



The Commission
on the Future
of Volunteering

Colin Rochester

Making sense of volunteering

A literature review

December 2006

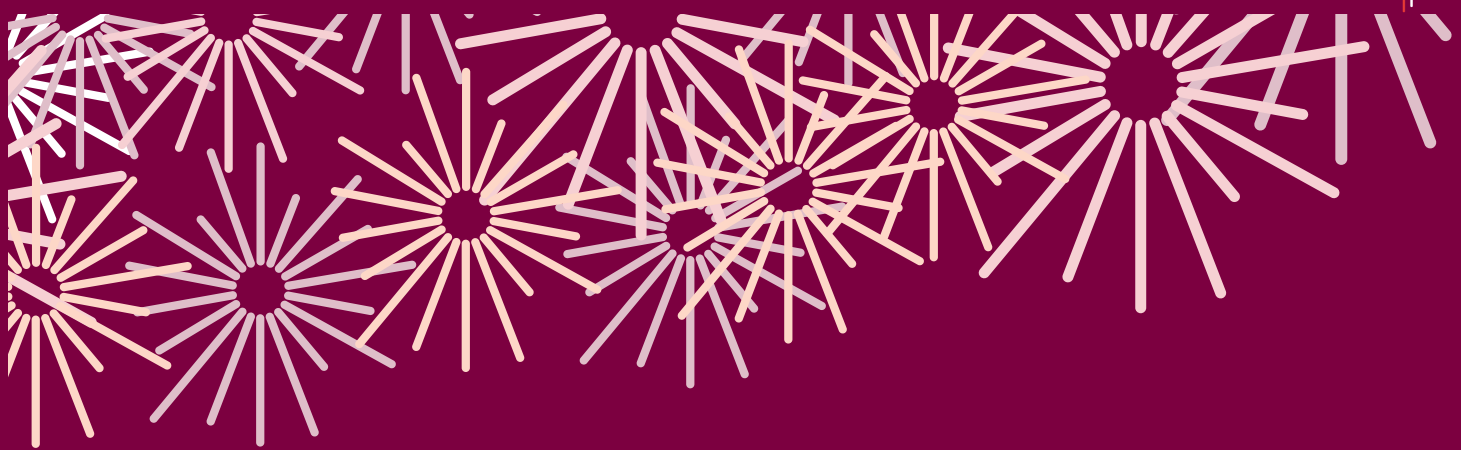




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Colin Rochester
10 September 2006



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Contents



Foreword by Baroness Neuberger	1
1 Introduction: expectations and aspirations	2
2 Making sense of volunteering	3
3 Who volunteers and why	9
4 A changing world	19
5 Challenges and choices	28
6 Tentative conclusions	31
References	34

Foreword

The Commission on the Future of Volunteering was established by the England Volunteering Development Council in March 2006 to develop a long-term vision for volunteering in England. We will have considered a whole variety of issues by the time we report, including:

- volunteering in all sectors (not just focusing on the voluntary and community sector) and including both formal and informal volunteering;
- specific issues relating to volunteering by and within faith groups and black and minority communities; in rural communities; and by those who are perceived to be less likely to volunteer;
- the relationship between volunteering and government (national, regional and local);
- the current volunteering landscape; and
- the present position, having listened to the opinion and experience of volunteers, academics, experts, and practitioners, and the wider public.

Volunteers are integral and essential to our society. The giving of time by over 20,000,000 people in England each year makes a difference to the lives of individuals, communities and all sorts of issues. We know that without the time, effort and activity of volunteers we would all find it difficult to lead our lives.

We are an independent Commission working for the good of the wider society, volunteers and volunteering. As volunteers ourselves, members of the Commission have a wide experience and understanding of our subject. We are excited by the task that faces us, and are trying to approach it vigorously, professionally and with huge enthusiasm and dedication to the principles of a society that values voluntary activity.

In order to help us frame the work that we are engaged in, we undertook two separate pieces of work during the first half of 2006. We consulted with individuals and organisations about their vision for



volunteering and asked them what they wanted us to look at. You can find the results of this consultation on our website. We also commissioned a ground-breaking literature review to tell us what is going on in the world of volunteering, not only in England but in the wider world. We asked for this report to consider societal changes and the impact that these will have on the future of volunteering. Colin Rochester has done us proud, and we extend our heartfelt thanks to him for undertaking this daunting task. Not only has he done what we requested, but he has identified key challenges and drawn

some tentative conclusions, which have helped us shape our work.

I am delighted that, with the support of the Volunteering Hub and Volunteering England, we are able to publish this report. We are making it freely available as a download from our website as we are committed not only to publish the Commission's thinking as it develops, but to making our information widely available. I hope you enjoy and learn from this report, as we have, and would be delighted to receive any comments you may have on it.

The publication of this report marks the end of the first phase of the Commission's activity. We are now actively seeking engagement from people (whether they volunteer or not), volunteer-involving organisations, providers of volunteering infrastructure, funders, policy-makers, businesses, trade unions, faith groups and anyone else who has an interest in the issues we are considering. Please join in the debate and tell us what you know and what you think. We need to hear from you if we are to deliver a vision for the future of volunteering that encompasses your perspectives and needs.

I hope that you find this report as thought-provoking and helpful as I have.

Baroness Neuberger DBE
Chair

The Commission on the Future of Volunteering

1 Introduction: expectations and aspirations



While volunteering has been 'a part of most societies throughout human history' (Hodgkinson, 2003) the current weight of expectation about the contribution it can make to individual development, social cohesion and addressing social need has never been greater.

This is a global phenomenon; in 1997 the General Assembly of the United Nations 'proclaimed 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers (IYV) in recognition of the valuable contribution of voluntary action in addressing global issues' (UN General Assembly, 2005). According to the UN Commission for Social Development, on the eve of the launch of IYV, 'volunteering constitutes an enormous reservoir of skills, energy and local knowledge which can assist governments in carrying out more targeted, efficient, participatory and transparent public programs and policies' (quoted in Hodgkinson, *ibid.*). A similar theme is found in the Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to IYV which claimed that volunteerism, when properly channelled, is a powerful force for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and called on 'governments and other actors' to address the unevenness of volunteering activity between countries and regions in order to enable 'volunteerism ... to realize its full potential for contributing to many of today's global challenges' (UN General Assembly, 2005).

At the European level, a network of 38 volunteer development agencies and volunteer centres has launched a Manifesto for Volunteering in Europe (European Volunteer Centre, 2006) which makes the claim that 'voluntary action is ... an important component of the strategic objective of the European Union of becoming the most competitive and dynamic, knowledge-based economy in the world' (p5).

Nationally, the promotion of volunteering is firmly established as a priority for government action. Writing to the newly appointed Minister for the Cabinet Office and Social Exclusion in May 2006, the Prime Minister included in his list of 'key challenges ahead for the Government and in particular for your department' the 'aim to increase overall levels of volunteering across all age ranges and backgrounds. On young people, the key challenge is to have a

million more young people volunteering within five years' (Blair, 2006). This is the latest manifestation of a policy stream that can be traced back beyond the Major government's Make A Difference initiative of 1992 (Davis Smith, 2001) to the establishment of the Volunteer Centre UK (now Volunteering England) in 1973 (Brenton, 1985).

The most recent emphasis is on volunteering as a response to social exclusion. The target set in the Public Spending Review of 2002 – 'to increase voluntary and community sector activity, including increasing community participation, by 5 per cent by 2006' – was supplemented in the 2004 round by a new objective – 'to increase voluntary and community activity, especially amongst those at risk of social exclusion including people with no qualifications; people from black and minority ethnic communities; and people with disabilities or limiting long-term illnesses' (Harries, 2005). Volunteering has also been seen as a means of delivering a range of other government policies in the areas of sustainable communities, rural communities, health and social welfare, criminal justice, education, social inclusion, and anti-social behaviour.

The great expectations of politicians and policy-makers and the rising aspirations of the many organisations which promote volunteering and involve volunteers in their work has been accompanied by a growing research interest both in the UK and internationally.

This paper will draw on this body of literature – as well as material produced by and for practitioners – to:

- explore the nature of the volunteering phenomenon of which so much is expected and provide a map of the territory it covers;
- present key facts and figures about the current extent and contours of volunteering;
- conduct an analysis of the trends and changes that will help to shape the future development of voluntary action; and
- identify key challenges and problems and offer some thoughts on how to address them.

2 Making sense of volunteering

Introduction

One of the key tensions or paradoxes identified by Justin Davis Smith in the speech he made at the launch of the Commission was the problem of 'how to re-conceptualise what we mean by volunteering without undermining its intrinsic value' (Davis Smith, 2006). The need for an inclusive but robust concept of volunteering has been underlined by a number of studies which have found that one important barrier to participation in voluntary action is a general lack of knowledge or understanding of the diversity of the possible activities, organisational settings and the people involved (see, for example, IVR, undated; Rochester and Hutchison, 2002; Hankinson and Rochester, 2005). This section of the paper will attempt to inform and clarify discussion of the concept of volunteering by:

- presenting three perspectives on voluntary action and bringing them together into a conceptual map of the territory;
- identifying the core characteristics of volunteering and using them to explore its boundaries; and
- developing typologies of (a) volunteering opportunities and (b) volunteers.

Perspectives on volunteering

Much of the discussion about volunteering in the UK, the USA and some other developed countries by practitioners, policy-makers and researchers tends to take place within what Lyons and his colleagues (1998) have described as the non-profit paradigm. Research in particular is shaped by the interests of academics in the fields of economics, law and management studies. These focus on comparatively large and well-staffed nonprofit organisations which provide public services. Volunteering is seen as philanthropy - as a gift of time analogous to the donation of money - and represents an additional resource for the organisation, the sector and the economy as a whole. In this view volunteering is essentially about unpaid labour which contributes to the work of a formally organised agency and, as such, needs to be managed according to the 'workplace model' in

which the norms and procedures of managing paid staff are applied to volunteers (Davis Smith, 1996). And researchers working within this paradigm 'look on volunteers as helpers, as people filling a distinct, contributory role in modern society and, more particularly, in certain kinds of organizations' (Stebbins, 2004; p2).

A very different perspective on the nature of volunteering is found in other parts of the world, notably in Europe and the countries of the south. Lyons et al term this the 'civil society paradigm'. Its academic roots are in political science and sociology and its focus is on associations - organisations which depend entirely on volunteers. 'Rather than non-profits that serve the public' those who work within this paradigm 'are interested in those that serve their members ... organisations that are the product of people's ability to work together to meet shared needs and address common problems' (Lyons et al, 1998; p52). Where the non-profit paradigm treats volunteering as unpaid labour, the civil society alternative describes it as activism and sees it as a force for social change.

In recent years there has been growing interest in these kinds of organisations in the USA where they tend to be described as 'grassroots associations' (Smith, 2000) and in Britain where they are seen as part of a 'community sector' (Rochester, 1997; 1998). This kind of activity has also been described here as horizontal volunteering as distinct from the vertical volunteering involved in the non-profit paradigm.

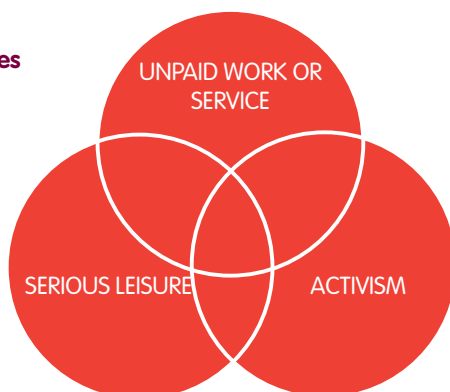
Alongside the concepts of volunteering as unpaid work and volunteering as activism we need to consider a third perspective - the idea of volunteering as leisure. It can be seen as simple common sense to view volunteering as a leisure time activity and it has been identified as such by scholars for more than thirty years (Bosserman and Gagan, 1972 and David Horton Smith, 1975 are quoted by Stebbins, 2004). Until recently, however, this perspective has been largely neglected by scholarly writers on volunteering. This may be explained by the association of leisure with ideas of fun and frivolity which are at odds with the serious business of much voluntary action and with terms like 'amateur' and 'hobbyist' which are often used pejoratively.



