “free time activities” (See, Ruston, 2003). People spent 150 minutes a day watching TV or videos – the third most important use of time, after

sleep and work. This reinforces the notion that time is often more of a psychological barrier than a practical one.

Lack of confidence: “Would any organisation take a chance on me?”

Participants in our study suggested that some people are put off volunteering because they are not confident they possess the skills and knowledge needed; their perceptions of themselves and their ability to become a volunteer was creating a barrier. This was particularly true of individuals who had experienced exclusion in other areas of life.

For example, some respondents felt that their limited language skills disqualified them from volunteering. The volunteer quoted here had overcome this barrier:

Language – I think that many people can’t understand and don’t have the confidence. When I came here I couldn’t speak or understand one sentence – if I can do it, then others can!
(volunteer, BME).

Some people felt even less confident about getting involved when their volunteering took place in an environment unfamiliar to them. This was one reason why people preferred to volunteer alongside those from similar backgrounds rather than within “mainstream” organisations. Comments included:

There are lots of issues in volunteering – particularly . . . when you are from a community that feels on the outside – that makes it hard. For example, there is a fear of a new environment and how you will be received. People do volunteer, but they volunteer in an environment in which they feel safe (member of staff and volunteer).

In BME groups, people begin to assume that others will react to them if they go into certain situations, and that stops them volunteering. For example, when women go into schools they feel more comfortable with their children’s teacher, as they know them – but they would feel different if they went into [a large volunteer-involving organisation], as there would be a question over how that would be received, for example by the clients coming in (member of staff).

In some cases a lack of confidence in one’s capacity was a psychological barrier; in other cases, however, it was a practical barrier as people did not have the confidence or capacity to volunteer without additional support.

Other people’s attitudes

When thinking of joining an organisation as a volunteer, some people were apprehensive about the judgements made by organisations about their eligibility to volunteer and this created a deterrent to putting themselves forward.

This was true for individuals from all three groups. But, respondents suggested that some ex-offenders would be particularly concerned about how organisations would judge them if they attempted to volunteer. Indeed, many of the ex-offenders we spoke to assumed that nobody would take a chance on them – and in reality, some organisations would not. As one organisation put it:

If we would not employ someone with a criminal record, then why would we involve them as a volunteer? (member of staff).

This was confirmed by some of the interviewees:

It’s that criminal record thing – you see that and you think, “Don’t bother”. Or if you do, you get other people looking at you, those that haven’t got a criminal record (non-volunteer, ex-offender).

Another person had been accepted by one organisation but rejected by another for no obvious reason:

I am a member of [a local organisation] and I had been to their meetings and they needed a driver. They said I would have to apply for the [volunteer] job but they then said that they didn’t need my services. It turns out that they had been advised by [the local] police not to use me – but they couldn’t say why. I couldn’t understand it: I am already doing voluntary work in one area of [the city], and I did have to go through a police check to become a volunteer here (volunteer, ex-offender).

Failing to give someone a legitimate reason why they have been turned down was seen to have the potential to severely knock a person’s confidence – leaving them unlikely to put themselves forward for volunteering again.

The attitudes of others may not only prevent people from coming into volunteering in the first place, but may also discourage them from staying.

There may be a general prejudice against volunteers among the paid staff of an organisation. Here are some comments by people who were put off, or at least made to think twice about their volunteering, by the attitudes of staff towards volunteers in general:

But there are lots of problems with [other staff], as paid [staff] don’t seem to like volunteer [staff]. Paid [staff] look down on volunteer [staff] and that has caused problems with me, but I can handle myself back (volunteer, ex-offender, disabled).

Facing prejudice

One disabled couple who volunteered together told how they had been assigned the task of giving people directions around an organisation that was spread across a large site. They had a large stand in a corridor, with notices saying they were volunteer guides. But service users often ignored them, apparently because they assumed that people in wheelchairs could not possibly be of any assistance:

It was more annoying the other week when a gentleman came up and then said, “Oh, I’ll find it”, and then he went and asked someone else (volunteer, disabled).

People think we are waiting for an ambulance and we have to say, “No, we are here to work” (volunteer, disabled).

Although this couple persisted with their volunteering, another volunteer had been put off:

When I first started I was going on the corridor guiding people, but that was no good for me and the public just went and asked someone else – so I felt like a spare part and it was a waste of time (volunteer, disabled).

In the first placement I found it difficult to mix with the staff as they were already in their own group, and they thought that they didn't need volunteers (volunteer, BME).

There is also the question of prejudice among staff, other volunteers and service users against certain individuals and groups. Such prejudice can be quite subtle or it can be blatantly discriminatory. As one volunteer said:

You have to tolerate a lot of abuse from people – it is their attitudes – and you shouldn't have to tolerate that (volunteer, BME, disabled).

Staff members had this to say about how other people's attitudes affect the volunteering experience of people from BME communities:

Old people can be racist. In this case, one volunteer had been [in one department] and the older people there did not want to talk to them (member of staff).

Similarly, some of the disabled volunteers in our study told us that they had experienced prejudice, and that this had put them off volunteering.

Other people's attitudes also influenced the roles that volunteers were given. Some volunteers – and some ex-volunteers – felt that they had been asked to do menial tasks because they had been stereotyped:

I thought I was volunteering for one thing, and when I actually got there and they realised I was a disabled person, they only gave me the mundane tasks . . . some people love doing mail-outs and that's fine, but others don't. It's sort of a lack of appreciation really (non-volunteer, disabled).

There is a certain pigeonholing of volunteers – for example, they say that you are Asian and then you can deal with the Asian client group (member of staff and volunteer, BME).

Fear of losing welfare benefits

Many respondents feared losing their benefits if they volunteered; they expressed concerns about “benefit/social security rules” or “being hassled by the Employment Service” and this was putting them off volunteering. Although the regulations state that most benefits claimants can volunteer for an unlimited amount of hours, it seems that this message did not always get through. (See Restall, 2003, for a summary of the benefits regulations relating to volunteering, and an insightful description of his personal experiences of how these regulations are interpreted.) In many cases, this meant that the message was not getting through to potential volunteers, so they were too fearful to volunteer. In others cases the message was not getting through to benefits staff, resulting in people being threatened with the withdrawal of their benefits.

Practical barriers

In addition to the psychological barriers to volunteering, a series of more practical barriers were also identified.

The difficulty of finding out about volunteering opportunities

Our study found that, owing to the lack of publicity about

volunteering, people had difficulty in finding out about volunteering opportunities. One respondent asked plaintively:

Where do you go to volunteer? (volunteer, disabled).

Without this information it was hard to see how people could start thinking seriously about volunteering. When asked if they had volunteered before, one respondent said simply:

No, because no one had talked to me about these things before. It was the first time that someone had asked me (volunteer, BME).

Not “being asked” was particularly problematic for people with experience of social exclusion and for those on the margins of society. Evidence suggests that word of mouth is the most common route into volunteering (Davis Smith, 1998), but for people who are excluded from other areas of society the reality is that they are unlikely to be connected to the networks that do the asking.

Other respondents felt that there was a lack of knowledge about individual organisations, what they do and what volunteers would be involved in:

Not many people know what [this organisation] is and what they do – many just don't know (volunteer, BME).

Without promotional campaigns or publicity material showing the breadth and value of

Experiences of the barriers created by benefits regulations

On [name of volunteering scheme], people get paid mileage expenses and that is a form of support to go towards the running costs of the car. The Inland Revenue set a limit and we pay within that. But the Employment Service says that the drivers are working and so they get an enormous amount of hassle. There is a mismatch between the two government departments. The amount that people receive each week is docked off their benefits – so where does that leave volunteers? It offers very little incentive to volunteer . . . We've hassled quite a lot with the Benefits Agency, but the official line is that they are treating it as work . . . It varies quite a lot – one driver is now getting hassled but others are not – but the drivers are all new and they are getting very weary about volunteering . . . It is the biggest disincentive to volunteering (member of staff).

One of the problems in trying to engage people in voluntary work is that there are a lot of concepts which are either real or perceived. For example, people think that to engage themselves with voluntary work will have an effect on their benefits. We have had a problem with the JobCentre, as an adviser has said that people can only volunteer for sixteen hours a week or it puts their benefits in jeopardy. If we could change that, then maybe more people would want to engage with volunteering. We seem to have had a spate of that at the minute and it is really annoying (member of staff).

People with no income might feel, “Oh no, I can't do it because social might jump on me.” I want to do voluntary work but social is going to say if that person can do voluntary work that person can get ordinary work. But I don't see that – you are not getting paid, you are just sitting, talking, helping (volunteer, disabled).

volunteering it is hard to see how inaccurate stereotypes of volunteers and volunteering can be challenged, or people be provided with the information they need to get into volunteering.

Few of the people we spoke to who were not currently volunteering knew about volunteer bureaux or had heard of schemes such as TimeBank or Millennium Volunteers. And among those that had some knowledge the image was not always positive. Of volunteer bureaux, one respondent said:

I get the impression that sometimes they are not very accessible and they are not very inviting. They could be more . . . a bit more professional . . . a bit more like the Jobcentre Plus, where you can go and usually they are bright buildings and people are willing to help. There is a national standard – you go into the Jobcentre in Islington and it is more or less the same as the Jobcentre in Peckham. I could go and put an advert for a personal assistant in Brixton and it goes in every Jobcentre in the country. Why can't there be a similar situation for people who want to volunteer? (non-volunteer, disabled).

Others felt that the volunteering infrastructure just needed to be promoted more.

Over-formal recruitment procedures

Volunteer recruitment and selection procedures, from lengthy application forms, formal interviews and police checks, were serving to put people off volunteering. This was particularly true for people who had been excluded from other forms of social participation and paid work, as they were less likely to have had much experience of such procedures.

Lengthy application forms were also intimidating for people with visual impairments (unless they are in accessible formats such as large font or Braille), and for people whose first language was not English. Lengthy forms may also be intimidating for some ex-offenders, particularly those with low levels of literacy. And more generally for people who dislike bureaucracy. As one respondent said:

Paperwork is too difficult to do on my own (non-volunteer, disabled).

We spoke to volunteers with learning difficulties who had gravitated towards the disability sector partly because they knew that their difficulties with filling in forms would be understood.

Some people we spoke to were unhappy about being asked to provide references, as they assumed that if they were unable to supply the references they would not be accepted as a volunteer – this was felt to be a particular issue among ex-offenders. Although the following comment concerns paid work, the person speaking used this as an example of what happened to them, and how they believed that trying for voluntary work would not be any different:

At the end of the day, if you have two people going for a job and one has a criminal record, they are going to take the one without the criminal record, even if the one with the criminal record has qualifications . . . I went for a job once at [employer]. I got an

interview and they sent me a letter saying I had the job and I had a start date and everything. With the letter, was another asking for a list of references and anything in your past; I didn't even bother replying (non-volunteer, ex-offender).

Having to undergo an interview can also be intimidating, particularly for people who have been unemployed and are therefore unused to interviews. Comments from our respondents included:

I was nervous – I was very nervous. I spoke to my friend to say that I had an interview, but my friend knew [the volunteer co-ordinator] and he put me at ease. Everything was all right . . . My biggest downfall is job interviews (volunteer, disabled).

We had a volunteer who wanted experience in a refuge after working with us. She went to the refuge, went for the interview and was interviewed by three white women. She felt it was unnecessary to have three people interview her. She said she didn't want the position, it felt too formal. She said there was a very cold atmosphere (member of staff).

Subjecting an applicant to a police check that they feel is unnecessary was also felt to be off-putting – particularly if it takes a long time to process.

A small number of respondents also felt that lengthy training programmes may be off-putting (although some people see training as a positive incentive; see Chapter four). As one respondent said:

Another thing that puts people off is that they have to come for the initial interview and they have to do several small courses which seem to go on for ever and that puts a lot of would-be volunteers off. They come and do the training but we never see them again (volunteer, ex-offender).

The importance of efficiency

It took me about six months before I got work. I went out as an escort a couple of times. It did bug me a bit, as I thought I had spent all that time on the training but I wasn't getting enough work. I came in and said that I had done the training but that I was sat at home waiting – after that I got more work. A lot of people are scared to say anything in case it backfires – they think that they are not needed. I went through it. It did bug me and it made me depressed (volunteer, ex-offender).

I did my application form nine months ago and every day I called to see if they had a placement (volunteer, BME).

[I] had [my] time wasted by an organisation who specifically advertised a volunteer post. I was interviewed, they sent off for references, interviewed me again. I got accepted for the position...and was told I would be contacted with more details. I never heard a thing despite me calling several times, and writing two letters. ... When I was interviewed I was given a copy of their AGM report saying how much their volunteers are valued – it was certainly not the impression I gained from my experiences and I am now somewhat glad that I never worked there (non-volunteer, disabled).