The idea of volunteering as leisure – and, most importantly, as ‘serious leisure’ – has been explored in a series of publications by Stebbins (see, for example, Stebbins, 1996; Stebbins and Graham, 2004). The focus here is on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivations for volunteering. ‘Serious leisure is the systematic pursuit of an amateur, a hobbyist or a volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting in nature for the participants to find a (non-work) career therein acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge and experience’ (Stebbins, 2004; p5). Stebbins also identifies two other forms of leisure volunteering – casual volunteering exemplified by ‘cooking hot dogs at a church picnic or taking tickets for a performance by the local community theatre’ (ibid.; p5) and project-based which is ‘a short-term, reasonably complicated, one-off or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking’ (ibid.; p7). This might, for example, involve participation in the organisation of a sporting or cultural event.

Each of the three perspectives captures a part of the phenomenon of volunteering; we can easily identify examples of the different kinds of volunteering opportunity and volunteers which can be explained satisfactorily as volunteering as service, as activism, and as leisure. Separately, however, they do not adequately reflect the complexity of many volunteering experiences which combine more than one of these perspectives. If we take as a model from Billis (1993) the use of overlapping circles to identify ambiguities and hybrid forms the result is:

A three perspectives model



Alongside the unambiguous forms of volunteering as unpaid work or service, as activism, and as leisure, we have identified four hybrid forms where either the nature of the organisation through which volunteering takes place or the combination of roles undertaken by the volunteer means that more than one perspective is required to understand the kind of volunteering involved:

- volunteering which can be seen as a combination of unpaid work and activism;
- volunteering which can be seen as a combination of activism and serious leisure;
- volunteering which can be seen as a combination of serious leisure and unpaid work;
- volunteering which can be seen as a combination of all three elements.

Boundaries and definitions

Having explored the fuzzy boundaries between three different conceptions of volunteering we turn our attention to the definitions which can enable us to draw a line between volunteering and other activities. At first sight the issue of definition looks straightforward. Cnaan et al (1996) identified four dimensions that were common to a variety of definitions they identified from a review of the volunteering literature: free choice; absence of remuneration; structure; and intended beneficiaries.

Work by these authors and colleagues (Cnaan and Amroffell, 1994; Cnaan et al, 1996; Handy et al, 2000) has led to the development and testing of the principle that public perception of who is a volunteer is related to the conception of the net cost of any given volunteering situation. This is calculated by measuring the total costs to the volunteer and setting against them the value of any benefits associated with the activity. They found that the higher the net cost the higher the publicly perceived valuation of the volunteer (Handy et al, 2000). A follow-up study by Meijs et al (2004) extended the enquiry to eight countries and found that the basic concept applied across a range of societies and there was a consensus as to who could be counted as a definite volunteer. There was ‘some variation ... regarding who is least likely to be considered as a volunteer’ but ‘remuneration and less free will have a

definite impact on people's perception of who is a volunteer across all regions' (ibid.; p32). On the other hand there were differences of culture and context such as different views about the legitimacy of some of the 'perks' of volunteering.

While there is a measure of agreement about the core characteristics of volunteering, we do not have a single, simple, objective definition which enables us to draw a clear line between what is volunteering and what is not. Instead, we need to look more closely at the fuzziness of some of the boundaries.

Formal vs informal volunteering

The first of these is the question of structure. The Home Office Citizenship surveys (undertaken in 2001, 2003, and 2005) distinguish between three kinds of participation in community and voluntary activities:

- *civic participation*: defined as contact with an MP or other elected representative or a public official; attending a public meeting or rally; taking part in a public demonstration or protest; or signing a petition;
- *informal volunteering*: defined as 'giving unpaid help as an individual to people who are not relatives'; and
- *formal volunteering*: defined as 'giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations to benefit other people or the environment (for example, the protection of wildlife or the improvement of public open spaces).

An increase in the numbers taking part in informal volunteering was the main element in the Home Office's achievement (in 2003) of its Public Sector Agreement (PSA) target of increasing the numbers involved at least once a month in any of the three activities by five per cent by 2006 (Home Office, 2004). It has also been suggested that informal rather than formal volunteering offers a more useful approach to increasing participation in voluntary action by people at risk of social exclusion (Williams, 2003). It is, however, doubtful whether the public perception of volunteering or any useful conceptualisation of it would include individual acts of neighbourliness or citizenship. They could, perhaps, best be seen as acts of service or unpaid

labour which are beyond the boundary of volunteering in the diagram on page 4. Similarly, acts of civic participation as defined by the Home Office can be seen as activism but not volunteering.

Free choice vs coercion

A second fuzzy boundary divides free choice from coercion. Some forms of activity involve a level of coercion that clearly puts them into a category of non-voluntary unpaid work. These include some forms of employer-supported volunteering (Tschirhart, 2005); some forms of service learning by students in higher education (Paxton and Nash, 2002); community service and work experience by school students; and internships and other unpaid work experience activities which represent a necessary preparation for employment.

Other activities may involve 'moral coercion'. Parents may not experience volunteering to help run services they want their children to benefit from as entirely uncoerced. Similarly, people holding office in a community organisation may not feel they have the option of resigning if there is no suitable successor in view.

Even in the field of volunteering as leisure the idea of completely free choice has to be qualified: after all it 'normally includes the clear requirement of being in a particular place, at a specified time, to carry out an assigned function' (Stebbins, 2004; p4). Stebbins suggests that alongside coercion and choice we need to discuss the concept of obligation: 'People are obligated when, even though not actually coerced by an external force, they do or refrain from doing something because they feel bound in this regard by promise, convention or circumstances' (ibid.; p7). Volunteering thus involves obligation but this is typically outweighed by the rewards it brings and the option for the volunteer to exit from the activity at a convenient point in the future. In any case it might well be an agreeable obligation rather than a disagreeable one. And, compared with the demands of work and one's personal life, the obligation involved in volunteering can be seen as flexible.

For love or money?

The third dimension of Cnaan et al's framework – the absence of remuneration – is also problematic.



While the conventional wisdom is that good practice in volunteer management means that volunteers should not be out of pocket as a result of their involvement but should not receive any other material reward, this is by no means universally applied. Blacksell and Phillips (1994) found that a significant proportion of volunteers in their study had received some kind of payment over and above the reimbursement of expenses. The ambiguity of this boundary has also been emphasised by the use of other kinds of material reward – such as birthday or Christmas gifts; free theatre tickets; parties; the use of comfortable hotels for board ‘away days’; and so on. These practices are less common in Britain than in the United States and have been seen as inappropriate by some volunteers (see, for example, Tihanyi, 1991; Rochester and Hutchison, 2002). There have been a number of suggestions that payment should be made for some forms of volunteering including charity trusteeship and Housing Association board membership (Charity Commission, 2003; Ashby and Ferman, 2003) and community activity by local residents (Williams, 2004). These have been met with the argument that any remuneration will undermine the gift relationship which is the essence of volunteering while ‘if a job needs to be done, people should be paid the going rate for doing it’ (Forster, 2004; p38). Suggestions that volunteering by students in higher education should be rewarded by the remission of tuition fees or the award of course credits (Ellis, 2003) have also failed to gain support. Alongside the concern about undervaluing voluntary action and employing people on substandard wages the research evidence also suggests that material rewards are unlikely to motivate large numbers of people to volunteer or to ensure that they continue to give their time (Ellis, 2005; Locke et al, 2003).

Cui bono?

Finally, we need to explore the extent to which volunteering can be seen as benefiting other people or the environment as well as the volunteer and her or his family. It is widely accepted that the motivation to volunteer is usually a blend of self-interest and altruism (Stebbins, 2004). Some definitions raise the bar by requiring the activity to produce public goods

or deliver public benefit (Dekker and Halman, 2003). This might lead to the exclusion of a great deal of ‘volunteering as leisure’ in clubs and associations which are seen as benefiting their members rather than delivering public benefit. On the other hand many of these organisations can be seen as ‘mixed benefactories’ (Lohmann, 1992) which produce both member and public benefits (Rochester, 1997). A similar case can be made in respect of self-help or mutual aid groups as a specialised part of the associational world (Borkman, 1999).

Conclusion

Volunteering is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon the boundaries of which are unclear. It is comparatively easy to find consensus about what is definitely volunteering on the one hand and what is clearly not on the other hand. But the point on each of Cnaan et al’s dimensions at which an activity ceases to be acceptable as volunteering is a matter of judgement and different individuals and cultures may reach different interpretations of where the boundary lies.

Typologies

The final part of this attempt to ‘make sense of volunteering’ looks at ways of categorising and classifying volunteering opportunities on the one hand and volunteers on the other. This has been included for two reasons. In the first place, it aims to ensure that we capture the full range and variety of voluntary action and those who engage in it. And, in the second place, it will help us to avoid making assertions about volunteers and volunteering as if they were homogeneous and help us to identify the distinctive characteristics of specific kinds of volunteering activities and ways of engaging with them.

A typology of volunteering

A useful typology of volunteering has been developed as part of the preparations for the UN International Year of Volunteers (Davis Smith, 2000; Dingle 2001). Based on a synthesis of the two paradigms identified by Lyons et al (1998, see above p3), it provides a definition broad enough to

encompass the full range of volunteering in all its diversity. The typology identifies four distinctive strands within volunteering:

- *mutual aid or self-help*: probably the oldest form of voluntary action, in which people with shared problems, challenges and conditions work together to address or ameliorate them. Sometimes described as voluntary action 'by us, for us'.
- *philanthropy and service to others*: this is what most people in Britain would identify as volunteering; typically involving an organisation which recruits volunteers to provide some kind of service to one or more third parties;
- *participation*: the involvement on a voluntary basis in the political or decision-making process at any level, from participation in a users' forum to holding honorary office in a voluntary and community sector organisation;
- *advocacy or campaigning*: collective action aimed at securing or preventing change which includes campaigning against developments seen as damaging to the environment and campaigning for better services, for example for people with HIV/AIDS.

Different types of volunteer

The key distinction increasingly made between types of volunteer is between long-term and short-term volunteering (Danson, 2003; Macduff, 2005).

The *long-term volunteer* is distinguished by a high level of dedication to a cause or organisation and a strong sense of affiliation with the organisation and the work of its volunteers. S/he is likely 'to have a strong emotional investment in their volunteer role and in the sense of personal worth and identity they gain from their participation' (Danson; p36).

There are three ways in which long-term volunteers tend to be recruited. They may seek out the organisation as a means of pursuing an existing commitment to the cause (and thus recruit themselves); they may become increasingly connected with the organisation over time; and they may be brought to the organisation 'because of a close connection with the existing circle of volunteers' (ibid.).

Long-term volunteers 'will tend to shape their own job, adapting their time and energies to whatever is

needed to make the cause succeed' and are 'willing to do whatever type of work is required ... although this may not be exciting or rewarding in itself' (ibid.).

By contrast, the relatively new phenomenon of the *short-term volunteer* has an interest in the cause which falls well short of dedication. S/he does not 'usually view the organisation or their involvement as a central part of their life' (ibid.).

Short-term volunteers tend to be 'recruited through participation in a specific event, such as a weekend sports programme' or 'by forced choice – they are asked by a friend or employer to volunteer' (ibid.).

They are looking for 'a well-defined job of limited duration' and want to know from the start 'exactly what they are being asked to do and for how long they are committed to it'. They will tend to undertake only one kind of work and, while 'they may well volunteer throughout their life, they do not usually remain too long with any one organisation' (ibid.).

Macduff (2005) has suggested that a better description of short-term volunteering is episodic – defined in her dictionary as 'made up of separate, especially loosely connected episodes; or limited in duration or significance to a particular episode, temporary, occurring, appearing or changing at irregular intervals, occasionally' (p50) – and has identified three different forms of it.

The *temporary episodic volunteer* offers a few hours or at most a day of his or her time on a one-off basis. S/he may 'pass out water bottles at a marathon, cook hamburgers at a party for homeless children, or arrive at a beach to clean refuse' (p50). This is a form of volunteering often found in the team challenges of employer-supported volunteering.

The *interim volunteer* is involved on a regular basis but for a limited period of time – less than six months. Examples might include a student on a work experience placement or the members of a time-limited task force.

The *occasional episodic volunteer* provides 'service at regular intervals for short periods of time' which may range from a month to a few hours 'but the manager of volunteers can count on this person returning year after year' (p51). An example from the UK might be the volunteer who solicits donations during Christian Aid week.

Macduff finds common ground with Hustinx



(2001) in describing these episodic forms as ‘new volunteerism’ by contrast with the older tradition of ‘classic volunteering’.

The table below (taken from Hustinx, 2001; p65) shows the different characteristics of the two models.

The contrast between the two models of volunteering is clearly related to the pithier distinction made by Evans and Saxton (2005; p41) between the decreasing number of ‘time-driven’ volunteers and the growing number of ‘cause-driven’ volunteers; rather than treating volunteering

as a means of spending time, people are increasingly seeking specific experiences and rewards.

Danson (2003) has also identified another volunteering type – *transitional volunteers* – who consist of those who use ‘volunteering as an activity to forge a path back into the community’ (p237). They include ‘housewives re-entering the job market, those with emotional disturbances moving back into interaction with others, those with disabilities learning new skills’ (ibid.).

	Classic volunteerism	New volunteerism
Culture	Identifies with traditional cultural norms	Individualisation
Choice of organisation	Based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • traditional cultural identities • great loyalty • delegated leadership • solid structure 	Personal interest Weak ties Decentralised structure Loose networks
Choice of field of action	Based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • traditional cultural identities • inclusion and exclusion 	Perception of new biographical similarities Taste for topical issues Dialogue between global and local
Choice of activity	Based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • traditional cultural identities • needs of the organisation • idealism 	Balance between personal preference and organisation’s needs Cost/benefit analysis Pragmatic
Length and intensity of commitment	Long term (unlimited in time) Regular Unconditional	Short term (clearly limited in time) Irregular or erratic Conditional
Relationship with the beneficiary	Unilateral, ‘altruistic’, ‘selfless’	Reciprocal

3 Who volunteers and why

Facts and figures

Who volunteers?

The key source for statistics about volunteering in England is the series of Citizenship Surveys conducted by the Home Office since 2001 (Attwood et al, 2003; Home Office, 2004; Murphy et al, 2006). The headline figures for the 2005 survey (Murphy et al, 2006) are that:

- 76 per cent of those questioned had taken part in some kind of volunteering activity - formal and informal - at least once in the past year (up from 74 per cent in 2001);
- 50 per cent had been involved at least once a month (this suggests that 20.4 million people have been involved at this level, a significant increase from 2001's figure of 18.8 millions or 47 per cent).

For formal volunteering:

- 44 per cent had taken part in formal volunteering at least once in the past year (up from 39 per cent in 2001);
- 29 per cent had been involved at least once a month (this translates as 11.8 million people, an increase of 800,000 on the figure of 11.0 millions or 27 per cent in 2001).

The survey also provides a breakdown by age, sex and ethnicity of those involved in volunteering at least once a month which shows that:

- more women volunteer than men (54 per cent to 45 per cent for all kinds of volunteering and 31 per cent to 27 per cent for formal volunteering only);
- more white people are involved than people from minority ethnic groups (50 per cent to 44 per cent for all kinds of volunteering and 29 per cent to 24 per cent for formal volunteering only). But this broad statement obscures differences in the participation rates of different minority ethnic groups. Black and mixed race people were found to have higher rates of participation than the white population while Asian and Chinese/Other people were less likely to be involved (see table);

	All kinds of volunteering (%)	Formal volunteering only (%)
Mixed race	58	34
Black	52	30
White	50	29
Asian	39	20
Chinese/Other	39	20

- the 16-19 age group have the highest participation rates in both volunteering of all kinds (63 per cent) and formal volunteering (32 per cent);
- the 75 and over age group have the lowest rates in both volunteering of all kinds (38 per cent) and formal volunteering (21 per cent);
- in other age groups the rankings vary according to the definition of volunteering used:

	All kinds of volunteering (%)
16 to 19	63
20 to 24	52
35 to 49	51
65 to 74	50
25 to 34	49
50 to 64	48
75 and over	38

	Formal volunteering only (%)
16 to 19	32
35 to 49	32
65 to 74	31
50 to 64	30
20 to 24	26
25 to 34	25
75 and over	21

The survey also focuses on those at risk of social exclusion - defined as minority ethnic groups, those without qualifications, and those with limiting long-term illnesses - and looks at their participation in voluntary activities at least once a month:



- those with no qualifications were less involved in all kinds of volunteering (38 per cent) than those with qualifications (52 per cent) and much less involved in formal volunteering (16 per cent against 31 per cent for those with qualifications);
- those with limiting long-term illnesses were less involved in all kinds of volunteering (44 per cent) than those without (51 per cent) and in formal volunteering (23 per cent as against 30 per cent for those who had none).

The full report on the 2005 survey has not yet been published so, for further information about the kinds of people most likely to get involved in formal volunteering and about the kinds of volunteering with which they are involved, we turn to the report of the 2003 survey (Home Office, 2004).

Its findings on formal volunteering are based on the minimal criterion of participation on at least one occasion during the previous twelve months rather than the 'at least once a month' definition used as the basis for figures from the 2005 survey. This criterion was met by 42 per cent of those interviewed.

On this basis the survey found that involvement in volunteering varied according to respondents' socio-economic characteristics.

Variations were clearly associated with:

- *age*: participation rose from 41 per cent of those aged 16-24 to a peak of 49 per cent in the 25-34 age group before declining steeply to a low of 27 per cent with the 75s and over;
- *socio-economic group and educational attainment*: there was a clear relationship between occupation and participation: 58 per cent of those in the higher managerial and professional group had participated compared with 24 per cent of those in routine occupations and 26 per cent of those who were long-term unemployed or who had never worked. Similarly, those whose highest educational qualification was a degree had a participation rate of 60 per cent; this compared with 46 per cent for those with GCSE Grades A-C or equivalent; and 24 per cent for those with no qualifications;
- *religious affiliation*: there was a positive relationship between formal volunteering and religious

practice – 57 per cent of those practising religion had been involved in volunteering as against 38 per cent of those who did not. The overall pattern of positive association was found in all ethnic groups with the exception of those of Pakistani origin;

- *caring responsibilities*: the highest participation rates were found among those with caring responsibilities – 58 per cent of those with a child aged five to nine as against 39 per cent for the childless, and 46 per cent among those caring for a sick, disabled or elderly relative as against 41 per cent by those without caring responsibilities of that kind;
- *ethnicity*: rates were highest for White and Black African people (both 43 per cent); lower for Asian (37 per cent) and Black Caribbean (38 per cent); and lowest for Chinese people (27 per cent). Within the Asian category rates were higher for Indians (41 per cent) and lower for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (31 per cent and 30 per cent respectively). Patterns of involvement by age group vary between ethnic groups. While White volunteering peaks in the middle years, that of Asians decreases consistently as people get older and rates of Black volunteering show modest increases with age. For most groups there is no statistically significant variation in relation to gender but Black women have much higher participation than Black men (44 per cent as against 37 per cent). Asian people born in the UK were far more likely to volunteer than those born in other countries – a participation rate of 48 per cent - but place of birth is not significant for volunteering by Black people;
- *sex*: with the exception of the Black group, there is no significant difference between the participation rates of men and women.

Another important set of findings looks at rates of involvement in terms of geography:

- there are significant regional variations; the South West (51 per cent) and the South East (49 per cent) had the highest rates of participation while those in the North East (33 per cent) and Yorkshire and Humberside (36 per cent) were well below the national average for England of 42 per cent;

- there were even greater differences between different types of area as defined by the ACORN classification system¹. Involvement was highest in those categorised as areas of 'Affluent Greys, Rural Communities' at 62 per cent and 'Wealthy Achievers, Suburban Areas' at 53 per cent. At the other end of the scale were 'Council Estate Residents, High Unemployment' with a rate of 27 per cent and 'People in Multi-Ethnic Low Income Areas' at 28 per cent;
- similar variations were found using the minority ethnic density of the area as a measure: in the 10 per cent of areas with the lowest density of minority ethnic households the participation rate was 50 per cent compared to 34 per cent in the areas of highest density. Similarly, those areas ranked as the 10 per cent least deprived by the Index of Multiple Deprivation had participation rates of 52 per cent while in the 10 per cent most deprived areas the rate was 31 per cent;
- given these findings, it comes as little surprise to learn that participation rates were significantly higher among people who reported that they definitely enjoyed living in their neighbourhood (45 per cent) than in those who did not (30 per cent); among those who felt that many people in the neighbourhood could be trusted (49 per cent) as compared to those who felt that none could be trusted (27 per cent); and other similar measures (Home Office, 2004: Tables 6-21 to 6-25).

What do they do?

By far the most common types of formal voluntary activities undertaken by respondents were:

- raising or handling money/taking part in sponsored events (53 per cent); and
- organising and helping to run an activity or event (49 per cent).

Other frequently mentioned activities were:

- leading a group or being a member of a committee (29 per cent);
- providing transport or driving (23 per cent);
- giving advice or information or counselling (23 per cent); and
- visiting people (20 per cent).

Respondents also mentioned:

- secretarial, administrative or clerical work (18 per cent);
- befriending or mentoring people (14 per cent);
- representing (12 per cent);
- campaigning (8 per cent); and
- other forms of practical help (28 per cent).

The 17.9 million people who had been involved in formal volunteering on at least one occasion in the previous year are estimated to have contributed approximately 1.9 billion hours. This is equivalent to 1 million full-time workers and, at the 2003 national average wage, was worth about £22.5 million. The calculation is based on an average figure of eight hours spent on activity of this kind in the four weeks before the interview which, assuming a consistent level of involvement across the year, would provide an annual total of 104 hours per person.

How did they get involved?

The survey also asked interviewees how they found out about opportunities for formal volunteering.

From somebody else already involved with the group	48%
Friends or neighbours	37%
School or college	21%
Through previously using the services provided by the group	20%
Place of worship	18%
Local events	10%
Local newspapers	8%
Promotional events, volunteers' fairs	6%
Employer's volunteering scheme	5%

An international comparison

Formal volunteering is taking place on a large scale in England and Wales and the number participating is growing, but how do the scale and main features of volunteering here compare with the experience of other countries?

Drawing on data from two major international studies - the European Values Survey and the World

¹ The ACORN classification system is a means of classifying areas according to various Census characteristics. There are 55 area types which are then collapsed into the 17 higher level groups quoted in this review. For fuller details see Appendix A to the report of the 2003 HOCS survey (Home Office, 2004).



Values Survey - Hodgkinson (2003) has calculated the percentage of the adult population which is involved in volunteering for 47 countries in North and South America; Western and Eastern Europe; Asia and Africa. Britain has the second highest participation rate of the seventeen countries from Western Europe included in the table - 43 per cent - behind Sweden's 54 per cent. Other Western industrialised countries with higher rates are the United States (66 per cent) and Canada (47 per cent). High rates of volunteering are also found in the very different societies of Asia - China (77 per cent), Hong Kong (64 per cent), the Philippines (57 per cent) and South Korea (47 per cent); of Africa - Central African Republic (75 per cent) and South Africa (59 per cent); of South America - Chile (43 per cent); and of Slovakia (49 per cent).

Hodgkinson's table also calculates the rates of involvement in different fields of activity - social welfare, religion, the environment, and sports. These figures show a bias towards volunteering in the field of social welfare in Britain which is shared only by the USA - and to a lesser extent Canada - among the more developed countries in the table. This can be seen in an edited version of the table covering the developed countries with the highest rates of participation in volunteering.

Country	All	Social welfare	Religion	Environ-ment	Sport
USA	66	36	37	8	8
Sweden	54	15	23	4	17
Canada	47	21	18	4	13
Britain	43	33	6	8	4
Finland	37	14	7	2	13
Denmark	33	9	3	2	14
Belgium	32	12	6	3	8
Iceland	32	13	5	1	11
Netherlands	31	12	11	n.a.	n.a.

Explanations

There are four kinds of explanation for why some people volunteer and some do not: socio-economic factors; individual motivation; opportunity or access; and the influence of history or culture.

The first set of explanations suggests that volunteering is associated with demographics and the propensity to become involved is related to factors such as age, gender, education and occupation. For a very long time, the stereotype of the British volunteer has been the white, middle-aged, middle-class woman. The evidence from the HOCS survey shows a much more complex picture with comparatively high levels of participation from younger adults and members of some BME communities; and, in terms of the 2003 survey, no statistically significant differences between the participation of men and women. There is, however, a marked difference in involvement between the different social classes as defined by occupation and level of educational attainment. More generally, researchers have not found the links between socio-demographic characteristics and rates of volunteering strong enough to provide a complete explanation for the differences (Dekker and Halman, 2003). On the other hand, it might be useful to note the view of Lyons and Hocking (2000) that the evidence from Australia suggests that there are three 'paths into volunteering'. In the first place people in their thirties and forties get involved because of the voluntary work associated with the services their children need (this might be an explanation for the HOCS finding that people with children volunteer more than those without). Secondly, people in rural areas tend to be involved in volunteering because of the paucity of professional services. And, thirdly, well-educated and older people are committed to the idea of public service.