The ongoing paperwork, which often accompanies volunteering, was also felt to create barriers, particularly for people with limited language skills, low levels of literacy, or sensory impairments. As one respondent said:

I joined the training course and it was very difficult. It was all British ladies and they were speaking English very fast. It made me feel stupid because of the language. If I could get the sheets earlier, then it would be better. Four or five times I suggested that this happen and it happened only sometimes. The training course time is so long – from 12:15 to 2:15 – and many people do not have enough time, so if they had the sheets first to prepare it would be easier (volunteer, BME).

Poor follow-up of new recruits

Several respondents told us they had been discouraged from volunteering because organisations took so long to respond to an initial enquiry, process an application or place the respondent once they had been recruited. Without a prompt response, many potential volunteers may walk away: they may join another organisation, or, worse, they may assume that they are not wanted as volunteers and never even try again.

A physically inaccessible volunteering environment

However positive people may be about the idea of volunteering, our study suggested that they can still be prevented from taking it up by problems of physical accessibility.

A lack of appropriate transport as a barrier for disabled people

We need to be aware that it takes [disabled people] two weeks to organise transport, so they need plenty of time/notice about their volunteering (member of staff).

There are only two forms of transport that we can use and they are busy – you can only arrange to book it one week in advance, so you can't just have an impromptu outing . . . It is difficult, as we like coming here (volunteer, disabled).

In [name of city] you can't get transport after five pm. You can't be spontaneous with transport. Transport does restrict people's independence (volunteer, disabled).

Transport

Not being able to get to the places where volunteering (and associated activities such as training) takes place was creating a considerable barrier to some people. Transport was seen as a serious problem in rural areas, either because people didn't have a car and public transport was poor, or because the distances involved were simply too big to make volunteering viable. Similarly, some disabled people found that their ability to volunteer was restricted by a lack of access to appropriate forms of transport.

Buildings access

Poor physical accessibility to buildings – office space and training venues – created barriers to volunteering for people with mobility problems or sensory impairments.

Inability to meet the costs of volunteering

Of the organisations in our questionnaire survey, 81% offered to pay volunteer expenses – but a considerably lower percentage of volunteers actually claimed them. This practice was seen to put volunteers who could not afford not to claim expenses in a difficult position.

The incidental expense of volunteering was felt to be particularly important in discouraging disabled people. Many of the volunteers we met were on disability living allowance and could not contemplate doing anything that might make them even worse off. Moreover, the support available under the Access to Work scheme does not apply to voluntary work:

Access to Work is where, if you are a disabled person, you can apply for any equipment or PA support – PAs are individuals who come along and help you do your work – so you can get a PA or travel to work expenses. Now you can only apply for that if you do paid work – I think it is over sixteen hours – but if you do voluntary work there is nothing. If you are going to get people volunteering from the disability community, then it needs to be extended to cover that area. If the government want [to get] more disabled people into employment [they should start them] on voluntary work with Access to Work – it builds up confidence. It seems sensible to me, but I'm not government (non-volunteer, disabled).

The issue of cost is also important for other people, especially those who are unemployed or on a low wage. The following comment was made during a focus group discussion on how volunteering enables people to acquire skills:

How would you get there? When you get this community service, or volunteering, how would you get there and back? You still need your bus fares (non-volunteer, ex-offender).



Chapter Four: Making it work: How organisations have worked towards overcoming the barriers

Among the organisations we spoke to, a number of methods to overcome the barriers to volunteering for people from BME groups, disabled people, and (to a lesser extent) ex-offenders had been tested or at least mooted. This chapter reports on these steps and their successes, but also introduces respondents' ideas of what still needed to be done. It must be noted, however, that while we found lots of examples of attempts to overcome the barriers for disabled people and people from BME groups, very few organisations had given thought to how to involve ex-offenders as volunteers.

Publicising the reality of volunteering

Many of the organisations we spoke to were using various forms of publicity to attract people who had previously been under-represented into volunteering – including putting up posters and distributing leaflets, placing adverts in the local press, running social events and arranging interviews on local radio. As, the following quote suggests, using a diverse range of publicity materials helped attract the attention of a diverse range of people:

It is important to try to get a mix of activities going for recruitment. What works for one group won't work for another, so you need a mix (member of staff).

Many organisations also paid attention to the content of their promotional and recruitment materials. These materials were used to challenge people's perceptions of volunteering by, for example, illustrating the diversity of volunteers within their organisations and highlighting the benefits of volunteering, the diversity of activities available and being realistic about time commitments required. Particular attention was often paid to the language used in publicity - for example by using plain English and by using terms that are accessible to a diverse audience:

[By] trying to encourage them to approach us regardless of their language – we use community languages in our publicity (member of staff).

As we are recruiting volunteers, we say that we need volunteers – but then we flower it up. You should never shy away from using the term “volunteers”. But in certain languages there is no word for volunteering so we would have to find the appropriate language (member of staff).

In essence, organisations were using pictures and language to try to create an image of volunteering that different people could identify with.

A number of the organisations we spoke to ran targeted campaigns to publicise specific types of volunteering to specific sections of the population. The design and content of materials had been created specifically for a target audience, and sometimes went as far as

4 Making it work: How organisations have worked towards overcoming the barriers

explicitly stating that they were looking for volunteers from a specific target group. As one respondent explained:

We have directly asked for minority volunteers on the posters and we directly asked for what we want and people respond to that (member of staff).

Different groups had also been targeted through dissemination of materials- by positioning them where members of excluded groups were most likely to see them: for example, by advertising in the BME or disability press, doing interviews on BME radio stations, putting posters and leaflets in community centres, places of worship, health centres, libraries, post offices, railways stations, and bus stations etc. When asked what advice they would give to an organisation keen to attract volunteers from BME groups, one volunteer co-ordinator said:

I would say if you can try and go to that community and find out what community organisations there are and what you can use to your advantage, such as free publications, community radio. For example, we used community radio over Ramadan when thousands of Muslims listen to the radio, so that was a good time to recruit volunteers (member of staff).

However, our research suggests that more could be done. For example, one disability organisation we spoke to circulate a newsletter to hundreds of disabled people in their area; they told us it had never been approached by any organisation to carry an advertisement for

Working in and with community groups

One organisation told us it had had difficulties in recruiting young volunteers from BME communities, and had tried to remedy this by making links with BME groups and promoting volunteering to them, while at the same time recognising the contribution that young people were already making to their communities.

Another organisation had gone into local schools to talk about volunteering:

We are fortunate due to the location of [our organisation], as there is a large Afro-Caribbean and Asian community locally. I go around to schools and colleges and that attracts a lot of people (member of staff).

Yet another organisation had been working with faith-based organisations:

The staff at [the organisation where I now volunteer] told us about it in the church – without that I wouldn't know about it (volunteer, BME).

volunteers. In particular, we found very little evidence of any organisations actively targeting their recruitment materials (and indeed more general recruitment drives) at people who were ex-offenders.

Some respondents, however, questioned whether recruitment campaigns should be targeted at all. They felt that to target recruitment was to discriminate. They argued that instead materials with a broad appeal should be used, making it clear that anyone can volunteer:

To go out and target BME or disabled people is insulting – we promote volunteering, and people are people (member of staff).

We make it clear what we are doing, but we don't target materials, as that would not be offering equal opportunities, as it has to be

4 Making it work: How organisations have worked towards overcoming the barriers

for everyone . . . We do try and target areas, though – we target where we put out materials, but it is the same information going out (member of staff).

Building relationships

Many of the participants in our study stressed the importance of establishing relationships with the community organisations and informal networks already serving the groups currently under-represented as volunteers and some organisations had begun to adopt this more proactive approach.

One aim of this outreach activity was to raise the profile of an organisation, and of volunteering within it, so people can see that it has a distinct identity and a genuine commitment to the community.

Some organisations had taken this much further. They recognised the value of developing more meaningful and sustained relationships with community groups in order to build up a sense of trust between themselves and individuals in the community. This also helped to engender a sense of identity among members of the community with the organisation's aims, meaning that people were more likely to get involved.

People also felt that this helped the organisation to understand the community better, so that it could meet the community's needs and support its volunteers more effectively. As one respondent said:

You have got to know your target community and their needs – if you don't know their needs, then you won't be able to recruit or support them (member of staff).

However, making these links could sometimes be a challenging task. A number of people we spoke to said that it could be difficult to find

Taking time to build relationships

One organisation we studied had been targeting an inner-city area with a large BME population and serious deprivation. The organisation had appointed volunteer co-ordinators specifically to work in this area and had succeeded in attracting postholders who were representative of the target community – a strategy they felt had been central to the success of the programme. But it had taken time to get to know the community and to find out the best way of persuading people to think seriously about volunteering:

It was hard to recruit there at first as there are different cultural groups, high population turnover and lots of refugees, so it was hard to advertise through the normal mediums. But once you get to know them and to find out who is linked to what community, you begin to say to people, "This is what I have got – who can make use of the training courses?" etc. You need to get to know the community (member of staff).

Although it had taken time, the investment was starting to pay off:

The aim was to recruit at least twelve volunteers in the first year. It was hard to begin with, and in the first six months we did not get one volunteer, but by the third and fourth quarters of the year it started to get better (member of staff).

contact details for community groups or for community leaders within them (important gatekeepers to the wider community). Developing relationships with communities, built on trust, took time and commitment; most that had tried it felt it was well worth the investment.

Capacity building

Some organisations were working towards, or talked about, building capacity for volunteering among people who lack the confidence to get involved, or who have no idea of what volunteering involves and may be reluctant to try it out. This ranged from holding open-days to enable

One organisation suggested assigning a mentor to work with volunteers who are ex-offenders to build up their confidence and to get them to work together as a group. This could be applied to all volunteers at risk of exclusion.

potential volunteers to come in to an organisation and familiarise themselves with the environment, through to running pre-volunteering courses to build people's confidence and skills to a level at which they felt ready to start volunteering.

Working in partnership to build capacity

One volunteer-involving organisation had developed a partnership with an organisation that supported volunteering by people with learning difficulties. The latter organisation had originally been set up to help people with learning difficulties into paid work, but had now diversified into helping them to volunteer. The support organisation works with the recipient organisation before the placement begins to ensure that existing staff are prepared: for example, by running awareness training courses and by ensuring that the site is accessible. It also prepares the new volunteers for the placement: for example, by taking them on visits, familiarising them with bus routes etc. Once in post, volunteers try out the placement for a month, during which time staff from the support organisation visit twice a week. At the end of the first month the placement is reviewed: if it is going well, it can be developed further; if not, the activities involved can be reassessed. A member of staff from the volunteer-involving organisation said of the partnership:

They are great . . . they place people with learning difficulties back into the working environment, whether that is in a paid position or voluntary... I've got seven [volunteers from that organisation] here with me. They come with a support worker for a few weeks until the volunteer is confident and the key workers feel comfortable.

Another organisation had been working in partnership with an agency that helps long-term unemployed people – including ex-offenders – acquire useful experience through volunteering. The agency felt that one of its strengths and why it had been successful in helping people to volunteer was that volunteer-involving organisations felt the volunteer was coming with a support network. In addition, by working with the ex-offender, they helped the volunteers with a record of offence appear to be perceived as “less of a risk”.

Various organisations told us how they had developed partnerships with other agencies to further this process of capacity building. For example, some local volunteer bureaux helped organisations to think through these issues and some ran supported volunteering programmes. We also found several examples of organisations that exist to support individuals from socially excluded groups and were working successfully in partnership with volunteer-involving organisations to support their service users as volunteers.

In fact this was a re-occurring theme with the volunteer-involving organisations we consulted; many said that their ability to involve volunteers with extra support needs was or would be increased if those volunteers arrived with an existing support structure behind them.

User-friendly recruitment

By ensuring that recruitment processes were user-friendly – minimising form filling and asking new recruits in for a chat rather than an interview, for example – some organisations had successfully made the volunteering experience seem less daunting.

A number of respondents stressed, however, that while recruitment procedures should generally be informal, organisations should also have clearly expressed procedures for recruitment and selection, and they should explain carefully to the volunteers why these procedures are necessary. There was a general agreement that organisations should only ask for references and carry

One organisation told us about the dilemma of wanting to be inclusive yet at the same time needing to attract volunteers with a certain level of skill in English. However, it did employ staff who spoke a range of languages, which enabled volunteers to fill in forms and do course work in their first language:

With the volunteers we give them a form and a pack and if they can fill it in then we use that to judge their levels of English. But one volunteer can understand spoken English, but their spoken and written English is not so good. But as a co-ordinator I can speak Arabic, so [the volunteer] can write all the answers in Arabic, which I can then translate, and we can also send the work from the training course to the Open College Network in Arabic (member of staff).