The second set of explanations is based on the view that some individuals are more likely to volunteer than others. At its simplest this is the idea that volunteers have personalities which are more helpful and generous than other people. A more nuanced view suggests the propensity to volunteer - the 'volunteerism-activism attitude' - is a blend of feelings about voluntary action, that it is effective and produces a feel-good factor as well as being a moral duty (Bales, 1996). The motivation to volunteer has been the subject of a huge amount of literature, particularly in the USA. Understanding why individuals volunteer has been widely seen as the key to effective recruitment as well as the means

of aligning specific kinds of volunteer activity to the aspirations of the volunteer.

A well-tested instrument for exploring motivation is the Volunteer Functions Inventory developed by Clary and his colleagues (Clary and Snyder, 1999; Clary et al, 1992). This consists of a series of statements about reasons for volunteering from which the respondent is invited to select those which most clearly match her or his own beliefs. The statements are based on a classification of six kinds of psychological function:

- *values*: people volunteer as a means of acting on important beliefs such as helping those less fortunate than themselves;
- *understanding*: volunteering is a means of personal learning and the development of skills;
- *social*: people choose the behaviour which is valued by their peer group;
- *enhancement*: volunteering is seen as a way of feeling better about oneself;
- *protection*: the obverse of enhancement where people embrace volunteering as a way of dealing with negative feelings about themselves; and
- *career*: people want to gain experiences which will enhance their employability.

The VFI and other approaches reflect the view that people get involved in volunteering for a variety of reasons, self-interested as well as altruistic and instrumental as well as expressive. Such mixed motives are common at the level of the individual volunteer. There is a growing tendency to emphasise the 'selfish' nature of much contemporary volunteering (Evans and Saxton, 2005) which may lead to the underestimation of the role still played by values as a motivation for engaging in voluntary action. The most common value associated with the propensity to volunteer is altruism but there are others of perhaps equal importance – solidarity and reciprocity on the one hand and justice and equality on the other (Dekker and Halman, 2003). These key values are associated with the teachings of the main faith traditions (Lukka and Locke, 2003).

Understanding people's motivation to volunteer is, however, rather more problematic than this account would suggest. In the first place, the

explanations given by volunteers tend to be rationalisations of their behaviour and are expressed in a conventional vocabulary which prompts them into certain kinds of stock answers – especially when administered through a questionnaire. 'It might be completely unacceptable for a "buddy" to terminal patients or a volunteer in a political organization to say that they do the work for fun, just as it may be considered pretentious to suggest anything else when doing voluntary work for a local choir or sports club' (Dekker and Halman, 2003; p5). Beyond the ticked boxes may lie a different and more complex set of reasons why people became involved (Brooke, 2002). Secondly, the cocktail of motives that lead people to engage in volunteering may be very different from the factors that maintain their involvement. Volunteers, for example, who become involved in the office of a campaigning organisation in order to enhance their employability may become committed to the values and cause of the organisation and remain as volunteers long after they have achieved their initial purpose (Moore, 1996). A great deal of attention has been given to understanding initial motivation and comparatively little to explaining why people stay. There is little consensus among the explanations we do have (Locke et al, 2003).

In any case, the propensity to volunteer will remain no more than that without an incident or trigger to convert it into involvement in a specific piece of voluntary action. The findings of the HOCS survey (Home Office, 2004) that people found out about opportunities to volunteer through word of mouth came as no surprise; the great majority of people who volunteer do so because they have been asked – usually by someone already involved with the activity or by a friend or member of their family. Access to volunteering is thus made possible by people's membership of social networks; the types of area in which voluntary action flourishes tend to be those with the most highly developed social linkages while the motivation to volunteer associated with the values of religion is likely to be translated into action through membership of a congregation or faith-based group. A recent study from the US found that, while levels of financial donations were explained by personal



characteristics and values, the giving of time was more likely to be promoted by community ties (Jones, 2006).

Finally, rates of involvement in voluntary action and the areas and forms of activity which are salient in any society are shaped by historical and cultural factors at the wider societal level. The USA's high rate of volunteering, for example, stems from 'the historical legacy of a volunteer culture of addressing citizen need' (Hodgkinson, 2003; p41). Like the USA and unlike the countries of Northern Europe, volunteering in Britain is heavily biased towards social welfare (ibid.). There is great concern about an apparent shift in culture away from norms of solidarity and participation in congregations and associations towards individualism, which has not affected the rates of participation so much as the ways in which people approach volunteering. Dutch volunteer organisations, for example, have begun to complain about 'revolving-door volunteers' who flit 'from one fashionable field of activity to another' (Dekker and Halman, 2003; p8). Cultural differences have also been used to explain the ways in which people from minority ethnic communities are involved in activities which might be seen as volunteering: there are powerful pressures within African-Caribbean and Chinese communities to care for members of one's family and neighbours (Obaze, 1992; Rochester and Hutchison, 2002).

Specific communities and categories

Young people

Government has had an explicit interest in volunteering by young people since the 1960s when it 'was seen as an antidote to, or palliative for, anti-social behaviour by teenagers' (Sheard, 1992; p32). Investment by more recent administrations in Millennium Volunteers and the implementation of the Russell Commission's recommendations can be seen in similar terms – as the positive encouragement of pro-social behaviour to set alongside the use of anti-social behaviour orders and other measures of social control.

Research undertaken for the Russell Commission

(Ellis, 2005) provides us with some key insights into young people's attitudes towards, and involvement in, volunteering. In contrast to earlier findings this study suggested that 'young people volunteer at a similar, or higher rate, when compared to older people' (p11) and found that they were involved in a wide range of voluntary activities. It also found that many young people had a positive view of volunteering and those who thought it 'not cool' or boring were a minority. Those who were involved in volunteering had 'a wider appreciation of its scope and potential' (ibid.) while those who did not volunteer tended to have a narrow and stereotypical view of what was involved.

The image or 'brand' of volunteering was thus seen as one of the barriers to wider participation. Those who get involved find the experience more enjoyable and rewarding than they had expected while non-volunteers are largely unaware of the potential benefits from participation. There were also problems with accessing information about opportunities to volunteer – both the initial problem of finding out where to look for information and then of finding a way through the mass of information this uncovered. Other obstacles to getting involved were identified as lack of time (especially as volunteering was seen as competing for attention with studying and paid employment); cost of travel and childcare; negative peer pressure; and, for some young people, lack of confidence and fear of rejection.

Young people valued group and team activities and were looking for volunteering opportunities which offered flexibility within a structured programme; the chance to influence decision-making but with clear limits on their responsibilities; and the opportunity 'to progress to leadership at their own pace' and with support and back-up from older people.

Older people

At the other end of the age spectrum – the 50s and over – we have evidence from a review of the 26 projects that made up the Home Office Older Volunteers Initiative (Rochester and Hutchison, 2002) and from a more recent study of the role of volunteering in the transition from work to retirement (Davis Smith and Gay, 2005). In a number of ways,

the experience and attitudes expressed by older volunteers involved in the HOOVI study echo those of the young people of 'Generation V'. Older people not involved in volunteering tend to have narrow and stereotypical views of the range of opportunities to volunteer and are pleasantly surprised about the enjoyment and benefits of volunteering when they do get involved. Lack of knowledge about what was available was one of the key barriers to involvement in volunteering. Other obstacles included the policies and practices of volunteer-involving organisations; practical issues like health and mobility problems and cost; the attitude of the older people themselves; and cultural barriers to the participation of older people from black and minority ethnic communities.

Older people, like their younger counterparts, wanted flexibility in the demands made on their time within a structured environment; opportunities to take on responsibility for their own work; and to create and develop their contribution to the work of the organisation. Like young people, too, they placed an emphasis on the benefits to them of the social interaction involved in volunteering. Unlike younger volunteers, however, many – but not all – older people find the experience of volunteering a valuable means of keeping busy and giving shape or purpose to their life. In this respect, Davis Smith and Gay make a useful distinction between different types of post-retirement volunteers: while some older people look to volunteering to replace the way their lives were given purpose and structure by paid work, others are seeking a complete break from it. Similarly, they distinguish between 'lifelong' volunteers who have always been involved; 'serial' volunteers who are returning to voluntary action now that lack of work and family responsibilities give them the space to do so; and 'trigger' volunteers who become involved for the first time as the result of retirement.

A recent survey of 470 volunteer-involving organisations undertaken by Volunteering in the Third Age (VITA) and Volunteering England has provided evidence of the extent to which organisations depend on the work of older volunteers. Two thirds of the combined total of 1,300,000 volunteers covered by the survey were 50

or older and 31 per cent of them were aged 65 or over. People aged 50 or over contributed 68 per cent of the total number of volunteer hours in the sample. Organisations valued the work of older volunteers for their willingness to contribute more hours over longer periods than younger people; the skills and experience they brought with them; and their willingness to take on a wide range of tasks (VITA/Volunteering England, 2006 forthcoming).

People at risk of social exclusion

There is, then, a considerable amount of common ground between the under 24s and the over 50s in their attitudes to volunteering, the obstacles to wider involvement, and the nature of a satisfactory volunteering opportunity. To what extent can we extend the analysis to other specific groups or communities? The Institute for Volunteering Research's exploration of 'the link between volunteering and social exclusion' (IVR, undated) found that most of the barriers to wider participation in formal volunteering that they identified were common to the three kinds of people involved in the study – individuals from black and minority ethnic groups; people with disabilities; and ex-offenders.

Barriers were of two kinds, the psychological and the practical, with the individual volunteers and non-volunteers who took part in the study putting the emphasis on the psychological and the volunteer-involving organisations which participated tending to focus on the practical obstacles. Once again, the image of volunteering was a major factor: the 'long-standing stereotype ... that [volunteering] is a formal, organisation-based activity carried out by white, middle-class, middle-aged people ... is persistent; this means that many people continue to feel that volunteering is not an activity they can identify with' (ibid.; p24). Respondents also felt that volunteering as an activity was not valued in a materialistic society and many of them were unaware of the ways in which volunteering could enhance the lives of those who participated or of the full range of volunteer roles available. They also shared the concerns expressed by the young and older people in the studies mentioned above about the time commitment involved (which they overestimated) and their lack of personal



confidence. Two other concerns were, however, more specific to these groups of people – anxiety about the attitude of other people to them and the fear of losing welfare benefits.

The practical barriers identified by the study included two familiar problems – access to information and concerns about the costs involved (especially for those who were unemployed or on low wages). They also involved questions of procedure and administration; over-formal recruitment procedures were off-putting to some and volunteers were lost through delays in the decision-making process.

Finally, the volunteers' wish lists included, inter alia, the need for the experience to be enjoyable, sociable (working in a team), supported (by staff and peers), and to give them a sense of ownership.

Disability and long-term illness

Traditional images of volunteerism depict disabled people as the 'helped' rather than the 'helpers' but there is evidence that many disabled people are active and visible volunteers involved with a wide range of organisations (SKILL, 2005; Roker et al, 1998). The traditional view also fails to acknowledge the growth of self-help and campaigning organisations of rather than for people with disabilities (Oliver, 1990; Barnes et al, 1999).

A study conducted by Volunteer Development Scotland (2005) sheds further light on the experiences of people with disabilities and volunteering. In Scotland, as in England, fewer disabled people volunteer than the population at large – 17 per cent as against 24 per cent. What the VDS study gives us is interesting evidence about the differences between people with disabilities and the population at large in two – possibly inter-related – aspects of the volunteer experience, how they got involved and which roles they play.

While most disabled people's route into volunteering had been through being asked to help, 20 per cent of them had been introduced to volunteering through their local Volunteer Centre, a very different proportion to volunteers as a whole where the figure is 6 per cent. None of them had become involved via the internet (which raised concerns about the accessibility of websites) but

some reported that being a previous user of a service provided by the organisation had led to their involvement as a volunteer while others had been referred from an educational institution, Job Centre or a social worker.

The most common role was providing a service or support. This was undertaken by more than half of all respondents which was, by some distance, more than the combined total for helping to raise money and organising or helping to run an event. And a remarkable 35 per cent served on a committee as against the overall Scottish figure of 11 per cent.

Overall this is an up-beat report; more than half of these disabled volunteers reported that their experience had been positive and a similar proportion had not experienced any barriers to participation. Of the non-volunteers, half intended to return to volunteering while the other half had not ruled out volunteering again – subject to their future health or situation. Those who had negative experiences or had encountered barriers to involvement cited problems of physical access, fluctuations in their own health and the attitudes of those around them. Some of those interviewed could be seen as transitional volunteers who were using the experience to gain confidence and skills to improve their employability while others were long-term volunteers who were using their involvement in volunteering as an alternative to paid work.

Other studies have highlighted the environmental, attitudinal and medical barriers faced by disabled people in accessing volunteering opportunities (Andrews, 2003; IVR, undated) and listed the range of benefits identified by disabled people from their involvement in volunteering. These included improvements in mental health; social contacts and making friends; the opportunity to make a difference to the community (usually in relation to disability issues like access and benefits); and the opportunity to help other disabled people (Andrews, 2005).

Mental health

While the links between volunteering and mental health have not been intensively researched there is evidence to suggest that participation in voluntary action has a beneficial impact (Howlett, 2004). Volunteering England's recent guide to involving

volunteers with mental health problems is based on a project funded by the Department of Health which found that 'many people who have had experience of mental ill health feel that volunteering has been a part of their recovery, and has often been one of the most important routes back into "normal" life' (Clark, 2003; p4).

The project's Volunteering for Mental Health survey of 120 people with direct experience of mental ill-health found that volunteering provided them with opportunities for: creating structure in life; increased social interaction; improved confidence and self-esteem; increased self-awareness; giving something back; greater understanding; working with others for common goals; learning more about future options – work, education, etc.; and improved skills and knowledge.

It also identified the key concerns or barriers to volunteering for people with mental health problems. While one of these was specific to this particular group – concern about how they would be affected by medication and the side effects of drugs – the rest of the list is familiar ground: they were concerned about their lack of skills and confidence; they were worried about other people's ignorance of mental health issues and their attitudes towards them; and they were anxious about how volunteering might affect their benefits and how they could afford the costs of travel and lunches.

Refugees and asylum seekers

Refugees and asylum seekers arrive in the country with a rich array of experience, skills and qualifications. Those with refugee status, humanitarian protection or leave to remain (and their families) have the legal right to undertake paid work but often find it very difficult to secure employment. Those seeking asylum - or appealing against a decision to refuse them asylum - have not been able to take paid work since a Home Office decision taken in 2002. But they are, despite a good deal of misleading information about this, allowed to volunteer (Wilson, 2003).

Many refugees and asylum seekers work as volunteers within their own communities or with wider groupings of refugees. But they also have a great deal to offer organisations in the wider

voluntary and community sector in return for the opportunity to get work experience, learn new skills and obtain references for paid employment. At the same time, volunteering can give these often vulnerable and socially excluded people the chance to do something useful while they wait to see if they will be given the right to stay and work; they may also rebuild their self-esteem and come to terms with the experience of seeking asylum (ibid.).

Studies of volunteering by refugees have tended to focus on the transitional nature of the experience as a route into paid employment. Those interviewed by Stopforth (2001) confirmed its importance for references, for gaining work experience in Britain and for regaining confidence. This study also suggested that volunteering had a significant effect on the employment chances of those refugees who have also achieved British graduate qualifications. More recently, Tomlinson and Erel (2005) report that opportunities for employment for refugees are concentrated in the VCS given that refugees are stigmatised by private sector employers; that opportunities are comparatively scarce and tend to be short-term and/or part-time; and that 'the process of transition from volunteer to employee was not straightforward and usually involved numerous setbacks and disappointments' (ibid. p39).

Volunteering in religious and faith-based organisations

While overall there has continued to be a decline in participation in religious observance, the growing numbers of people following religions other than Christianity, as well as contributing to the rich diversity of cultures in England, has ensured that the contribution of religious and faith-based organisations to voluntary action has remained significant and has, since 1999, been increasingly recognised by government as a key element in voluntary activity and community involvement (Lukka and Locke, 2003).

The findings from interviews with community leaders and active members from eight different faiths in three English cities conducted by Lukka and Locke suggested that, despite the distinctive ways in which each of them operated, there were important commonalities in the experience of



voluntary action across them all. The first of these is the extent and nature of their voluntary activities. 'Faith communities carry out a wide range of voluntary activities, and there are many similarities between communities in the types of activity chosen' (ibid.; p10). Lukka and Locke have developed a typology of faith-based volunteering which includes routine activities such as services for older people, women's groups and activity classes and clubs; the provision of more formally organised welfare services; the mobilisation of large numbers of volunteers when religious festivals are celebrated; and responses to disasters and other specific causes.

Secondly, volunteering is absolutely key to the existence of the institutions of faith communities which 'depend almost entirely on voluntary action for their survival: a large proportion of members volunteer regularly and an even larger number occasionally' (ibid.; p11).

A third common feature is the similarity of the value base and of the factors that influence the motivation to volunteer. Living according to the spirit of their religion was associated with giving time or money to help others; taking responsibility for those in need; and a commitment to social justice and equality.

Other research has highlighted differences between voluntary action by members of religious organisations and other forms of volunteering (Cameron et al, 2005). These include 'a greater commitment to organizational values ... which can lead them to do too much and so suffer from burn-out'; 'greater expectations ... that their views will be taken into account'; 'a greater sense of reciprocity'; and such volunteers tend to have 'a sense of ownership of the organization as well as the task' (ibid.; p163).

These findings echo Margaret Harris's pioneering study of Christian and Jewish congregations (1998) which identified the key role played by volunteers in their activities; their ability to provide 'quiet care' for members of their congregations; and the marked differences between the majority of congregational volunteers and the 'inner group of willing people' who undertake the bulk of the work. Harris is also concerned that the current trend in social policy to

create a larger role for religious and faith-based organisations as vehicles for meeting need does not take account of the comparatively small scale of the resources – including volunteers – at their disposal (Harris, 1998; Harris et al, 2003).

Sports volunteers

Something like one eighth of the population takes part in formal volunteering in a sports context at least once a year and 45 per cent of them had made their contribution to one of the 106,000 local grassroots clubs organised by their members (Nichols, 2006 forthcoming). While the number of volunteers involved is large, the contributions they make in terms of hours is unevenly spread with 18 per cent of the volunteers contributing 62 per cent of the total hours. Clearly these stalwarts play a key role and may determine how clubs react to pressure for change but we know little about them (ibid.). Other volunteers contribute in varying degrees through the National Governing Body (NGB) structure for each sport at regional and national levels. Together the local clubs and the wider NGB structure offer a means through which government can 'promote active citizenship, develop sports for young people, contribute to social inclusion and promote sports participation for health benefits. It may also provide, through the NGB structure, the vehicle for policies to promote excellence in sporting achievement' (Nichols et al, 2004; p32). Their ability to continue to do so, however, may be challenged by an increasingly competitive market for potential members; the impact of government policy requirements as conditions of local or national government funding; technological change; and an increasingly risk averse society (Nichols, 2006 forthcoming).

4 A changing world

Societal trends

This section of the report seeks to identify key changes in our society that are likely to affect future patterns of involvement.

An ageing population

There has been a significant change in the age profile of British society with the numbers of those aged 65 and over increasing by 28 per cent and those under 16 falling by 18 per cent between 1971 and 2003 (Social Trends, 2006). This will be accentuated by the downward drift of fertility rates: more women are remaining childless and those who have children have started childbearing at increasingly older ages (ibid.).

Changing perspectives on retirement

These trends have been accompanied by changing perspectives on retirement. While the retirement age is expected to rise, there are increasing numbers of young retired people who are fit and active. On the other hand their ability to become involved in voluntary action may be constrained by the childcare responsibilities many assume as grandparents and, for some, the alternative attractions of travel and commercial leisure pursuits.

Changes in patterns of employment

Despite the recent decision to raise the age of entitlement to the state pension, working lives have become shorter as increasing numbers of young people have extended their education to degree level. By 2003, one in six of the adult population were graduates (Social Trends); in 2002 nearly 3 million people were beginning their tertiary education (Evans and Saxton, 2005); and the present government has set a target for participation in higher education of 50 per cent of young adults. There has also been a significant change in the gender balance: the employment rate for men fell from 92 per cent in 1971 to 79 per cent in 2004 but it rose for women from 56 per cent to 70 per cent over the same period (Social Trends, 2006). At the same time, 81 per cent of male and 50 per cent of women managers, higher officials and professionals worked more than 45 hours in a typical week (ibid.).

Increases in real personal income

There have been significant increases in real personal income (after housing costs) for all levels of British society between 1986 and 2003 (Evans and Saxton, 2005) and the amount spent on less essential items – including recreation and culture – has risen much faster than spending on essentials like food, housing, water and fuel over the past 35 years (Social Trends, 2006). Growing wealth, however, has not been equally shared and the gap between the richest and the poorest has widened. And, even though the proportion of households earning less than 60 per cent of median disposable income has fallen from the peak of 21 per cent in 1999, it remained at 17 per cent in 2001-03 (Social Trends, 2006).

Composition of households

There have been marked increases in the number of one-parent and single person households in Great Britain. The proportion of children living in lone-parent families tripled between 1972 and spring 2004 to 24 per cent. In 2003-04, one in six adults aged 16 and over lived alone. The number of young adults living at home with their parents in England has also risen to 58 per cent of young men (aged 20 to 24) and 39 per cent of young women of the same age.

Communities of place

There have also been decreases in the importance and strength of community ties based on location. Modern patterns of employment and the increased mobility brought by car ownership mean that people cannot rely on finding work in the place where they live and do not depend on local shops and facilities.

Multi-cultural communities

The communities in which people live and work are increasingly characterised by a diversity of cultures and faiths. Volunteering has a continuing role to play within communities and could be of increasing importance as a means of providing bridges between them.

A virtual society

ICT has become 'the new way of life' (Evans and Saxton, 2005). Mobile phone ownership rose rapidly



from 16 per cent of the population in 1996-97 to 70 per cent in 2002-03 (Social Trends, 2006) and 77 per cent in 2005 (Evans and Saxton, 2005). Access to the internet has also grown quickly – from 10 per cent in 1996-97 to 45 per cent in 2002-03 (Social Trends, 2006). In the past two years, it has become more equally spread across the genders and age groups (for example the rate for the 55-64 year olds is 60 per cent and this rises to 70 per cent across the 16-44 age groups) but access to occupational groups is more unequal, with ABs at 80 per cent; C1s and C2s at 63 per cent and 51 per cent; and DEs at the very low rate of 29 per cent (Evans and Saxton, 2005).

Secularisation

The process through which religious belief and observance has declined and religious organisations have lost many of their adherents and much of their influence with other social institutions has been a feature of the past forty years or more (Torry, 2005). In 2000, 60 per cent of the population claimed to belong to a specific religion with 55 per cent being Christian. However, half of all adults aged 18 and over who belonged to a religion have never attended a religious service (Social Trends 32, 2001).

Loss of trust in the political process

There is widespread concern about a decline in participation in the political process which appears to match the haemorrhage of support from the churches. Turnout in parliamentary elections has fallen precipitately since 1992 (although 2005 saw a small recovery over the all-time low of 2001) while membership of political parties has plummeted since 1964 and active participation in them has declined even more steeply (Power Inquiry, 2006).

According to the Power Inquiry into Britain's Democracy, the appearance of apathy created by these indicators is misleading; there is an abundance of research evidence that very large numbers of British citizens are engaged in community and charity work outside politics while involvement in pressure group politics such as taking part in campaigns and demonstrations, joining consumer boycotts or signing petitions has been growing significantly over a number of years and there is increasing participation, through the

internet and its blogs and discussion forums, in debates about political and social issues.

Disengagement from the formal political process is thus a response to dissatisfaction with the systems and structures for political decision-making. Power calls for major shifts in political practice to reflect the need for more flexibility and responsiveness in the system and for citizens to be able to exercise a more direct and focused influence on the decisions that concern them. Imaginative ways in which people can be involved in decision-making are discussed in the Involve report on People and Participation (2005). These include Appreciative Inquiry; Citizens' Juries; Citizens' Panels; Consensus Conferences; Deliberative Meetings of Citizens (Democs); and Planning for Real.