The importance of establishing recruitment policies and procedures

Be specific with your policy before you start, and be clear who you will work with and who you won't and say why. You have to have strong policies to start with a grounded fact, so then you can be clear if you say no to someone why [it is] (member of staff).

Where we have done police checks, [the volunteers] have understood, as they have been working with children. It is about how you put the message across (member of staff).

All volunteers have a police check carried out on them . . . The only offenders we wouldn't recruit are those with child protection issues, offences against children or serious crimes . . . Petty offences, road offences, shoplifting etc don't affect someone's capacity to volunteer . . . We have to do the police checks as volunteers are working with vulnerable children (member of staff).

out police checks when they are absolutely necessary: for example, if the volunteer in question would be having unsupervised access to vulnerable clients or would be handling large sums of money:

Creating a inclusive environment

Organisational ethos

Many people that we spoke to, whether they were staff, volunteers, or non-volunteers felt that creating an atmosphere within an organisation that felt inclusive and reflected a valuing of diversity was essential in overcoming the barriers to volunteering. A number of organisations that we spoke to had paid particular attention to creating the right atmosphere, others felt that organisations needed to do more:

It is a bit of an education process for people – the whole ethos of equality of opportunities is how we work and that makes people feel comfortable with the organisation. The general ethos of the organisation means that we are not going to judge people (member of staff).

You need to be open. If you are going to work with drug users, they need to know you are going to be open and listen, and that you are not going to judge them if something goes wrong (member of staff).

People are scared to ask questions, so you need to create an environment in which people feel free to express their individuality and ask things in a mutually respectful and mutual way. Don't go making people feel guilty – you can't have a collective guilt because that makes things hard to move on from (member of staff and volunteer, BME).

In particular, respondents talked about the importance of valuing (and managing) diversity and respecting differences. Several organisations we spoke to were taking care to ensure that cultural differences in particular were respected:

... it is about being respectful, knowing to take your shoes off etc . . . People are more at ease with us (member of staff).

The other thing we have found is that during celebrations and events we have to invite someone with the volunteer, for example from their family, an older brother or someone. And in the evening things aren't as successful as in the day (member of staff).

Some of the organisations we spoke to had clearly got their ethos right, and as a result had created an environment to which volunteers responded positively:

It is the way they treat you. For example, everyone says good morning to you, and you have a laugh with the other [volunteers and staff]. [This] is a good organisation. I have been on some schemes in other places and people [make fun] of me – here they don't. Everyone feels equal (volunteer, disabled).

[The volunteer co-ordinator] is very positive about encouraging and supporting disabled people as volunteers (volunteer, disabled).

At university I felt a sense of vulnerability and that affected my personality. For example, I did not wear my headscarf. But since I have been here I wear my headscarf, and so I feel more confident (volunteer, BME).

Diversity training

Some of the organisations we spoke to had provided diversity awareness training; more often organisations had provided specific training in cultural awareness or disability awareness for their staff and existing volunteers.

The value of delivering such training was widely acknowledged by staff and volunteers. For example, one respondent said:

One organisation had been working with a group of their volunteers who were disabled to deliver disability awareness training to other volunteers and staff.

I do believe that, given we are dealing with the social model, training is useful because it focuses on barriers and discrimination awareness . . . they are more likely to see a disabled person as a person and the barriers to their volunteering as imposed by the organisation as opposed to that person is a disabled person so they can only stuff envelopes. I've witnessed a volunteer bureau organise DET (disability equality training) and social model training for itself and other organisations, and suddenly . . . the thinking of the organisation was on barriers that they had not thought of before, and recognition of what they were doing and taking that further . . . But training needs to be backed up with policies (volunteer, disabled).

As this comment illustrates, however, training was often not enough. Another respondent agreed:

The social model and training is a good tool but it is not enough. I fear that as soon as organisations feel that they do not really know much about disability they go, "Oh, training." And training in itself is not OK any more from my perspective . . . there is no systematic evidence as yet that anybody actually knows anything and no systematic evidence to suggest that person will go away and change their attitude. Changing attitudes is something that happens over a very long period of time (non-volunteer, disabled).

Policies and procedures

Staff, volunteers and some non-volunteers stressed the importance of having volunteer policies and procedures. In particular, a number of respondents felt that volunteer policies (or policies that include volunteers) should be explicit about equal opportunities and diversity:

Unless you have a policy on volunteering that is inclusive of the rights of disabled people . . . we need to get off the subject of need, this is about rights. OK, it's about the right to work if you want to work, it's about the right to volunteer if you want to volunteer, and about making sure that organisations – whether they are voluntary groups or companies – have the policies in place to be able to do that (non-volunteer, disabled).

Fifty five per cent of the organisations that responded to the survey, however, did not have a policy on the involvement of volunteers.

Some of the organisations we spoke to, however, had made considerable efforts to develop effective volunteer policies that covered issues of diversity and equal opportunities. As one respondent said:

We wrote out an equal opportunities policy from the point of view of trying to explain the barriers people are up against. We are promoting it but not in a heavy way. We have a friendly but professional approach so people feel comfortable (member of staff).

However, respondents pointed out that an organisation can have the most comprehensive policy in the world, but it will be of no use unless some effort is made to implement it. Other respondents spoke about the need to find a balance between having policies and procedures and implementing them in ways that did not appear overly bureaucratic.

Individualising volunteering

I discuss what is available and then they say what they want to do. It is their choice and they know what they are capable of. It is about capabilities not disabilities (member of staff).

I find out what a volunteer wants to do and then I find a placement to suit them – there are so many things going on in [the organisation] that I can normally find them something (member of staff).

Don't expect that people are going to be really pleased that you have asked them to volunteer just because they are from a BME group. Look at an individual, their interests and passions, and then try and meet their aspirations and don't try to pigeonhole people into stereotypical roles. Treat the individual as an individual (member of staff and volunteer, BME).

We do try to find a placement to meet what someone wants, but a lot of people do not know what they want, as they have never had experiences and opportunities. So we try and fit these things in, in small steps. If people have been stuck in a day centre and all of a sudden they go into the big wide world, then it is a big step. We do get to know people and to find out what they are like and find placements to suit them. For example, if someone is quiet, then a crowd might put them off . . . We try to cater for individuals, but it is difficult (member of staff and volunteer, BME).

Improving physical accessibility

Most of the organisations we spoke to had taken some steps towards improving the physical accessibility of their volunteering. This had involved:

- Providing transport to volunteering venues, or at least reimbursing travel expenses, especially in rural areas.
- Modifying buildings to improve access for disabled people.
- Reimbursing all out-of-pocket expenses.

However, respondents pointed out that these types of support can be quite expensive, and some organisations may not have the resources.

Alternatively, some organisations had found new ways to involve volunteers who faced access-related barriers. For example, on-line volunteering was felt to hold potential for people who are house-bound to volunteer from their own homes. One respondent suggested that volunteer training could be delivered on-line, while

others felt that contact could be maintained with volunteers via the Internet.

Fitting the job to the volunteer

Several organisations told us how they attempted to fit the job to the needs of the volunteer, rather than making the volunteer fit the job. By asking new recruits why they have volunteered, what skills they can offer and what they expect to get out of their volunteering, some organisations had been successful in finding or adapting roles to meet the volunteers' needs and expectations. It was about recognising the individuality of volunteers and adapting the volunteering experience to fit the individual.

There may, of course, be limits to what some volunteers can do. But instead of focusing on a person's limitations, some organisations said they were focusing on their capabilities, by, for example, adapting existing volunteer roles or by breaking them down into manageable tasks.

One organisation described its experience of involving two volunteers with severe learning disabilities:

We do have to be careful and have boundaries. For example, volunteers with learning difficulties – we have two people who could not volunteer without support. We did get other volunteers to support them at first, but now we have had to ask them not to come until we can find additional support. But instead they are sitting on the disability steering group and they may also come to do a newsletter – so we are finding alternatives (member of staff).

They went on to say:

We are now trying to get volunteer advocates to give that support. There is always a way around it – it is never a closed door (member of staff).

Another organisation told a similar story about involving volunteers with poor English. Rather than rejecting them because they were unable to meet the criteria for service delivery volunteers, the organisation found them other roles:

There are ways around involving people who do not have good English skills – for example, we are using volunteers with very bad English skills to grow plants in the greenhouse.

The same organisation was eventually able to capitalise on the language skills of these volunteers:

It can also be twofold, as we can use volunteers as interpreters. All the main signposts are translated, and the volunteers have helped with this (member of staff).

People that we spoke to suggested that people who have not volunteered before might appreciate the offer of “taster days” where they can come into an organisation and try volunteering out. This could also work for existing volunteers, who could sample different volunteer roles and activities within an organisation.

Providing meaningful support

The volunteers that we spoke to were asked about what they would include on their wish lists for volunteering. They highlighted many items that had implications for how they wanted to be supported; this

Volunteers in one organisation told us how they appreciated being able to try out different activities for a couple of sessions before committing themselves. As one respondent said:

Nobody falls out with you, for example if you don't want to do something. You can have a see what it is like for a couple of days (volunteer, disabled).

list of items offers useful pointers to how organisations could improve their inclusiveness. When organisations had put these in place, some of the key barriers to involvement had been overturned.

An enjoyable experience

Most of the volunteers we spoke to said that they wanted to have an enjoyable time while volunteering. Volunteers valued those organisations that made their volunteering enjoyable. Volunteers enjoyed their experience when, for example, they got respect, or saw that their volunteering was having a positive impact. They also wanted to gain a valuable experience, one that matched their needs or expectations, and/or one that introduced them to new experiences.

Training

The provision of training was seen as an important element for many volunteers.

83% of the organisations in our study said that they provided their volunteers with training.

For some, however, formal training could be intimidating and some organisations had tried calling training by other

names - information exchange for example.

Using existing skills and developing new ones

A majority of the volunteers we spoke to wanted to use their volunteering to develop new skills, but many also wanted to use existing skills. It was important to volunteers that their skills were being fully utilised, rather than being given menial tasks that belittled what they could offer the organisation, and that they were supported to develop new skills.

A route to employment

Some of the volunteers we spoke to saw their volunteering as a route to employment. They therefore wanted volunteer managers who could help them to acquire the skills and experience they need. Some also

One organisation we studied formed a partnership with a local careers advice service, which gave advice to any of the volunteers who wanted it.

said that they valued receiving advice and information on careers opportunities and support when applying for paid work.

Recognition and incentives

Many of the volunteers we spoke to wanted to feel appreciated, for their contribution to be recognised – whether this was through receiving certificates or by being invited to social events.

Some people stressed that if an organisation truly appreciate their efforts, this is the only incentive or form of recognition they need. As one volunteer put it:

I am not looking for Blue Peter badges or cash, but just to be recognised that you are as valuable as a paid worker.

Friendly, effective and efficient support from staff

Volunteers wanted supportive, understanding managers who made them feel that they have a place in the organisation and a job to do:

One organisation we studied decided to offer incentives, such as inviting its volunteers to take part in outdoor activities at reduced cost. This was seen not only as a way of valuing existing volunteers but also as a way of making volunteering more attractive to new volunteers.

I know that I can give her a phone call and she will come and do anything I need – her door is open all the time and that makes a difference (volunteer, disabled).

The value of personal, but professional, contact was generally recognised by staff working with volunteers:

A lot of it is to do with approach. We try to be friendly and professional. People feel that they are OK when they walk through the door. It is about being approachable and allowing it to be on people's own terms. We give people details about opportunities that are available but we don't try and push people in any direction. We work with people at their level and at the pace they want to go at. Even if we are desperate for volunteers we need to be careful not to put too much on them (member of staff).

Volunteers said they wanted efficient and effective support. For example, they wanted to know who they should go to if they have a problem, or how to get in touch with somebody if they are working out of the office or outside opening times.

Peer support

Peer support among volunteers was felt to be important, whether it was achieved through formal peer mentoring, a volunteer forum or social activities and events.

Of the organisations in our survey, 57% had a specific person to manage volunteers. In the remaining organisations, the responsibility for looking after volunteers fell on various staff members, usually the project staff or managers supervising the activity that the volunteers were involved in. Eighty-eight per cent did provide regular support for their volunteers.

4 Making it work: How organisations have worked towards overcoming the barriers

Variety of opportunities

Many of the volunteers said that they wanted a variety of roles and tasks, and that they wanted to be able to change roles as their motivations, skills and interests developed.

Payment of expenses

Many people we spoke to said that they could not afford to volunteer if

Alongside helping with childcare for volunteers in their everyday activities, one organisation also recognised the need to extend this to cover training courses:

Most volunteers need support in terms of a crèche and childminding, so the training comes with a crèche and childcare provision (member of staff).

organisations did not repay their incidental expenses, such as fares, subsistence and childcare, so it was vital to them that the organisation paid these expenses, and promptly.

Team spirit and ownership

Volunteers wanted to be part of a team, to feel accepted and to be appreciated, and to feel ownership of their work and of the goals of the organisation.

One organisation we spoke to emphasised the importance of ensuring that volunteers feel a valuable part of the team:

They [the volunteers] say that they feel a real bonding. We had one lady with learning difficulties who had a work placement where who also said she felt part of us. ... They see they have time to talk with other workers about what they do and to see how their efforts help the organisation (member of staff).

Communication

To make them feel informed and valued, volunteers wanted organisations to communicate with them regularly about new opportunities and new developments. This could be done via newsletters, e-mails, notice boards or regular meetings.



Chapter Five: The value of inclusivity and diversity: How volunteering can reduce social exclusion

Where the barriers to involvement had been overcome, individuals from BME groups, disabled people and ex-offenders were benefiting considerably from their volunteering. Through volunteering various aspects of social exclusion were being addressed.

This chapter focuses in more detail on how volunteering can benefit individuals and help to combat exclusion in the following ways:

- Ending personal isolation
- Empowering the individual
- Helping other people
- Developing skills
- Improving employability.

Ending personal isolation

A constant factor in social exclusion is personal isolation – not being able to meet and mix with other people. Our study found that the social aspect of volunteering was important for the groups we were talking to. For example, when asked what they got out of volunteering, 32% of respondents to the volunteer survey said that it “encouraged me to join in more” and 29% said that it “gives me a position in the community”.

For some of the people we spoke to – particularly disabled people with severe mobility-related impairments or learning difficulties – volunteering provided the only opportunity they had during

Volunteering as a way to end isolation

I find disability is isolating . . . I found I lost many friends, so with going out volunteering, doing things for other people, I'm starting new links rather than being isolated with disability (volunteer, disabled).

The opportunity to meet different people . . . I had only lived here four months and I didn't know anyone apart from my husband, so I was getting bored (volunteer, BME).

I am on medication for depression – this kind of work gives me an incentive to get out of the house (volunteer, disabled, ex-offender).

It gives you a kind of social life. It may be the only time that you get out and about. When you get here you get lots of help and support from other volunteers. [One couple] have been coming here once a week – if they couldn't come here then they wouldn't get out of the house (volunteer, disabled).

I would be bored stiff if I wasn't taking part in such activities – I have variety, every day I am doing something different. I meet lots of people and it makes you appreciate all the good things that are there (member of staff and volunteer, BME).

It gives you a bit of an interest. If I go out socialising with people then I have something to talk about – previously I felt that I had nothing to contribute in the social circle (volunteer, disabled, ex-offender).

the week to get out of their homes and interact with others. Volunteering also provided people with an interest and a subject for conversation with others, an important benefit for people whose lives may otherwise be restricted.

By providing people with opportunities to meet and interact with others, volunteering was seen to have a role in breaking down isolation.

Empowering the individual

Another destructive element of social exclusion is dependence – the feeling that one is not in control of one’s own destiny and that one has little chance to effect change. We found that volunteering can empower people who have experienced, or are at risk, of exclusion, by providing them with new skills and knowledge, increasing their self-confidence and self-esteem, and helping them to realise that they have a contribution to make and are therefore not totally dependent. This has subsequently helped people to effect change in other areas of their

lives.

Volunteering as capacity building and empowerment

Out of boredom you get into a comfort zone of sitting at home not going anywhere. But now I am more free, confident, and I can go anywhere on my own (volunteer, BME).

...it has helped me to go on to do other stuff (volunteer, BME, ex-offender).

Volunteers start making conscious choices for themselves – they are becoming much more independent (member of staff).

volunteering, the organisations that people volunteered for, members of the local community, and the friends and family of volunteers and service-users.

Some respondents talked about the value of volunteering in terms of enabling them to feel like they were giving something back to society:

it is about helping the community – putting back into the community – to make the community in a better situation (volunteer, BME).

Or if not to give something back, then to provide a service which they felt was lacking:

[I got involved] because I thought I would have enjoyed having someone to do it for me, and we all get something from it. It encourages people, if they see someone who is working, then it gives them motivation and encouragement. One woman thought it was marvellous how well I was doing – we are very similar. One man was telling the nurse I saved his life – he was very depressed when I started visiting him . . . These are things that make it worthwhile (volunteer, disabled).

For some respondents, volunteering was a way of fighting back against the stereotypes and prejudices that had caused them to be excluded:

There is an element for me that if you are from an ethnic minority, or from the disabled community . . . you have an obligation to contribute to your community, because that is one way that these communities actually have a voice within society. It is a positive but quiet way in which you can get people who find themselves marginalised from mainstream societies, a way of just being involved in something. It's a good opportunity for those groups I have just mentioned to have a platform in the community (ex-volunteer, disabled).

I hope that I am breaking down barriers and overturning peoples' assumptions and stereotypes. Also, I go into schools and talk about Islam – I am a trained teacher so I feel comfortable in that environment, but I also feel that I can contribute and that I am doing something useful . . . The big thing is to feel useful (volunteer, BME).

Being able to help other people was an important source of satisfaction for many volunteers, making them feel that they had done something worthwhile, and engendering in them a sense of self-worth. When

Helping others leads to a sense of satisfaction and well-being

After I have completed a job, I feel satisfied that I have done it for the public, I have been working for the community and I feel that I have done something worthwhile (volunteer, disabled).

It makes me feel like we are doing a job of work as well, really. Instead of sitting at home, we know we are doing something worthwhile (volunteer, disabled).

Voluntary work is a good thing because you are not only helping yourself, you are helping other people in the community, you are seeing people being happy, meeting new people and that is the way it should be (volunteer, disabled).

On the whole volunteers are happier – it is important to me to feel that I have been of use today (member of staff and volunteer, BME).

What I wanted was not to feel as if I had been chucked on the scrap heap, to contribute what I could. I used it as therapy, I suppose. It broke up my day and gave me something to look forward to (volunteer, disabled).

I enjoy it a lot. I feel now that I am contributing something to the community . . . and that keeps me going. I am not a sponger. I am helping people. I had a near-death experience in an accident and that made me realise. I have mental health difficulties. It is a very nice feeling that I am actually helping someone else (volunteer, ex-offender, disabled).

It's not just for other people; it's for yourself. You might find that doing some voluntary work, you feel good, you get some kind of satisfaction from it that you have helped somebody else. We get out what we put in and by giving what we find is that we get something back, it might be directly or indirectly, it might be self-development, it might be a sense of satisfaction, it might be a nice dream at night instead of nightmares. (member of staff).

the volunteers in our survey were asked what they got out of volunteering, 84% said “a sense of achievement”. This is particularly important for individuals who have experienced social exclusion, or who are marginalised, and so have been restricted in their ability to make contributions in other areas of life.

Developing skills

In our study, 57% of respondents to the volunteer survey said that one of their reasons for volunteering was “learning new skills”. Evidence from the case studies showed that volunteering was effective in this

Volunteering building new skills

It certainly helped me develop communication skills and speak to people. It also helped me to be more social and get out of my own comfort zone (volunteer, BME).

More skills. Before, I couldn't answer the phone, but now I am right good. Typing skills, reading and writing (volunteer, ex-offender).

The social skills I have gained have changed me – I have learnt social skills and networking skills and they are very important . . . Getting into volunteering gets you recognised, gets you skills, confidence and gets you to practise things (volunteer, disabled).

way – helping people to develop a whole range of skills, from “softer” interpersonal skills, to “harder” vocational skills.

Interestingly, evidence from other studies shows that when people volunteer with the professed intention of learning new skills, they go on to develop strong feelings of empathy with the community, even though that was not their original motive for getting involved (see, for example, Eley's, 2001, study of young volunteers). We found that this was particularly true for some people whose first language was not English - many wanted to use their

Improving employability

volunteering as a way of learning English, thus helping them to assimilate. Volunteering was not just about their developing English skills; it was more that their volunteering was helping them to feel part of the community.

Thirty-seven per cent of the volunteers responding to our survey said that one of the reasons for getting into volunteering was “work experience”. Evidence from our research found that volunteering was an effective route into employment for some people. A number of volunteers we spoke to or heard about had moved on to paid work within the organisation they had volunteered for, others had moved into paid work in other organisations. For example, one volunteer we spoke to had found paid work after volunteering in an organisation for a number of years - reflecting on how volunteering had helped them get a job, they said:

Because as a volunteer it boosted my confidence and the training I got as well as a volunteer helped me, so there is a lot going for volunteering. It is about getting out of the house and meeting new people . . . It has opened up a lot of doors to me (volunteer, disabled)

Another volunteer felt sure that their volunteering would make them more employable:

Now I am applying for jobs and this experience will definitely help me. Now I am confident that this experience will help me get a job (volunteer, BME).

A number of volunteers we spoke to had clearly used volunteering as part of their strategy to paid work, and this was affecting the way in which they approached their involvement (see Hirst, 2001, for evidence that volunteering is most helpful in terms of employability when it is used as part of a deliberate plan to find paid work). As one volunteer said:

If you treat volunteering as if it is paid work – so for example you do nine to five – then it is a good stepping stone in that respect. It helps you get into the rhythm of work. It depends on the individual – how you want to use the experience. I wanted to use it as a route into paid work (volunteer, BME).

However, even when volunteering did help people to become more “job ready”, finding paid work was not always easy:

We have seen what volunteers can do – you see people become job ready, but then it is a big leap to actually get a job as there are lots of barriers (member of staff).

In addition, for some respondents, volunteering was not a route to employment, but an alternative to it. They included people who could not take on paid work due to physical or mental ill health. Where the pressures of work were too much, volunteering provided a more flexible and relaxed environment:

I couldn't cope doing full-time work. I wouldn't have the confidence in myself to commit myself to paid work, but as a volunteer if you don't feel up to it then you don't have to do it. You can only cause a problem if you don't say that you can't do it (volunteer, ex-offender).

I am not well enough to go back to work, but I am well enough to want to do something (volunteer, disabled).

Moving on to paid work

One organisation in Sheffield used the fact that some of its volunteers had gone on to employment within the organisation as a selling point to attract new volunteers. In one year alone, seven volunteers had made the transition to paid work.

One volunteer said that they too were hoping to get into paid work by volunteering for the organisation:

Volunteer work is a stepping stone to enabling you to get a proper job – it gives disabled people the opportunity of experiencing a paid job. If it was possible, I wouldn't mind getting a paid job down here, as I like it (volunteer, disabled).

Other volunteers said that they had joined the organisation specifically to gain experience and build up their CV:

At the time I joined I had very little experience on my CV, I just had my university experience but needed more. I needed more experience and so I joined [the organisation] (volunteer, BME).

5 The value of inclusivity and diversity: How volunteering can reduce social exclusion

Staff also confirmed this:

It gives them confidence – gives them something to get up for that day. If you can't hold down a proper job due to illness, this is something without pressure and it is a social gathering as well (member of staff).

And, indeed, some people did not want to link their volunteering to paid work at all – the value of volunteering was felt to be totally different from paid work. As one respondent said:

I don't see volunteering as a stepping stone into work – volunteering does not relate to my work at all (volunteer).

Wider impacts

The research did not explicitly look at the impact of inclusivity and diversity on the organisations that involve volunteers, or on the wider community. However, a number of positive benefits were identified.

Many of the volunteers in our study were involved in the direct provision of services: 43% of volunteers responding to the survey gave advice, information or counselling, 30% visited people, 23% provided transport and 14% provided “other direct service”. This was felt to benefit those who access the service, at the same time as benefiting the volunteers who provide it.

Involving volunteers from socially excluded groups, particularly those who were service users or from a similar background, helped organisations deliver their services better to their clients who also had experience of social exclusion:

There is such a wide variety of [clients] – for example, according to health, language, disability – [so the] different volunteers... we get... can all use their expertise. For example, [one] volunteer speaks Somali and Swedish, so we can use that (member of staff).

I saw what happened through the system, so when I started volunteering I could see what should have happened. I can really relate to young people – I know what they are going through (volunteer, BME, ex-offender).

Some respondents also talked about having wider impacts on other people that they associated with, for example, on family and friends. One volunteer told us that his volunteering was having a positive impact on his family:

My younger brother looks up to me, but if other older brothers are doing something bad then the kids will be bad – that is why I want to get in there and do volunteering work (volunteer, BME).