Consumerism and choice

The increase in personal disposable income, for most but not all people, and greater mobility and wider access to information technology have underpinned the development of an increasingly consumerist society which offers a growing range of choices to its members. A typical supermarket today stocks a range of 40,000 products rather than the 5,000 it had available in the early 1980s. With the privatisation of utilities since 1990, consumers now have a choice of 16 providers of electricity, 22 gas suppliers, and 11 telecommunications companies. And developments in technology have brought a choice of 900 TV channels when once there were only four (Evans and Saxton, 2005). Furthermore, successive Conservative and New Labour administrations have adopted the rhetoric and practices of the commercial sector and sought to apply them to the work of government and the delivery of public services (Deakin, 2001).

Regulation and risk

During the last twenty-five years the conviction has grown that the world in which we live is beset by danger and that it is a major government responsibility to reduce to a minimum the many risks to which the population is exposed (Rochester, 2001). According to Gaskin (2005; p42) 'economic, social and cultural changes have destroyed collective belief systems and individual responsibility, replacing it with

a sense of vulnerability and a tendency to blame others when things go wrong’.

Developments in public and social policy

This section will highlight recent key developments in public and social policy that are likely to have an impact on volunteering. It will use the distinction employed by Kendall (2003) between ‘horizontal’ agendas – policy developments explicitly addressed to volunteering as a whole and involving government as a whole - and the ‘vertical’ agendas of policies which take forward the work of individual departments and agencies which have implications for voluntary action. A third sub-section will look at two broad policy streams which are also relevant to volunteering – civil renewal and social inclusion.

The horizontal agenda

There has been a long history of government interest in and support for volunteering from the establishment of the Volunteer Centre (now Volunteering England) in 1976 through the Opportunities for Volunteering Scheme launched in 1982, the Make a Difference programme which ran from 1994-6; and specific programmes for young people (Millennium Volunteers) and older people (the Home Office Older Volunteers Initiative and the short-lived Experience Corps).

Since taking power in 1997 New Labour has also included volunteering as a major theme within its Compact with the voluntary and community sector and invested in its development through including volunteering as the remit of one of the hubs of excellence funded under the ChangeUp programme.

The Compact’s Code of Good Practice for Volunteering (Home Office/Compact Working Group, undated) sets out the essential principles underpinning a ‘framework of partnership between Government and the voluntary and community sector’. Both parties committed themselves to:

- maintaining best practice in the promotion, development and celebration of volunteering; and
- ensuring that volunteers are brought into policy-making processes, both internal decision-making and responses to government consultation.

Voluntary sector organisations should:

- budget adequate resources to support volunteers (management or peer support, office space and equipment) and reimburse their out-of-pocket expenses including care costs; and
- acknowledge the nature and extent of volunteering in their annual and project reports.

Government agreed to:

- examine how the contribution of volunteering could be shown in national economic accounts; and
- encourage employment practices that allow time off for volunteering in partnership with employers in all sectors.

There are three strands to the work of the Volunteering Hub (www.volunteering.org.uk/aboutus/volunteeringhub):

- *strategy and management*, with an emphasis on ensuring that ‘organisations from all parts of the voluntary and community sector (are) fully involved in the Hub from the start’;
- *information dissemination, good practice and management development*; and
- *modernising infrastructure*, to make it ‘lean, robust and securely funded, locally, regionally and nationally’.

The Hub’s agenda is to:

- enable far more people to volunteer – many of them through employer-supported volunteering;
- develop a more diverse population of volunteers including many more from under-represented groups such as rural communities, and refugees;
- ensure that more volunteers are more active where they are most needed, with organisations working in the most deprived communities; and
- ensure that all volunteers are well managed and supported so that they continue to volunteer.

It plans to deliver its aims by:

- encouraging more people to volunteer from every community as the result of a marketing campaign; and increasing the numbers of employer-supported volunteering by developing a nationwide infrastructure and promoting national and regional events;



- improving the quality of volunteer management by developing a national training strategy for volunteer managers; rolling out a quality accreditation process to ensure consistent levels of effectiveness; and promoting the Investors in Volunteers' standards; and
- providing access (online) to a 'huge range of volunteering-related materials'.

Until recently, responsibility for government's involvement with volunteering rested with the Volunteering and Charitable Giving Unit within the Active Communities Directorate of the Home Office (it was transferred to the Cabinet Office in May 2006). The Unit's remit was 'to increase overall levels of volunteering across all age ranges and backgrounds. On young people, the key challenge is to have a million more young people volunteering within five years' (Blair, 2006). It pursued this goal through five initiatives (<http://communities.homeoffice.gov.uk/activecomms/encourag-vol-and-charit-giv/>):

- the Year of the Volunteer 2005;
- the Volunteering for All programme;
- support for mentoring and befriending;
- the GoldStar volunteering and mentoring exemplar programme; and
- implementation of the Russell committee's recommendations.

The Year of the Volunteer 2005

The Year of the Volunteer 2005 (YV05) was a national campaign across the UK, funded in England by the Home Office to the tune of £7 millions and by pro bono contributions valued at a further £3 millions and delivered by a network of partners led by CSV and Volunteering England. Its main aim was to create awareness of volunteering, increase the opportunities for people to become involved in it and encourage more people to participate in voluntary action.

These aims were addressed through a marketing and communications strategy involving: an advertising campaign, public relations and other marketing activity; twelve themed months; grants and awards to local organisations to develop volunteering opportunities in their area; numerous activities to celebrate the achievements of

volunteers; and the promotion of employee volunteering.

The evaluation of YV05 (GfK NOP Social Research, 2006) found it difficult to pin down the exact degree to which it had achieved its aims partly because of the absence of a benchmark and partly because of the difficulty of 'direct attribution of outcomes to YV05 activity'. It did, however, find evidence that awareness of volunteering had been increased and more opportunities for volunteering had been developed. It also found that it had led to more collaboration between organisations concerned with promoting volunteering.

On the other hand the short-term nature of the programme and lack of lead-up time together with the absence of a clearly targeted communications strategy had constrained what could be achieved and, in particular, there was little evidence of impact on the awareness of volunteering and involvement in it among the more hard to reach groups – young people, those with no qualifications, black and minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities.

Key lessons drawn from the experience of the Year were:

- the need for a longer lead-in time;
- the desirability of simplifying decision-making by a single lead organisation;
- the need for an overall strategy (and the evaluation provides detailed recommendations on how to achieve this);
- the importance of addressing the image of volunteering, 'to move it away from the traditional perceptions found in this review to one that can be relevant to different groups in society ... as participation in volunteering continues to grow, so those left reside in the increasingly more difficult groups to reach, be they the unemployed, the unqualified, and the disabled and so on. A range of carefully differentiated messages, delivered via appropriate media and using targeted access methods will help attract some in these groups';
- the need for 'enhanced care of volunteers' in order to retain them and encourage them to recruit others by word of mouth. Conversely, dissatisfied volunteers are a poor advert.

Volunteering for All

Volunteering for All is a two year cross-government initiative led by the Home Office and part of the legacy of the Year of the Volunteer. Its aim is to identify and remove barriers to volunteering and increase volunteering by adults at risk of social exclusion and to increase cross-government working. Organisations with a 'strategic England-wide coverage and [the ability to] secure substantial pro bono (particularly media) support' have been invited to tender for the delivery of 'a series of individually targeted campaigns to raise awareness among ... target groups'. The £3 millions available will be allocated in proportion to the size of each target group:

- those with no qualifications (estimated numbers 10,907,959 or 30.7 per cent of the adult population);
- those with disabilities or long-term limiting illnesses (6,085,392 or 17.1 per cent)
- BME (3,049,699 or 8.6 per cent); within this group there is a specific focus on Asian and Chinese communities, particularly those not born in the UK.

The Volunteering for All programme is thus a response to the lessons learned from YO05 on the one hand and the findings of HOCS on the other.

Mentoring and befriending

In 2001 the Home Office conducted a survey of mentoring and befriending and also set up a Mentoring Fund which supported 38 projects. Following further research commissioned by the Home Office eight of these projects were selected for two further years' funding as 'exemplars of good practice' under the GoldStar programme (see below).

Over the same period £4.1 millions were invested in organisations providing infrastructure support to small mentoring and befriending projects. This involved:

- a grant to enable the National Mentoring Network to create a Mentoring and Befriending Foundation whose role will include 'ensuring that key national bodies (eg Learning and Skills Councils, Prisons Service, Connexions, Youth Justice Board) are aware of the role mentoring and befriending can play in support of [their] strategic objectives';
- funding for the further development of the infrastructure in four regions where there are the

greatest number of mentoring and befriending projects;

- more limited funding to support the salary of one full-time worker in each of the other five regions.

The GoldStar volunteering and mentoring exemplar programme

This is a two-year programme with a budget of £5 millions launched in November 2005. A total of 44 projects will be funded to 'act as exemplars of good practice in recruiting, managing and retaining volunteers, mentors and befrienders' from the government's target groups (people with no qualifications, those with disabilities or long-term limiting illnesses, and people from BME communities).

Two thirds of the funding will meet the costs of the projects and the other third is allocated to meeting the costs of sharing their experience with other voluntary organisations.

'The GoldStar programme will also include national and regional events and dedicated publications, all aimed at spreading the benefits of good practice as widely as possible.'
(<http://communities.homeoffice.gov.uk/activecomms/encourag-vol-and-charit-giv/goldstar>)

Implementation of the recommendations of the Russell Commission

The Commission was set up in May 2004 and, following extensive consultation with young people and voluntary and community sector organisations, produced its report two years later (Russell, 2005a). It called for 'the creation of a new national framework for youth action and engagement to enhance the diversity, quality and quantity of volunteering opportunities for young people' (Russell, 2005b; p12). It set an ambitious 'aspiration of attracting 1 million more young volunteers across all forms of volunteering activity' which would mean that 'more than half of all those in the 16-25 age group would participate' (p5). And it proposed the setting up of 'a dedicated implementation body to take the lead in delivering the framework, bringing together young people ... the voluntary and community sector, business and government as partners to make volunteering a valued part of the lives of most young people' (p5).



This vision and the 16 more detailed recommendations through which it was to be implemented have been accepted by Government, which has provided funding to a new independent charity **v** (www.wearev.com) to take the proposals forward. The key features of the Russell framework are:

- a series of campaigns to raise awareness of volunteering linked to a national web-based volunteering portal which will ensure access to information on volunteering opportunities; and the creation of 200 Youth Volunteer Adviser and 200 Youth Volunteer Development Manager posts to ensure that young people receive high quality advice and guidance on volunteering;
- action in schools, colleges and higher education institutions to make it commonplace for young people to volunteer while in education;
- giving young people access to a 'menu of opportunity' with details of the full range of volunteering activities; and ensuring that the opportunities exist for all of them through creating up to 300,000 short-term, group-based opportunities per annum, up to 80,000 part-time volunteering opportunities, up to 12,000 full-time opportunities per annum, up to 1,000 opportunities for international volunteering, and tapping into the potential for volunteering by young people within the public sector;
- quality assurance: the encouragement of volunteer-involving organisations 'to meet minimum standards governing the access, involvement, development and reward of young volunteers'; and
- measuring the impact of these measures and ensuring attention is paid to evaluation and learning.

Some vertical agendas

Health

There is a long history of volunteering input into the National Health Service. Volunteering England's precursor, the Volunteer Centre, was established in large part to provide a national focus for the work of the rapidly expanding numbers of NHS volunteer coordinators during the 1960s and 70s (Brenton, 1985). The contribution of volunteering to the NHS has

been recognised by the Department of Health's commissioning of a report which aims to 'inform local practice, and help to harmonise and regularise support for NHS volunteer involvement so that it becomes more consistent and coherent across NHS organisations' (Hawkins and Restall, 2006; p3).

While the main purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for practice it does throw light on the contribution made by volunteers to the NHS. The authors have identified more than 90 different 'things that volunteers do within the NHS' and noted the changing patterns of voluntary action in the health service: 'some of these roles (such as providing library trolleys or fundraising) pre-date the NHS; other roles reflect newer developments such as involvement in Patient and Public Involvement activities, governance, service and policy development activities, self-help groups and initiatives such as the Expert Patients Programme (EPP)'. 'Volunteers' they conclude 'bring tremendous value to the National Health Service in a variety of roles that enhance services to patients provided by paid staff and assist the NHS in improving and developing services' (ibid.; p3).