Volunteering was felt to give people a chance to see how different communities could work together, challenging stereotypes and so helping to tackle one of the causes of social exclusion:

I am interested in the organisation in a personal way . . . But also I am aware that I am a role model for other people. I hope that I am breaking down barriers and overturning people's assumptions and stereotypes (member of staff and volunteer, BME).

5 The value of inclusivity and diversity: How volunteering can reduce social exclusion

Volunteering was seen as an important way of enabling people to become active in their communities and thus building social capital (see for example Putnam 2000, for an explanation of social capital).



Chapter Six: Issues and debates

During the course of the research, a number of issues arose surrounding the link between volunteering and social exclusion – in particular to do with the difficulties faced by organisations in striving for inclusivity. This chapter introduces these issues, not to provide answers, but to stimulate further debate.

What are we striving for?

One interesting debate that arose concerned what we actually mean by terms such as inclusiveness, equal opportunities and representation. These are all common currency within the volunteering movement, but they could all be interpreted in different ways.

In particular, people were concerned that organisations should not become obsessed with being numerically representative of the population, as they felt this was sure to result in tokenism. What was needed, they thought, is a more deep-seated belief in the value of diversity. As one respondent said:

There is a conflict between being seen to work in an equal opportunities way and we do want to make sure that everyone is catered for and that they all have the same opportunities – everyone is obsessed by it, but I sometimes think, “Why are we doing this?” We are coming at it from the wrong angle (member of staff).

A number of respondents we spoke to felt the danger of becoming tokenistic was often a reality; they felt that they had been recruited not because the organisation really valued them as an individual, but because they wanted to be seen to be inclusive:

The difficulties of striving for inclusiveness

I do want to target our recruitment, but it is very easy to target students and if you are desperate for volunteers, which I am now (member of staff).

But we do pussyfoot around the issue – it is to do with funding . . . All projects are funded with time-limited funding. We are supposed to see if the profile of our volunteers matches the profile of the community . . . It is unrealistic. We are not going to get diversity – it is all very hit and miss (member of staff).

It is very hard to fit diversity into our priorities, as it is the icing on the cake, not the core work (member of staff).

It needs a balance between how much support you can give to volunteers in a general project, and the issue of when there is a client/volunteer crossover – i.e. when a volunteer should really be a client (member of staff).

I was in one organisation where I was taken on as a token figure – but because of that tokenism I didn't feel like taking part and in the end I stopped (member of staff and volunteer, BME).

Many other organisations such as . . . NGOs [Non-Governmental Organisations] are extremely concerned about having diversity – they want a brown face [sic] there and they want to tick a box – we seem to be the first people that they come to (member of staff and volunteer, BME).

Pressures against inclusivity

Many of the organisations we spoke to during the project told us about the frustrations they experienced in striving to be inclusive.

About a quarter of those that responded to our organisational survey said they simply had no idea how to increase the diversity of their volunteers. More fundamentally, perhaps, people admitted that they were afraid of saying or doing the wrong thing – concerns about “politically incorrect” language made them reluctant even to begin a conversation about exclusivity/inclusivity.

The “contract culture” also means that some organisations which rely on volunteers to deliver services felt they had to restrict themselves to tried and tested types of recruit, in preference to those who may be harder to recruit, support and manage. Indeed, it was not just the organisations with contracts that face this kind of issue.

Another major factor was short-term funding, which pressurised organisations to deliver results (usually still measured in terms of outputs rather than outcomes) within a limited time scale. This too was seen to inhibit an organisation's desire to be inclusive.

Demands based on quantity were also seen to compromise quality. Under pressure to meet targets, organisations said that they had neither the time nor the resources to tackle the barriers that stop different kinds of people getting involved.

One interesting theme to emerge was the difference between organisations that involved volunteers so that they could help to deliver services, and organisations that involved volunteers as part of their mission. In the former type, volunteers are a means of delivering the organisation's aims, but in the latter type, volunteers are the organisation's aim – its reason for existence. Although a very crude over-generalisation, some people we spoke to felt that trying to be inclusive is fine for organisations that involve volunteers as part of their ethos and for whom recruiting “excluded” people as volunteers may mean involving their service users. But they felt that service-delivery organisations would find it harder to “justify” the level of resources they thought might be needed to involve “excluded” people.

Managing the contradictions – formality versus flexibility

“Good practice” tells organisations that they need to have in place policies, procedures and guidelines for their volunteers (as indeed was identified as being important in our research). At the same time organisations are increasingly being invited to take on service delivery contracts; this trend away from grant aid has forced organisations to

formalise their relationship with volunteers and to place tighter restrictions on what they do (Russell and Scott, 1997).

As we have seen, however, excessive bureaucracy and formality puts off potential volunteers, particularly those who have experienced or are at risk of exclusion, and so, rather than being challenged, the barriers to involvement are reinforced.

How exactly organisations should manage these contradictory pressures was a topic of considerable debate. As one respondent said:

Organisations want to be flexible for volunteers, but they also must meet the needs of their clients (member of staff).

Exclusion from volunteering is just the start

Many respondents – volunteers, non-volunteers and staff – raised an even more fundamental issue. Exclusion from volunteering mirrors exclusion from other areas of life – it is just one dimension of the far more complex and deeply entrenched reality of social exclusion within our society. It was argued that we could only discuss volunteering and social exclusion within the framework of a much broader attempt to tackle inequality.

When it comes to tackling social exclusion in its widest sense, ensuring that volunteering is inclusive may be well down in the list of priorities. As the comments in the box suggest, people who experience exclusion have far more formidable barriers to negotiate before they could even begin to think about volunteering.

However, that is not to say that we should forget about tackling exclusion from volunteering, or that it is an insignificant issue. Making volunteering more inclusive may only be a small step in addressing the inequalities within society as a whole, but it is, we suggest, a step that could have wider impacts and which we have a responsibility to make.

Volunteering as one element of social exclusion

I have come to realise that voluntary work is a kind of activity for the privileged – those who are already marginalised are not likely to volunteer because of the precarious nature of their lifestyles already (volunteer, BME).

Asian women have very little liberty or freedom within their own culture or community, let alone volunteering, so volunteering is way down the agenda (member of staff).

In communities that are disadvantaged . . . it is hand-to-mouth needs which they concentrate on, with no time or inclination or skills to volunteer (member of staff).

With refugees they want their immediate problems solved before they can think of anything else such as volunteering (member of staff).

If you don't feel part of the community, how can you give back? For example, for ethnic communities, if you feel excluded from your community, then how can you give something back to it, or why should you? (member of staff and volunteer, BME).

I think it's wonderful when people like you [the researcher] come in and say what can we do now [to increase access to volunteering], because what we need is laws to protect us, without that we are “bleep, bleep” (non-volunteer, disabled).



Chapter Seven: Where we go from here: Conclusions and implications

What can we conclude about the relationship between volunteering and social exclusion? And where do those conclusions lead us?

The impact of volunteering

First of all, can volunteering really help to tackle social exclusion? We were not looking for schemes that had been specifically set up for this purpose. Nor were we looking at volunteering in its entirety. Rather, we were examining the contribution that formal volunteering within organisations can make to the lives of individuals. We found that volunteering does indeed alleviate the symptoms of social exclusion both for individuals and communities, and can also help in the fight against its causes. We saw, for example, how people who volunteered felt less isolated and had a better chance of moving on to paid work.

For some people, volunteering does provide a route into employment, which government (and many others) see in turn as the main route out of exclusion. But this is not the only contribution that volunteering makes to inclusion, nor is it (for many people) the main benefit to be derived from volunteering. By providing people with skills, knowledge and personal development, volunteering helps people to help themselves. On a more personal level, volunteering provides a vital source of social interaction for many people, reducing their sense of isolation, which has been identified as an important element in social exclusion for some people (see for example Morris, 2000). Volunteering is also a source of pride and dignity, enabling people to make an important contribution to a community from which they may previously have been excluded.

At the same time, by taking part in volunteering, people can overturn widespread misconceptions about “socially excluded” groups. They can challenge the assumption that members of such groups are only ever at the receiving end of volunteering. In this way, volunteering can help to overcome the prejudices that perpetuate social exclusion. Volunteering can also increase social capital by enabling people to work together in communities.

We are not suggesting, however, that if mainstream organisations do succeed in involving more volunteers from the groups we studied, this will bring about social inclusion all by itself. That is too ambitious a claim. Indeed, we feel that governments (as well as practitioners and researchers) sometimes need to be realistic about what volunteering can achieve. We do not want to see it set up to fail. Volunteering is only one part of a wider set of policies, programmes and forms of civic engagement that need to function together to tackle social exclusion. At the same time, however, we do believe that volunteering has a particularly important contribution to make.

Implications and recommendations

What are the implications of all this? On the one hand government

wants to tackle social exclusion by focusing on paid work, and on the other hand it has been a noteworthy champion of volunteering – how do these two different agendas fit together? Government must indeed be realistic about what volunteering can achieve, but at the same time it should not underestimate its potential. By taking too narrow a view of social exclusion or too narrow a view of volunteering, government is in danger of undervaluing the role of volunteers. They could look to do more to demonstrate the value of volunteering by, for example, including data on volunteering in national accounts. Practitioners could also look to do more to measure and then promote the benefits that volunteering brings. Researchers could look to carry out more comprehensive studies on the impact of volunteering and to providing more empirical evidence to support the business (and philosophical) case for diversifying volunteers.

Realising the potential of volunteering

But whatever the potential impact of (formal, organisationally based) volunteering, our findings confirm the opinion of others that, at present, it is not realising its potential. Volunteering is not yet fully inclusive, and so its contribution to combating social exclusion is being limited.

A number of barriers prevent people from volunteering in formal, organisational, settings. These barriers are both psychological and practical. They affect people's willingness and ability to volunteer at different points in time: some operate when an individual first thinks (or doesn't think) about volunteering, others operate when they attempt to take their first steps into volunteering, and yet others operate after they have become involved.

We are not the first to draw attention to these barriers, but our findings have added weight to what was previously mainly anecdotal evidence. By listening to the experiences of individuals and organisations, we have realised that rather than examining the exclusion of specific groups from volunteering, we ought to be looking at the wider barriers that prevent many different groups of people from getting involved.

Implications and recommendations

The broader implications are, firstly, that there is a need to acknowledge that many of the barriers to volunteering mirror the barriers to other forms of civic participation – volunteering itself is subject to the forces of social exclusion. Therefore the volunteering movement alone cannot address the structural causes of exclusion.

Secondly, the range of pressures that volunteer-involving organisations face, many of which may hinder them from working towards inclusiveness, need to be recognised.

In general then, trying to persuade people to volunteer by finding new ways of asking them is simply not enough to enable people from marginalised groups to volunteer. (See Henderson and Salmon, 2002, for similar arguments on how government seems to think this is all that is needed to achieve community involvement). This simplistic approach to volunteering has led to a proliferation of target-driven initiatives such as Experience Corps and Millennium Volunteers

(although MV has had considerable success in getting young people into volunteering for the first time).

Policy-makers and practitioners cannot go on asking ever more people to volunteer by launching ever-larger campaigns. Instead efforts need to be made to dismantle the wider barriers that prevent people from volunteering. This is not a simple task – which may explain why it has so far been somewhat neglected. There is a need for a far more comprehensive programme of challenging people's perceptions and building their capacity – many people may have to experience a “pre-volunteering” stage during which their confidence and skills are developed. It will take a great deal of commitment, time and resources to build trust and to persuade people to participate. Government could consider developing a programme to meet this need.

There is a need to look at the demand side of volunteering as well the supply side (see Barnes, 2000, for similar arguments on employment policies for disabled people). Do organisations really have the capacity to involve excluded people as volunteers? Although organisations are crying out for volunteers, it is naïve to assume that they will all accept anyone who comes along with open arms. In many cases they have neither the resources nor the commitment to do so. It is a classic dilemma: the organisation needs more volunteers to help deliver services, but in order to attract those volunteers it must use up scarce time and resources. Admittedly, some of the barriers can be tackled with a few minor changes and a little more thought – and indeed, during our research we found many good examples of organisations and individuals who had surmounted those barriers – and organisations could do more in this regard. But other barriers are more intractable.

Government could look to provide funding for improving the capacity of organisations to involve volunteers from marginalised groups. One example might be providing resources to volunteer infrastructure organisations to recruit volunteer support workers. Meanwhile, researcher could undertake further analysis on what the volunteer management capacity of organisations currently is and what it could or should be.

The bigger picture

Social exclusion has many aspects (poverty and income, unemployment, housing and environment, disability and chronic illness, crime, discrimination) and so lends itself to intervention by a range of different agencies (Henderson and Salmon, 2001).

Volunteering can play an important role in this “multi-agency approach”. But there needs to be more “joined-up thinking” as well. Although volunteering can be effective at the micro-policy level, by empowering individuals and local communities, we also need macro-policies to tackle the wider structural causes of social exclusion. The two levels of policy need to work together in unison.

Implications and recommendations

A number of different examples could be given of macro-policies that could be adapted or extended to help volunteering.

As we have seen, volunteering can be an effective step into paid work,

and the government has recognised this, yet it does not extend programmes such as Access to Work to volunteering. Nor does the Disability Discrimination Act or the racial discrimination legislation cover volunteers. All anti-discriminatory legislation should be extended to cover volunteers – indeed, many disabled people are adamant that legislation is the only way to extend their rights. This is not to suggest that every aspect of volunteering should be legislated for – just that certain safety nets are needed. A legislative framework is needed that safeguards volunteers, but does not dictate how they should be organised. What exactly the legislative framework should look like needs more consideration by policy-makers, practitioners and researchers.

A similar approach could be adopted to benefits. Benefit regulations have been a major barrier to volunteering – in both practical terms and psychological terms. A number of solutions are possible here. Government could, for example, follow Lister’s (2001) suggestion of exempting benefit claimants involved in “approved” voluntary or community work from normal job-seeking requirements. This would show that volunteering is genuinely valued, as an alternative to paid work for some people and a route to paid work for others. However, the danger is that by “approving” some forms of volunteering and not others we could establish a two-tier system, rather than recognising the value of all forms of volunteering. Another danger might be that the organisations that involve the volunteers might be expected to police the scheme.

There are less radical alternatives. Officially recognising volunteering as a legitimate step towards work would help make the regulations clearer to benefits claimants and make benefits staff less suspicious of it. More should be done to ensure that the frontline staff dealing with benefits payments know the existing rules about volunteering, and subsequently to ensure that they promote it to their clients. Too many of their clients are still under the impression that their benefits will stop if they start volunteering.

Another solution would be to tackle the “time barrier”. Surveys show that people in the UK work the longest hours in Europe. This means that people have less “free time” to undertake activities such as volunteering. A Department of Trade and Industry survey (2004) found that 38% of adults aged 35–55 felt they spent too much time at work, at the expense of other commitments; and 44% of respondents said they would do some form of voluntary work if they could solve their work-life balance. By tackling the big issue of work-life balance, government could also improve access to volunteering. It has been running a Work-Life Balance Campaign since 2000, but there is little evidence that this is being effectively linked to volunteering promotion. Organisations can also help here, firstly by telling potential volunteers that they only need to give small amounts of time, and secondly by adapting their practices so that they can be more flexible about time. Researchers can also do more to explore people’s perceptions of time and how they use it.

Valuing diversity in volunteering

There is yet another important aspect to the theme of volunteering and social exclusion. This report has focused on volunteering within organisations, and predominately mainstream ones at that. We are not alone in this: government, and to a large extent the volunteering infrastructure, has also focused primarily on formal volunteering so far.

However, our findings suggest that, if formal volunteering remains the only type of voluntary involvement to be recognised, this could reinforce social exclusion rather than reduce it. We have shown that different groups of people tend to pursue different forms of volunteering: for example, many members of BME communities engage in informal volunteering and many disabled people prefer to campaign for disability organisations. But if formal volunteering is seen as more important than other types (Williams’ (2003) “hierarchical ladder” model), we risk marginalising the dominant forms of volunteering in excluded communities. We cannot force (or should not seek) to fit people into mainstream society by giving precedence to certain types of volunteering. Rather we should recognise and celebrate the diversity of volunteering in all its manifestations.

Implications and recommendations

There is a need to bring our knowledge and understanding on forms of volunteering together. Community development practices that encourage “participation” or informal volunteering have been regarded as having little to do with formal voluntary action. There is a need, instead, to understand the links between them: how people and communities participate in ways that recognise no boundaries between different types of volunteering – formal and informal; advocacy and campaigning, philanthropy and service, mutual aid, self-help and community development, and participation.



Bibliography and further reading

Attwood, C., Singh, G., Prime, D., Creasey, R. and others (2003) *2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey: People, families and communities, Home Office Research Study 270*, Home Office: London.

Barnes, C. (2000) 'A Working Model? Disability, work and disability politics in the twenty-first century' *Critical Social Policy* 20(4).

Billis, D. (2001) 'Tackling Social Exclusion: The Contribution of voluntary organisations', Chp3 pp.37-48 in M. Harris and C. Rochester (Eds) *Voluntary Organisations and Social Policy in Britain*, Palgrave: Basingstoke

Blunkett, D. (2001) *From strength to strength: Re-building the community through voluntary action*. A speech to the Annual Conference of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 7 February 2001, London.

Brown, G. (2000) Speech by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the Annual Conference of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 9th February 2000, London.

Burchardt, T. (2000) *The Dynamics of Being Disabled*, CASEpaper36, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion. London School of Economics: Research Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) available at <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/cp/CASEpaper36.pdf>

Cabinet Office (1998) *Bringing Britain together: a national strategy for neighbourhood renewal*, The Stationery Office: London.

Caldwell, K. and Wiegand, M. (2001) *Volunteer Participation and Life Satisfaction Among People with Disabilities: A Pilot Study*. School of Science and Health Graduate Program in Occupational Therapy. Available at <http://www.geocities.com/givestore/lifesatis.html>

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (1996) *Managing Diversity: An IPD position paper*, accessed from: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/7D4AAB6A-CCB4-4B22-889F-6754879BD110/0/divers.pdf>

Cnaan, R., Handy, F., and Wansworth, M. (1996) 'Defining who is a volunteer: conceptual and empirical considerations', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 25, pp 364-383.

Clark, S. (2003) *You Cannot be Serious: A guide to involving volunteers with mental health problems*, The National Centre for Volunteering: London.

Community Service Volunteers (1986) *A Lot of Experience: Disabled people's views of volunteering*, CSV: London.

Corden, A. and Sainsbury, R. (2001) *Incapacity Benefits and Work Incentives*, Department of Social Security Research Report No. 141, Corporate Document Services: Leeds.

Davis Smith, J. (1998) *The 1997 National Survey of Volunteering*, The National Centre for Volunteering: London.

Davis Smith, J. (2000) 'Volunteering and social development', *Voluntary Action*, 3 (1), pp 9-23.

Davis Smith, J., with Locke, M. and Shepherd, J. (1998) *Volunteering for Employment, A Review of the Literature*, Institute for Volunteering Research: London.

DSS (1998) *New Ambitions for our Country: A new contract for welfare*, Cmd 3805, The Stationery Office: London.

Department of Trade and Industry (2004) *Britain's Workers Crave More Time with Friends*, Reference P/2004/6, accessed on 26/02/04 at http://www.dti.gov.uk/work-lifebalance/press_2704a.html

- Eley, D. (2001) 'The impact of volunteering on citizenship qualities in young people', *Voluntary Action*, 4(1), pp 65-82.
- Ellis, A. (2003) *Barriers to Participation for Under-represented Groups in School Governance, Research report 500*, Department for Education and Skills: Nottingham.
- Farrant, F. and Levenson, J. (2002) *Barred Citizens: Volunteering and active citizenship by prisoners*, Prison Reform Trust: London.
- Forster, J. (1997) *Potential of a Lifetime: the third age volunteering report*, The Carnegie Trust: Dunfermline
- Foster, J. (1997) *Volunteering by Members of Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in Britain, Dimensions of the Voluntary Sector: Key facts, figures, analysis and trends*, Charities Aid Foundation: London.
- Foster, J., and Mirza, K. (1997) *By the People: voluntary activity by African-Caribbean and Asian communities in Luton*, Voluntary Action Research, Fourth Series, paper 2, National Centre for Volunteering: London.
- Gaskin, K. (1998a) 'Vanishing Volunteers: Are young people losing interest in volunteering?', *Voluntary Action*, 1(1), pp 33-43.
- Gaskin, K. (1998b) *What Young People Want from Volunteering*, Institute for Volunteering Research: London.
- Gay, P. (1998) Getting into work: Volunteering for employability, *Voluntary Action*, 1(1), pp 55-67.
- Giddens, A. (1998) *The Third Way. The renewal of social democracy*, Polity Press: Cambridge.
- Goss, N. (2000) *Mind the Gap: Disability, Opportunity, and Employment*, Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation: London.
- Handy, F., Cnaan, R., Brudney, J., Ascoli, U., Meijs, J., and Ranade, S. (2000) 'Public perception of "who is a volunteer": an examination of the net-cost approach from a cross-cultural perspective', *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations*, 11 (1) pp 45-65.
- Hann, C. (2003) *Making Diversity Happen! A practical guide for voluntary and community organisations with case studies and checklists*, NCVO: London.
- Henderson, P. and Salmon, H. (2001) *Social Exclusion and Community Development*, Community Development Foundation: London.
- Hirst, A. (2001) *Links between Volunteering and Employability*, Research Report 309, Department for Employment and Skills: Nottingham.
- Howlett, S. (1999) *Volunteering into Participation: Volunteering, social exclusion and regeneration*, Paper presented at the NCVO 5th Researching the Voluntary Sector Conference, 7-8 September, City University, London.
- Kamat, A. (2001) *Room for Growth: Patterns and potential in Black and Minority Ethnic volunteering*, Community Development Foundation: London.
- Knight, J. and Brent, M. (1999) *Excluding Attitudes: Disabled people's experience of social exclusion*, Leonard Cheshire: London.
- Kinds, H., Munz, A. & Horn, L. (2000) *Volunteering into Participation: A strategy for social inclusion*, 2000, Community Partnership Consultants: Amsterdam.
- Institute for Volunteering Research (2002) *UK-Wide Evaluation of the Millennium Volunteers Programme*, Department for Education and Skills: Nottingham.
- Knight, J. & Brent, M. (1998) *Access Denied: Disabled peoples' experience of social exclusion*, Leonard Cheshire: London.

- Knight, J. & Brent, M. (1999) *Excluding Attitudes: Disabled people's experience of social exclusion*, Leonard Cheshire: London.
- Lautenschlager, J. (1992) *Bridges to the Future: Supported programmes for volunteers with special needs*, Canadian Heritage: Ottawa.
- Levitas, R. (1998) *The Inclusive Society? Social exclusion and New Labour*, Macmillan: Basingstoke.
- Lister, R. (1990) *The Exclusive Society: Citizenship and the poor*, Child Poverty Action Group: London.
- Lister, R. (2001) 'Doing Good by Stealth: The politics of poverty and inequality under New Labour', *New Economy* 8(2) pp 65-70.
- Little, M. (2001) 'Brand on the run', *Third Sector*, May 2001.
- Lukka, P. and Ellis, A. (2001) 'An exclusive construct? Exploring different cultural concepts of volunteering' *Voluntary Action*, 3(3) pp 87-109.
- Lynn, P. and Davis Smith, J. (1992) *The 1991 National Survey of Voluntary Action, Second Series Paper No.1*, The Volunteer Centre UK: Berkhamsted.
- Michael, A. (1998) 'Volunteering and Community Action – Building the Future Together' *RSA Journal*, pp 61-67.
- Mole, V. and Harrow, J. (2003) *Managing Diversity in the Workplace: An introduction for voluntary and community organisations*, NCVO: London.
- Morris, J. (2000) 'That kind of life?': *Social exclusion and young disabled people with high levels of support needs*, Scope: London.
- National Council of Voluntary Organisations (2004) *The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac*, NCVO: London.
- Niyazi, F. (1996a) *Volunteering by People with Disabilities*, The National Centre for Volunteering: London.
- Niyazi, F. (1996b) *Volunteering by Black People: a route to opportunity*, National Centre for Volunteering: London.
- Obaze, D. (2000) *Noticeable by their absence*, National Coalition for Black Volunteering: London.
- Oppenheim, C. (ed) (1998) *An Inclusive Society. Strategies for tackling poverty*. IPPR: London.
- Paxton, W. and Nash, V. (2002) *Any volunteers for a good society?* IPPR: London.
- Putnam, R. (2000) *Bowling Alone. The collapse and revival of American community*. Touchstone: New York.
- Restall, M. (2003) 'Breaking the Benefits Barrier' *Volunteering Magazine*, August 2003, 90 pp 12-13.
- Retired and Senior Volunteers Programme (2000) *Disability Need be no Handicap: Creating opportunities in volunteering*, RSVP, Community Service Volunteers: London.
- Room, G. (1997) *Social Quality in Europe: Perspectives on Social Exclusion*, in Beck, W.; Van der Neesen, I. & Walker, A. (eds) *The Social Quality of Europe*, The Policy Press: Bristol.
- Russell, L. and Scott, D. (1997) *Very Active Citizens? The impact of contracts on volunteers*, The University of Manchester: Manchester.
- Ruston, D. (2003) *Volunteers, Helpers and Socialisers: Social capital and time use*. Office for National Statistics: London, available at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/articles/njournal/Time_Use_Volunteers_helpers_socialisers.pdf
- Seyfang, G. (2001) 'Spending Time, Building Communities: Evaluating time banks and mutual volunteering as a tool for tackling social exclusion', *Voluntary Action*, 4(1) pp 29-48.