In a foreword to the document, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State highlights three key benefits of volunteering to the NHS: offering services that bring a more personal touch; fostering better local ownership and helping commissioners to understand local need; and the direct contribution made to the health and well-being of the volunteers themselves.

Education

Like Health, Education is a policy area where volunteers have played a major role in the past as well as the present. The DfES describes school governors as the 'largest volunteer force in the country' and estimates that there are some 350,000 of them. Given the prevailing trend of devolving decision-making and management to the level of the individual school, the role of the school governor has become increasingly demanding.

The DfES is also interested in promoting volunteering by young people through the Millennium Volunteers programme and has commissioned a review of Gap Year Provision (Jones, 2004).

A third growth point is the increasing use of volunteer mentors for under-achieving school students.

Criminal justice

The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales supported 80 community mentoring projects between 2001 and 2004 which provided mentoring for young people aged between 10 and 17 who had offended or were judged to be at risk of doing so. These projects have been evaluated by a team from London University's Institute of Education (St. James-Roberts et al, 2005). The schemes, which targeted young people from BME communities and those who had difficulties with literacy and numeracy, recruited between them a total of 3,400 volunteers who worked with 4,800 mentees. Many of the projects reported improvements in attendance and behaviour at school; in literacy and numeracy skills; and in accommodation (including moving back into the family home) and family relationships, and mentoring promoted greater involvement by the young people in community activities like sports and social clubs. Mentoring was not found to provide a 'magic bullet'; the evaluation team concluded that their study did 'not support wider implementation of mentoring programmes as a means of preventing or tackling youth crime' although they did feel that some of the features of mentoring were valuable and should be incorporated into other forms of intervention (Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, 2005; p5).

Historically, volunteering has played a key part in the administration of the criminal justice system which continues to rely on the unpaid work of lay magistrates, prison visitors, special constables and police cadets. More recently, Neighbourhood Watch schemes have involved very large numbers of participants (although the trustees of the National Neighbourhood Watch Association have voted to wind up the national body on the grounds of insolvency) and the Metropolitan Police Service has created a wider range of behind-the-scenes opportunities for volunteering.

Rural communities

DEFRA and the new Commission for Rural Communities (established in 2005) are committed to

the implementation of a rural strategy to address the need for social and economic regeneration, tackle rural social exclusion and protect the natural environment (DEFRA, 2004). Within this overarching strategy, DEFRA has committed resources to development of the infrastructure of the VCS and is committed to supporting the work of VCS organisations and parish councils in building social capital and ensuring fair access to public services.

Policy streams

Two broad areas of policy which involve a number of different government departments provide significant challenges – and opportunities – for voluntary action.

The first of these policy streams is *civil renewal* which 'is about people and government, working together to make life better. It involves more people being able to influence decisions about their communities, and more people taking responsibility for tackling local problems, rather than expecting others to' (www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1500186).

Launched by the then Home Secretary, David Blunkett, in 2003, civil renewal has three key ingredients:

- *active citizens*: people with the motivation, skills and confidence to speak up for their communities and say what improvements are needed;
- *strengthened communities*: community groups with the capability and resources to bring people together to work out shared solutions; and
- *partnership with public bodies*: public bodies willing and able to work as partners with local people.

The civil renewal agenda is being taken forward by the government's Together We Can action plan (Home Office 2005) which brings together 12 government departments to address four policy strands:

- *citizens and democracy*: 'together we can ensure that children and young people have their say and strengthen our democracy';
- *health and sustainability*: 'together we can improve our health and well-being and secure our future';
- *regeneration and cohesion*: 'together we can revitalise neighbourhoods and increase



- community cohesion and race equality’;
- *safety and justice*: ‘together we can build safer communities and increase confidence in the criminal justice system’.

To take this agenda forward the government has established a Civil Renewal Unit (www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1500186) which has been transferred to the Department for Communities and Local Government as part of the recent reshuffle. As well as leading on the co-ordination of the Together We Can initiative, the Unit has responsibility for implementing three aspects of the action plan:

- *Active Learning for Active Citizenship* programme: a programme of regional hubs trying out different approaches to citizenship education for adults, running to 2006;
- *Civic Pioneer* network: a network of local authorities signed up to work with communities to help them have more influence on the way local services are designed and carried out; and
- *Guide Neighbourhoods* programme: funding experienced residents from successful neighbourhoods to help other communities to tackle similar problems.

The government also established an Active Citizenship Centre which has provided a range of research reports on different aspects of civil renewal including greater public involvement in service delivery, social capital and community cohesion.

The second of these policy streams - *social inclusion* - has been a high profile issue for much of the Labour government’s first and second terms in office but appears to have slipped down the agenda more recently. As part of the new arrangements in government which accompanied the Cabinet reshuffle, the Social Exclusion Unit which had been set up in 1997 has been disbanded. Some of its staff have been transferred to a new Social Exclusion Taskforce which will ‘concentrate on identifying the most at-risk and focus on specific hard-to-reach groups including children in care, people with mental health problems and teenagers at risk of pregnancy’ (Armstrong, 2006).

As we have noted above (page 2), the Prime Minister’s letter of appointment (Blair, 2006) included

the directive that ‘you should also aim to increase overall levels of volunteering across all age ranges and backgrounds. On young people, the key challenge is to have a million more young people volunteering within five years’. Interestingly, this task is not included in the otherwise comprehensive statement of ‘next steps’ announced on 13 June (Armstrong, 2006).

The changing face of volunteering

This review of the volunteering literature highlights some developments in volunteering that appear to be trends that will help to shape its future.

Episodic volunteering

Researchers and other commentators believe that episodic volunteering is increasing and that it is growing at the expense of traditional long-term commitment but there is little firm evidence that this is the case. Empirical data about this kind of volunteering tends to be concentrated in the area of heritage and recreation, especially to do with the organisation of festivals. In any case, these are two models of volunteering rather than types of volunteer and there is some evidence that individual volunteers take part in both kinds of activity. Handy et al (2006) also found that habitual episodic volunteers, while contributing fewer hours per year than their long-term counterparts, had volunteered for significantly longer periods of years.

Employer-supported volunteering

Here again, there is little, if any, firm statistical evidence to support the widely-held view that employer-supported volunteering has increased and is increasing both in the USA and the UK, though there is a considerable body of more anecdotal data. Much employer-supported volunteering is episodic; a common activity takes the form of a team-building exercise involving such tasks as painting a community building; clearing environmental eyesores, or tidying the overgrown gardens of older people. It may also take the form of providing expert advice and support to a specific programme or

project or the longer-term commitment of board membership (Tschirhart, 2005; Rochester and Thomas, 2006).

Virtual volunteering

Much of the discussion about the impact on volunteering of a society which increasingly conducts its business and personal relationships by means of ICT rather than face to face has concentrated on the need to use the new technology to recruit and retain volunteers (Evans and Saxton, 2005). There is some evidence, however, that the voluntary activity itself can be undertaken on a virtual basis (Murray and Harrison, 2005) and it is more than possible that this will become an increasingly attractive option for volunteers who are used to operating in a virtual world as well as those, like some older people and people with long-term limiting diseases, who have problems with mobility. A recent international study of virtual volunteering (Cravens, 2006) concluded that online volunteers could provide organisations with enhanced capacity while 'online volunteering can be a positive side to "globalisation", happening at a very local, personal level for people and organizations all over the world' (p22). The scope for this form of voluntary action is underlined by the claim that the online encyclopaedia composed and edited by more than a million volunteers may make the Wikipedia Foundation the world's largest nonprofit effort (Chronicle of Philanthropy, 2006).

Transnational volunteering and the gap year

Another burgeoning area of voluntary activity involves the movement of volunteers from one country to another. There have been examples of cross-national volunteering since the nineteenth century and, more recently, it has been the focus of well-known programmes delivered by organisations such as Voluntary Service Overseas in this country, the Peace Corps in the USA, and the United Nations Volunteers internationally. But it has taken on a new significance with the 'recent dramatic increase of activity' in its scale 'and the form such activity takes' (Davis Smith et al, 2005; p63). VSO recorded an increase of 59 per cent in applications for volunteering opportunities between 1999 and 2000

and a 17 per cent increase in the number of volunteers sent overseas (Thomas, 2001 quoted in Davis Smith et al, 2005). Much of the growth has been fuelled by the increasingly common practice of young people taking a gap year as part of the transition from school to university or between courses. A review of the phenomenon undertaken for the DfES (Jones, 2004) estimated that there were 'upwards of 800 organisations' offering 350,000 overseas volunteering placements in 200 countries (p15). Transnational volunteering is not, however, restricted to the young: VSO recruit increasing numbers of experienced professionals rather than young graduates (Rochester and Hutchison, 2002) and the idea of a career break has grown in popularity.

Young people's activism

Cross-national volunteering can be seen as 'volunteer tourism' which benefits the young volunteer more than the organisation with which s/he is placed and their constituents or users (Davis Smith et al, 2005), but it can also be seen as tapping into a rich vein of enthusiasm and commitment which is more about creating social change than service. The success of the student campaigning organisation People and Planet and the widespread support for campaigns like Make Poverty History provide further evidence of an interest in action or activism that does not easily translate into the usual terminology of volunteering.

TimeBanks

The TimeBank network claims to be 'transforming the image of volunteering to reflect its vital role in a healthy society and the dynamic affect it can have on the lives of volunteers' and 'inspiring and connecting a new generation of people to volunteer in their communities' (www.timebank.org.uk). A review of the work of time banks (Seyfang, 2001) found that they were beginning to achieve their objectives of 'building social capital and promoting community self-help through mutual volunteering, targeting socially excluded groups' albeit on a modest scale at this early stage of their development and had 'great potential to transform volunteering for the twenty-first century' (ibid.; p30).

5 Challenges and choices



This section of the report discusses some of the challenges and choices for the future development of volunteering identified by a review of the literature.

The first of these is the challenge of *rationale*. Government policy and the aspirations of volunteer-promoting organisations both treat as self-evident the value and importance of increasing the proportion of the population engaged in volunteering despite the fact that a considerable number of people are giving a great deal of time to voluntary action and that participation rates compare favourably with most comparable societies.

There are three broad rationales for involving more people in volunteering and each of them might lead to a different approach to making this happen. If we place our emphasis on the benefits of volunteering to the individual our principal concern will be to extend the opportunity of securing those benefits to the sections of the population who are less likely to take part. If the main driver is the need to recruit a larger unpaid work force to address social need and take forward the public and social policy agenda, the strategy might be to target groups of the population with a greater propensity to volunteer and to seek to convert short-term or episodic volunteering into longer-term commitment. It is arguable that, as the population acquires greater personal disposable income and a higher proportion of the population is educated to degree level, there might be a natural increase in the numbers volunteering. The third rationale is that volunteering helps to improve the quality of life in the communities in which people live. In this case the strategy would be to encourage and promote self-help and associational forms of voluntary action at local level.

This discussion leads to the second challenge, the question of *targeting*. The Home Office has identified as its priorities increases in volunteering by young people (aged 16-24) and three categories of people at risk of social exclusion – those without educational qualifications, people with disabilities and long-term limiting illnesses, and members of BME communities (it is interesting, however, to note that older people, whose participation rates are low and for whom volunteering has clear benefits for social inclusion and health, are no longer prioritised). Given that

variations in rates of volunteering are clearly related to location and to the kind of community in which people live, it might make better sense to develop priorities based on these considerations for the future development of volunteering. An approach of this kind would sit more comfortably alongside the sustainable communities and rural communities agendas of the Department for Communities and Local Government and DEFRA respectively than that of the Home Office.

The targeting of young people makes a good deal of strategic sense. If the Russell Commission's vision that volunteering will become commonplace among the 16-24 age group is realised, there is a reasonable expectation that they will continue to volunteer at later stages of their life. And, on a practical level, schools, colleges and HEIs provide an institutional framework through which young people can be contacted and influenced.

The YV05 and the Volunteering Hub have also targeted employer-supported volunteering as a growth area. This is partly opportunistic: volunteering of this kind appears to be on the increase both in Britain and in the USA and efforts in this area are likely to be rewarded. Again, it offers an institutional framework through which potential volunteers can be approached.