Appendix A: Resources

Skill (1999) 'Disability and Equality in Volunteering' *Volunteering Magazine*, 45(21).

Skill (2000) *Into Volunteering: Positive experiences of disabled people*, Skill: London.

Stopforth, S. (2001) 'The Effects of Volunteering on Refugees' Prospects of Getting Paid Work', *Voluntary Action*, 4(1) pp 11-27.

Social Exclusion Unit (2000) *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: A framework for consultation*, Cabinet Office: London.

Social Exclusion Unit (2004) *Welcome to the Social Exclusion Unit*, The SEU website home page is at <http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk>

Terry-Schumann, J. (2000) *Are volunteers allies or oppressors of disabled people? An examination of the effects on the lives of disabled people of volunteer-provided services*, MA thesis for University of Leeds.

Thomas, A. and Finch, H. (1990) *A Qualitative Research Study of Images, Motivations and Experiences*, Voluntary Action Research Paper No.2, The Volunteer Centre: Berkhamsted.

Volunteering Magazine (2003) 'Pilots prepare for take-off' *Volunteering Magazine*, August 2003,90, pp10-12.

Walmsley, J. (1993) "Talking to top people": some issues relating to the citizenship of people with learning difficulties' in Swain, J., Finkelstein, V., French, S., and Oliver, M. (eds), *Disability Barriers – Enabling Environments*, Sage: London.

Wales Council for Voluntary Action (2001) 'The Ability to Volunteer' *Network Wales*, 5th March 2001.

Williams, C. (2003) 'Cultivating Voluntary Action in Deprived Neighbourhoods: A fourth sector approach', *Voluntary Action*, 5(3) pp 11-25.

What follows is a list of useful resources, publications and organisations that have been categorised according to different aspects of volunteering. It is not a totally comprehensive list, but should give you some good starting points. The categories are:

- General information and good practice guides on volunteering;
- Diversity
- Ex-offenders
- Disabled people
- People from black and minority ethnic communities
- Where to go to volunteer

General information and good practice guides on volunteering

Volunteering England's Information Service (previously the National Centre for Volunteering) offers a comprehensive list of free information sheets on aspects of volunteering, which you can access on line. Topics covered include *Finding out about volunteering; Health and safety for volunteers; the National minimum wage; Sample Volunteer Agreements; Screening and police checking; Types of insurance policy which cover volunteers; volunteer drivers; Volunteering and State benefits; Who is allowed to volunteer.*

All of these can be accessed on-line at <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/workwith/sheets.htm> or by post from (free of charge with SAE) form:

Information Service
Volunteering England
Regent's Wharf,
8 All Saints Street
London, N1 9RL

A helpline is also available on FREEPHONE 0800 028 3304 (UK Only)
Volunteering England has also produced a Good Practice Guide dealing with all aspects of volunteer engagement:

- Bowgett, K; Dickie, K and Restall, M (2002) *The Good Practice Guide for everyone who works with volunteers. Second edition*, National Centre for Volunteering.

Available from the above address or through the ordering facility via www.volunteering.org.uk or by contacting the marketing officer on Tel: 020 7520 8936

Volunteering England has also produced a series of smaller good practice guides:

- Bowgett, K (2003) *Deciding whether to involve volunteers*
- Dickie, K (2003) *Risk management*
- McManus, M.T; Kerr, A and Lazard, T (2003) *Making your organisation accessible*
- Restall, R (2003) *Safe involvement of volunteers with vulnerable clients*

Each of these guides provides key information on an essential area of good practice, and each has a list of further information. All are available from Volunteering England at the above address.

The Institute for Volunteering Research has published research on what volunteers want from organisations in terms of how they are supported and managed. The reference for the publication is:

- Gaskin, K (2003) *A Choice Blend. What volunteers want from organisations and management*, The Institute for Volunteering Research: London.

A summary of the report is available from:

The Institute for Volunteering Research
Regent's Wharf,
8 All Saints Street
London N1 9RL

Tel: 020 7520 8911

Email: nicola.ponikiewski@volunteeringengland.org

Or you can order a full copy of the report online, from:
www.volunteering.org.uk/publications

Diversity Resources

Volunteering England's website features information on diversity among volunteers. These pages can be accessed from: <http://www.volunteering.org.uk>

The diversity pages on the website provides information and advice for organisations seeking to diversify the range of volunteers supporting their activities and services. The site includes definitions of diversity, lessons on how to persuade your chief executive to back your drive for diversity, and a toolkit providing practical resources to help you achieve greater diversity.

NCVO have produced a number of publications and guides on managing diversity in voluntary organisations – although not specifically focused on volunteers, they provide a useful point of reference and many of the lessons are transferable.

- NCVO (2004) *Are You Looking At Me? A practical pick and mix guide to recruiting a diverse workforce*, NCVO: London.

This guide provides 10 checklists covering the whole recruitment process. Supporting the checklists are 20 'building blocks' that include sample documents, adverts, and application packs. Details of this publication, and how you can purchase it, are available from the publication section of NCVO's website - www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

- Hann, C. (2003) *Making Diversity Happen: A practical guide for voluntary and community organisations with case studies and checklists*, NCVO: London.

This guide aims to give voluntary sector leaders, trustees, managers, diversity officers and others with an interest in the diversity agenda, practical ideas on how to implement diversity. The publication takes the reader through a series of steps from mission to action plan. Details of this publication, and how you can purchase it, are available from the publication section of NCVO's website - www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

- Mole, V. and Harrow, J. (2003) *Managing Diversity in the Workplace: An introduction for voluntary and community organisations*, NCVO: London

This publication is based on a review of existing literature on managing diversity. A summary of this publication is available online from askNCVO at www.askNCVO.org.uk/diversity. You can obtain a copy of the full 57 page literature review by contacting the NCVO Helpdesk on 0800 798798 or emailing helpdesk@askNCVO.org.uk

Ex-Offenders

Nacro is an independent charity working to reduce crime and to help settle offenders. Nacro produces a range of useful resettlement good practice briefings such as:

- A brief guide to recruiting people with criminal records

A briefing for employers who recruit, but which contains information useful to help organisations think about volunteers with records of offence.

- Finding a job Information for people working with prisoners and ex-offenders

This guide is for people working with prisoners and ex-offenders, it introduces the idea of voluntary work to get skills and experience and provides a introduction for people working with ex-offenders to build upon why volunteering can benefit them.

- The sorting yourself out guide to applying for work (with a criminal record)

This leaflet is aimed at ex-offenders and offers guidance on how to disclose a criminal record.

All of the above are available for free in single copies (in a PDF format as well as printed), and for purchase in multiple copies. NACRO also offers more detailed guides for sale such as *Recruiting ex-offenders: the employers perspective*.

Further information can be obtained via the NACRO web-site: www.nacro.org.uk

Or from:

Nacro
169 Clapham Road
London
SW9 0PU

Tel 020 7582 6500

Fax 020 7735 4666

Nacro help is also available via the *Resettlement Plus* Helpline on 020 7840 6464 (helpline@nacro.org.uk)

The Criminal Record Bureau offers advice about criminal records. You can find their website at <http://www.crb.gov.uk/>. It contains further advice on disclosure and a list of umbrella bodies through which organisations not registered with the bureau, but wishing to carry out checks on volunteers, can be found.

Volunteering England's Information Sheet, *Screening and police checking*, offers advice about the need to police check volunteers, including advice about when an ex-offender may be asked to give details of spent convictions when working with 'vulnerable' people. Information sheets are available free of charge (with SAE) from :

Information Service
Volunteering England
Regent's Wharf,
8 All Saints Street
London N1 9RL

Or online at <http://volunteering.org.uk/workwith/screening.htm>

A helpline is also available on FREEPHONE 0800 028 3304 (UK only)

Disabled Volunteers

Skill: The National Bureau for Students with Disabilities have published a booklet called *Into volunteering positive experiences of disabled people*. The booklet details the experiences of disabled volunteers. It provides advice as well as some stories from disabled volunteers about their volunteering

Skill National Bureau for Students with Disabilities
Chapter House
18-20 Crucifix Lane
London SE1 3JW

Tel: Voice/text 020 7450 0620
Fax: 020 7450 0650
Email: admin@skill.org.uk
Website: www.skill.org.uk

Skill also have an information service open 1:30 – 4:30pm Monday to Friday

Tel: Voice 0800 328 5050
Text 0800 068 2422
Email info@skill.org.uk

Volunteering England has published a guide to involving volunteers with mental health problems. The reference is:

- Clark, S (2003) *You cannot be serious. A guide to involving volunteers with mental health problems*

This handbook by Sherry Clark is a good practice guide that also contains sample volunteer application and feedback forms as well as sections on further reading about mental health. This publication is available from

Volunteering England
Regent's Wharf,
8 All Saints Street
London N1 9RL

The Social Model of disability

The **disability equality website** <http://www.disability-equality.com/>, provides an introduction to the social model of disability.

The **Essex Coalition of Disabled People** has written a very clear introduction to the social model of disability, for the Social Firms of Essex. This can be found at: http://www.socialfirmsforessex.org.uk/Social_Model_of_Disability.pdf

Disability Equality Training

The benefits of Disability Equality Training as well as a great deal of other information about suitable terminology, civil rights for disabled people and a contact to find out about training can be found at <http://www.disability-equality.com/>

Many disabled peoples' organisations deliver disability awareness training; <http://www.disability-equality.com/> contains a contact which outlines how they can help or direct you to other places, they can be contacted on Info@disability-equality .com

Or at

Outside Centre Limited
PO Box 2237
Wolverhampton
WV3 9XB
Phone/fax 01902 716747

In London GLAD, **Greater London Action on Disability** run Disability Equality Training courses as well as providing a comprehensive range of advice and information about Civil Rights and other disability related issues, GLAD have a help line which can be contacted on 020 7346 5800 ext 43 or e-mail: info@glad.org.uk

GLAD's website can be found at <http://www.glad.org.uk/index.shtml>

Black and Minority Ethnic Volunteers

The Ethnic Minority Foundation (EMF) is a charity seeking to build capacity within minority ethnic community organisations while also stimulating increased participation in regeneration and neighbourhood renewal, influencing policy and practice at local, regional and national level and recruiting volunteers to act as trustees, mentors and in decision-making processes. EMF can be found at

<http://ethnicminorityfund.org.uk/html/index.asp>

Volunteering England has published a practical handbook for involving people who are asylum seekers as volunteers. The reference is:

- Wilson, R (2003) *The a-z of volunteering and asylum. A handbook for managers*

NCVO – the National Council for Voluntary Organisations have produced two publications concerning BME representation as trustees of charities and community groups:

- Akpeki, T. (1997) *Governance in Focus: A Race and Gender Perspective. Resource material on Trusteeship for Ethnic Minority Women.*
- Akpeki, T. (2001) *Recruiting and Supporting Black and Minority Ethnic Trustees*

Both are available from:

NVCO
Regents Wharf
8 All Saints Street
London
N1 9RL

Tel: 020 7713 6161

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

Welfare benefits

The **Volunteering England** information sheet - *Volunteers and welfare benefits, expenses and tax* provides a useful guide to benefits regulations with regard to volunteering. Information sheets are available free of charge from www.volunteering.org.uk, or contact the information service on 0800 028 3304.

Jobcentre Plus has produced a leaflet entitled *Volunteering while unemployed helps others and can help you*, although aimed at potential volunteers, it does provide a useful summary of how voluntary work affects benefits. This can be downloaded from: <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/centre/JSAL7.pdf>

Appendix B Methodology

Where to go to volunteer

Finding information out about where to volunteer can be the hard, but volunteer bureau exist in most big towns and cities to help you do just this. These are places where organisations that need volunteers advertise the opportunities they have. But not only this, volunteer bureau employ skilled staff who can help you to think about what sort of volunteering you might want to do linked to your interests and what you want to get out of it. Some volunteer bureau also have specialist staff who can provide extra support to help you find opportunities and settle-in.

You can find your local volunteer bureau in the 'phone book, but you could also use the 'VB finder' on the Do-it web-site (see below). And if you do not want to go through your local Volunteer bureau you can use this site to directly look for organisations in your area that want volunteers.

There are other organisations that help people find volunteering placements, these include:

do-it

do-it enables you to search on-line for volunteering activities, drawing from a massive database of opportunities with organisations from around the country. Simply select the type of activity you are interested in, then type in your postcode, and do-it will provide a list of possibilities.

If you are an organisation that needs volunteers, you can also post volunteering opportunities on do-it.

do-it can be found on the web at www.do-it.org.uk.

TimeBank aims to help people volunteer, while also more generally raising the profile of volunteering, redefining volunteering, and diversifying volunteering. They provide several different ways in which you can access volunteering opportunities (both in the UK and overseas). Just fill in your details and they will put you in touch with relevant organisations.

TimeBank can be found on the web at: www.timebank.org.uk

Millennium Volunteers (MV) is an initiative aimed encouraging young people (16-24 year olds) to get into volunteering.

You can find details at: www.mv-online.gov.uk

Community Service Volunteers (CSV) place thousands of volunteers every year, and they have a policy of never turning anybody away – a belief that everyone has something to offer is part of their ethos. CSV's contact details are:

237 Pentonville Road
London
N1 9NJ
Tel: 020 7643 1428 (voice); 020 7833 1894 (text)
Fax: 020 7837 9261
Email: information@csv.org.uk
Website: www.csv.org.uk

The approach

The research was conducted in a number of phases, and used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods:

Literature review

A review of the literature was conducted, distilling the findings of previous research on volunteering and social exclusion/inclusion, and volunteering among disabled people, people from BME groups, and people with a record of offence. This literature included:

- Academic literature accessed through database searches, including, for example: Bids social science index (www.bids.ac.uk); Ingenta (www.ingenta.co.uk); Arnova (www.arnova.com); British Library (<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/toppage.html>); Energize (www.energizeinc.com); and the National Centre for Volunteering library (www.volunteering.org.uk);
- Published practitioner literature accessed through contacts with organisations working with the three groups;
- Grey unpublished literature collected throughout the course of the research from the case studies and other organisations working in the field.

Consultation interviews with key stakeholders

In order to identify key issues affecting the groups under study, consultation interviews were conducted with key volunteering organisations, and those working with disabled people, ex-offenders and people from BME communities.

This initial phase of the research also served to identify the three geographical regions within which the research was based, and to form partnerships with the key volunteer development agencies (VDAs) in Devon, Haringey, and East Devon. These partnerships were fundamental to the subsequent phases of the research, enabling the research team to draw on the VDAs local knowledge and expertise, as well as their extensive lists of local contacts.

Questionnaire surveys

Three questionnaire surveys were conducted – one with volunteers; one with non-volunteers; and one with organisations.

For the **organisational survey**, attempts were made to include as many and as diverse a range of organisations as possible from the three geographical areas. Organisations were sampled from the databases of the VDA's in each area, with supplementary samples derived (where necessary) from directories, such as the guide to voluntary, community and statutory organisations in Sheffield. In total 98 organisations responded to the questionnaire, 43 of these organisations were based in East Devon; 19 in Haringey; and 36 in Sheffield.

The type of organisation responding to the survey varied greatly, from national organisations to large regional organisations to much smaller community based organisations.

Volunteer questionnaires were distributed via the organisations targeted within the survey. Each organisation was sent three volunteer questionnaires to be distributed to their volunteers from the three target groups. It is impossible to estimate the total number of questionnaires that actually reached volunteers. In total 203 questionnaires were returned from volunteers across the three areas; 91 from volunteers in East Devon; 30 from Haringey; and 82 from Sheffield.

While the survey aimed to capture the views of volunteers from the three target groups (BME, disabled people, and offenders/ex-offenders), a number of responses came from volunteers who did not belong to any of these groups.

While the questionnaire survey was relatively successful at capturing the views of BME volunteers and disabled volunteers, it was less successful at reaching offenders/ex-offenders. After reflection, the responses from volunteers who were not in our target group were included in the main analysis as they provided important insights into the barriers to volunteering.

In order to capture the views of non-volunteers, organisations were also asked (where applicable) to request two of their service users who were not volunteering to complete a ‘non-volunteer’ survey. While we acknowledge the severe limitations of such a methodology in terms of reaching ‘socially excluded’ individuals to gain their opinions on volunteering, the survey served as a starting point which would be developed further through case studies, focus groups and one-to-one interviews.

In total 40 non-volunteers completed questionnaires; 22 came from East Devon; 8 from Haringey; and 10 from Sheffield.

All three questionnaires contained a mixture of open and closed questions. All replies were analysed through SPSS, a statistical package for social science research.

Case studies

We undertook detailed case studies with selected organisations in Devon (we extended beyond the boundaries of East Devon slightly in order to identify appropriate organisations), Sheffield and Haringey. A majority of the organisations were selected from those who had responded to the initial questionnaire and expressed an interest in getting involved further. In addition, additional contacts of the VDAs in each region were followed-up in order to identify as broader range of organisations as possible.

The case studies mainly involved ‘mainstream’ organisations that involved volunteers. Some were selected as they had been particularly successful in attracting volunteers from one or more of our target groups, others were selected to give a range of more general volunteer-involving organisations. In addition, some of the case studies were based in ‘community’ organisations, focusing specifically, for example, on disabled people or people from BME groups.

It proved more difficult than we first imagined to identify organisations in each of the three regions that had successfully involved a substantial number of volunteers from one, or more, of our three target groups. This was particularly problematic in East Devon where the small size of many organisations, and the small size, for example, of the ethnic population meant that we had a limited pool of organisations to select from. In order to overcome this issue in East Devon we had to extend the boundaries of our research slightly to allow the inclusion of organisations from a wider area in Devon.

Each case study involved in-depth interviews with volunteers and staff. The research team used semi-structured topic guides, and the general approach was to keep the interviews as informal as possible. Case studies interviews, where agreed, were taped and subsequently transcribed for analysis. In total 78 interviews were conducted during this phase of the research.

Focus groups

In order to supplement and re-check some of the emerging findings generated through earlier stages of research, a series of focus groups was held with volunteers and non-volunteers from the three target groups.

Given that identifying significant numbers of volunteers, and the difficulty of identifying non-volunteers from the three target groups through organisations had proven somewhat challenging, this stage followed a different strategy. We worked with membership and umbrella groups to identify focus groups of disabled non-volunteers and volunteers and volunteers and non-volunteers from BME groups. For ex-offenders, the group that was hardest to involve in the research, we worked with a charity for the rehabilitation of offenders to convene a focus group of ex-offenders who did not volunteer.

All focus groups were taped and later transcribed for analysis.

Appendix C Terminology

The following provides a glossary of terms we have used in this document and working definitions that have informed the research. However, it is important to note that rather than the research team imposing any definitions, all the respondents within the research identified themselves as being disabled, from a black or minority ethnic group, and/or an ex-offender.

Volunteering

In this research we were asking about how people got involved with volunteering in organisations i.e. formal volunteering. We have used the definition of formal volunteering that appears in the 1997 National Survey of Volunteering:

Any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or to benefit the environment (Davis Smith, 1998)

The important definitional point here is that there is some organisational boundary around the activity be it a national voluntary organisation, statutory agency or more loose knit grouping such as a residents’ committee or sports club. Added to this is the important point that volunteering is undertaken through free will.

We were not looking specifically at informal volunteering, but inevitably found people who were engaged in this type of activity. Informal volunteering is defined as:

activity meeting the broad definition of volunteering but outside an organisational context – such as neighbour helping neighbour (Davis Smith 1998).

More broadly, Davis Smith (2000) has provided a useful typology to help disaggregate the variety of activities performed by volunteers, these are:

- Mutual aid or self-help – volunteering to provide help and support to others primarily to members of the same group or community;
- Philanthropy or service to others – volunteering to provide help and support, but distinguishable from self-help in that the recipients of the help are not primarily members of the group themselves;
- Participation – the role played by volunteers in governance, for example being parts of boards of trustees, or user-involvement in local development projects;
- Advocacy or campaigning – volunteering to lobby government and other organisations for a change in legislation.

Mainstream

We defined mainstream organisations as those which were providing advice and/or services to the community at large and were not focussed on specialist communities – i.e. in this instance not set up to benefit solely disabled people, ex-offenders or people from BME communities.

Social exclusion

Social exclusion is multi-dimensional and complex. The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) set up by the present New Labour government in the UK defines it as:

What can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown.

It is also an individually experienced feeling or state – shown in the fact that some of our interviewees felt this exclusion while others did not.

Social inclusion

We have looked at inclusion in the terms set out by Kinds, Munz, and Horn (2000) in their study of volunteering and social inclusion in Europe. They define social inclusion as:

- the opposite of exclusion, measurable in terms of indicators such as employment, education, voting, access to services and the like;
- a process which restores broken links between the individual resident and the community and encourages participation in community affairs;
- an individually experienced feeling or state.

Marginalisation

In the context of this study marginalisation refers to a facet of social exclusion where people who do not necessarily feel socially excluded, nevertheless feel that access to areas of social, civic and economic life, which may be taken for granted by others, are restricted.

Under-represented

Where groups of people are not represented in organisations in the numbers that would be expected based on their presence in the general population.

Diversity

Diversity is about valuing difference. It recognises that people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experiences bring fresh ideas and perceptions.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's position paper on managing diversity (1996) describes it as:

“Managing diversity is based on the concept that people should be valued as individuals for reasons related to business interests, as well as for moral and social reasons. It recognises that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and perceptions which can make the way work is done more efficient and products and services better.

Managing diversity successfully will help organisations to nurture creativity and innovation and thereby to tap hidden capacity for growth and improved competitiveness”.

Disability

The definition of disability we have used follows the social model of disability. This model of disability makes a key distinction between 'impairment' and 'disability'. Impairments are an injury, illness, or congenital condition that causes or is likely to cause a long term effect on physical appearance and / or limitation of function within the individual that differs from the commonplace. This includes learning difficulties, visually impaired, partially sighted, deaf, hard of hearing, people with epilepsy, people with mental health impairments, physically disabled people, People with HIV, arthritis, cerebral palsy. Disability is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in society on an equal level with others due to social and environmental barriers. In this model access issues arise not due to impairments, but because society is organised in a way which does not takes these impairments into account.

BME

Black and minority ethnic (BME) is a term used by the Home Office, Census Bureau and Commission for Racial Equality among others. We use BME to cover visible and non-white minorities, and other ethnic minorities such as Eastern European.

Ex-offenders

People who have a record of offence, spent or unspent.

Your feedback

Your views and feedback are important to us to see how this document has been used, and for us to shape further work in this area. So please take the time to complete this form.

1. Do the experiences and issues relayed in the publication ring true for you?

Yes – if yes, which aspects in particular?

No – if no, in what ways does your experience differ?

2. Has *Volunteering for All* made you think differently about:

- The ways in which volunteering can help combat social exclusion?

Yes No Not applicable

- The barriers to volunteering?

Yes No Not applicable

- How the barriers to volunteering can be tackled?

Yes No Not applicable

- The ways in which you involve volunteers?

Yes No Not applicable

3. What did you find most interesting about the publication?

4. What did you find least interesting?

5. Did you think that anything was missing from *Volunteering for All*?



Your feedback

6. How many people have read this copy of *Volunteering for All*?

7. Do you have any other comments that you would like to make about *Volunteering for All*?

Please answer the following questions about you and your organisation. They will help us to check what groups of people have read the publication.

8. Are you:

- From an organisation that works with volunteers
- From an organisation that places volunteers
- From a volunteering-infrastructure organisation
- An interested individual
- A practitioner
- Policymaker
- A researcher
- Other _____

9. Is your organisation:

- Public
- Private
- Voluntary
- Academic

10. Does your organisation have a specific target group:

- Disabled people
- People from BME communities
- Offenders/ex-offenders
- Other
- Non-specific

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

Please cut out this page or copy it and send it to:

The Institute for Volunteering Research, Regent's Wharf,
8 All Saints Street, London, N1 9RL

Or fax it to: 020 7520 8910

Or you can email us your comments to: instvolres@aol.com

The Institute for Volunteering Research aims to develop knowledge and understanding of volunteering and the context in which it operates, with particular relevance to policy and practice.

Its activities include:

- Strategic research
- Action research
- Organisational consultancy
- Programme evaluation
- Research reviews
- Seminars and publications