A third challenge is that of *marketing* volunteering. The weakening of family and community ties (including the declining importance of religion) has led to the creation of a society which is increasingly dominated by the values and practices of the market. From this perspective, prospective volunteers are seen as potential consumers to be attracted by a communications strategy which involves tailoring the message to the interests of different groups. One key problem here is the image or perception of volunteering. The experience of YV05's attempt at marketing volunteering identified the need to move from traditional perceptions to an image that can be relevant to different groups in society. Many volunteers do not describe or would not recognise their activities as volunteering. A marketing approach, moreover, may be more appropriate for some forms of volunteering than others; it fits more easily into the non-profit paradigm of volunteering as unpaid labour than into

the ideas of serious leisure and activism. And it may lead us to the uncritical adoption of new models of volunteering.

Evans and Saxton (2005) advocate what they call the 'productisation' of volunteering opportunities. Just as fundraising 'asks for specific sums of money or specifies exactly how the money will be spent' so 'the gift of time can be standardised and packaged' (pp47 and 48). This can be seen as the ultimate expression of a marketing-led approach to voluntary action.

Another key challenge is the demand for *quality*. The argument that volunteering activities should be well organised and that volunteers should receive the induction, training, support and supervision to enable them to function effectively and obtain maximum reward from their involvement is unanswerable. And the means of achieving this seem appropriate: the development of a trained, accredited profession of volunteer managers and the application of a specific quality standard – Investing in Volunteers – to volunteer-involving organisations. For those organisations where the role of volunteer manager is recognised and which are large and formally organised, this is clearly beneficial.

The great majority of organisations in which volunteering takes place do not, however, meet these conditions. Mutual aid groups, campaigning organisations, clubs and voluntary associations of all kinds need to ensure that the volunteering opportunities they offer are as rewarding and productive as any other kind but need different ways of addressing them. Rather than management, they may need to pay attention to leadership, while the quality assurance agenda needs to be addressed in ways which are specific to these kinds of organisation. What may be helpful here are case studies and models of good practice drawn from the field. These could be supplemented by education and training for those who work with and support grassroots activities.

The issue of *management* as such is perhaps less problematic. The task has been defined as finding 'the right stuff' (Zimmeck, 2001) or 'the right blend for the organisation, combining choice and control, flexibility and organisation, to be experienced by the

volunteer as a blend of informality and efficiency, personal and professional support. This must take account of the blend of characteristics, motivations and needs within the volunteering workforce; and the type of volunteering and context in which it is carried out' (Gaskin, 2003).

Another challenge that has been highlighted by the work of the Russell Commission has been the question of *ownership*. Research for the Commission found that young people wanted 'to have a say in the planning and decision-making in their volunteering' (Ellis, 2005; p34) and the implementation body has factored that into its governance. There is other evidence that in other age groups and other types of volunteering people see volunteering not as a series of time-limited and bounded tasks but as an opportunity to develop a role and exercise a good deal of autonomy.

A final theme is the question of *access* to volunteering. A number of studies have identified barriers to participation by various groups or categories. Young people identified lack of time, negative peer pressure based on the idea that volunteering was not cool, lack of confidence, and lack of access to information about opportunities (Ellis, 2005).

People from socially excluded groups taking part in the IVR study identified two kinds of barriers. The first kind were psychological; like young people they cited the image of volunteering, concerns about the amount of time needed, and lack of confidence. Some of them – especially ex-offenders - were also concerned about the reception they would get from any organisation they approached. The second kind of barriers – the practical – included the difficulty of finding out about volunteering opportunities but were also about over-formal recruitment procedures and poor follow-up for new recruits, and also the physically inaccessible locations and the financial costs involved (IVR, undated).

A very similar set of findings were reported in Rochester and Hutchison's (2002) review of the Home Office Older Volunteers' Initiative. Here the barriers associated with the attitudes of older people and practical barriers like health and mobility issues were also accompanied by the attitudes and practices of volunteer-involving organisations.



Across the three studies we can see that access could be improved by addressing the image of volunteering, by more and better sources of information about the range of possible activities, by more specific activities aimed at boosting people's confidence, and by applying the principles of good volunteer management.

But there are other barriers to participation in volunteering that are less susceptible to corrective action by volunteer-involving and volunteer-promoting organisations. The complex web of regulation that has become such a feature of our risk-averse society and its over-zealous implementation has caused great difficulties for local voluntary action (Rochester, 2001). If grassroots activity is to flourish, we need a better-tailored approach to the management of risk in clubs, societies and associations.

Secondly, the formalisation and professionalisation of the voluntary sector organisations which have historically provided a range of volunteering opportunities has both reduced the scope of these activities and raised barriers against involvement in them. The delivery of public services calls for a smaller number of trained and closely supervised volunteers and, for many of those who are involved, this has been a very positive experience - they feel both valued and well managed. This has been achieved, however, at the considerable cost of excluding from the opportunity to volunteer with these organisations people who are not able to assume the responsible roles that have been created without the period of personal development that they would have experienced in earlier days (Russell and Scott, 1997). The volunteer as unpaid and skilled labour has supplanted the long-term volunteer involved in serious use of her or his leisure.

6 Tentative conclusions

One theme running through this review of the literature is a kind of tension between analyses and prescriptions rooted in the predominant perspective on volunteering shared by government and the 'volunteering industry' and an attempt to grapple with a wider, more inclusive conception of voluntary action. In the final section of this report I try to draw out the differences between the two approaches and the implications of these for the future of volunteering.

The predominant perspective: volunteering as unpaid work or service

While paying attention to the heterogeneity of voluntary action, much of the discussion about future directions and good practice in volunteering tends to revert to the default setting of volunteering as unpaid work or service. Volunteers are seen as junior members of a workforce recruited and managed by large, formally constituted organisations which deliver services to other people, predominantly in the broad area of social welfare.

A key concern – explicit or implicit – is to increase the size of the volunteering workforce by the development of a more adequate marketing and communications strategy which involves targeting groups which are currently under-represented and addressing the barriers to their participation.

The second major concern is to enhance the quality of the volunteering experience by the development of a more professional approach to volunteer management, by the dissemination of good practice, and by the use of quality standards.

From this point of view, volunteer-involving organisations need to adjust to the changes in attitudes to volunteering and wider cultural developments rather than challenge them. On one level this involves an acceptance that the loyal and committed long-term volunteer of the past is being replaced by the episodic and 'selfish' contribution of the 'new volunteerism' whose needs they must address. More generally, volunteer-involving organisations are adopting the values and practices of the for-profit sector model of management.

Much of the 'new' volunteer workforce will be supplied by growing numbers of employer-supported volunteers. Increasingly, institutions like the workplace and schools and colleges will provide a locus for volunteer recruitment while churches and associations are seen as diminishing assets.

Alternative perspectives

From the other perspectives discussed in this report – volunteering as collective action, as mutual aid, and as serious leisure – the key concerns take on a rather different form. Rather than accept the atomisation and commercialisation of society, the existence of these other approaches challenges them and offers alternative sets of values.

The influential work of Putnam (1995) in the US has led to widespread concern that participation in organisations which bring people together to meet shared needs and pursue common interests has fallen into precipitate decline. There is some evidence in this country that it has become more difficult to interest people in some forms of volunteering of this kind (see, for example, Jackson, 1999) but there are also indications that volunteering as collective action is far from moribund (see, for example, Nichols, 2006 forthcoming). There may also be other explanations for the apparent decline. A recent study of participation in the local volunteer-run groups or branches of national federal bodies found that some were in decline while others were growing. The explanation was the age of the groups; they seemed to have a natural life span which was the period of time their founding members continued to be involved in them (Wyper, 2001). We need more robust evidence about the extent to which the increased emphasis on the individual and the consumer has affected participation in collective action. This would also enable us to identify the kinds of action most or least affected by the changing culture. We might then be in a position to judge whether Margaret Mead's often-quoted maxim still holds good:

'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world: indeed it's the only thing that ever does.'



Another key area for more research is the extent to which the internet and the mobile phone have made it possible for collective action to be organised on a virtual basis. The pace of change has been so rapid that we remain largely unaware of the actual and potential contribution the use of ICT could make to volunteering as collective action. One potent example of the potential is the use made of the internet in the campaign for the Democratic nomination for the US presidential campaign in 2003-04 by supporters of Howard Dean, which has become a model for mobilising activists as well as raising money (Borger, 2006). Support for UK campaigns like Make Poverty History have been developed through similar methods (Guardian, 2006). There is an urgent need for a substantial study of the extent to which virtual collective action can replace or supplement the more traditional methods of face-to-face organising.

Mutual aid is closely related to collective action and involves values that challenge the dominant paradigm. As well as seeking a collective rather than an individual response to a social need, mutuality challenges the authority of the professional expert who has become a dominant figure in contemporary society by stressing the importance of experiential knowledge (Borkman, 1999). The principle of mutuality has somehow survived the growing emphasis on the individual as consumer and the development of a professional and managerial society and, while it has not received the same attention as the notion of the social entrepreneur, there have been new stirrings in the co-operative sector (Yeo, 2002). The TimeBank movement is also rooted in the mutual principle (Boyle, 1999).

The volunteering as serious leisure perspective also represents a critique of the prevailing culture. The idea of the amateur as someone who practices an art or takes part in sport out of the love of the activity and to gain pleasure from it has been lost behind its contemporary usage of a hapless incompetent (even the LVSC's manual for managers of voluntary sector organisation is entitled 'voluntary but not amateur!'). Similarly, the term 'professional' is associated with high levels of competence when once it referred to a mercenary who took part in an activity for money rather than from higher motives (Taylor, 2006).

As well as these fundamental differences in values, the alternative perspectives provide us with different organisational challenges and concerns. On the whole we are discussing smaller, less formally structured organisations in which the leading (and all other) roles are played by volunteers. Like the volunteer-involving organisations associated with the predominant perspective, they need to attract and retain volunteers and organise their work effectively but the ways in which these functions are carried out are very different and raise distinctive problems. They do not, as a rule, recruit people to undertake predetermined roles, apply selection criteria and offer formal training. The culture tends to be more about seeking and accepting offers of help from among those who may have an interest in the issue or the activities of the organisation. It is also about allowing the volunteers to develop the roles they will play in the organisation in response to what is needed and what they feel able to take on (Rochester, 1992).

A key distinction is between the core of highly committed serious leisure volunteers who form the 'inner group of willing people' (Harris, 1998) or the 'stalwarts' (Nichols, 2006 forthcoming) on the one hand and those who play a more episodic role. (There is nothing new about the idea of episodic volunteering in this kind of organisational context.) One distinctive organisational challenge is to ensure that the inner core does not become overloaded and that due attention is paid to the issue of succession.

Another distinctive feature is that, unlike for-profit corporations and agencies designed in their image, the organisations in which this kind of volunteering takes place are not purely instrumental; they exist to meet the social needs of their members as much as to achieve other - extrinsic - objectives.

Many of these kinds of volunteer-involving organisations are networked into larger structures which may offer valuable advice, information and support. They may also, however, provide a conduit for ideas about the nature of the group's work and the way in which it should go about its business which are rooted in ideas of professionalism and managerialism which are an imperfect fit with the local organisation's own aspirations. In the world of sport, for example, the aims of national governing bodies to improve performance levels and widen



participation in their sport may import a new agenda to the local club. Across the leisure areas of arts and culture as well as sport and recreation, there may be a tension between pressure for elite performance at the national level and grassroots participation at local level. The ethos that 'if a thing is worth doing, it's worth doing badly' may be under threat.

Finally, the issues of regulation and risk management can weigh especially heavily on local organisations based on collective action, mutual aid or the pursuit of volunteering as serious leisure. There is a bewildering range of legal requirements developed to regulate large scale commercial activity and administered with little regard to the needs of small voluntary organisations (Rochester, 2001) which act as a cost and a constraint on local voluntary action. There is a clear need for a 'lighter touch' (Kumar and Nunan, 2002).

Finally

The agenda for the future of voluntary action viewed from the perspective of volunteering as unpaid labour or service is, as we have seen, comparatively straightforward. There is a level of consensus about what is needed and about the technocratic or managerial tools which can take it forward.

An agenda which takes full account of the other perspectives of volunteering as collective action, mutual aid and serious leisure is less clear-cut, broader and more contentious. It involves:

- making the case for alternative values (collective action and mutual aid vs focus on the individual; the value of experiential knowledge vs professional and managerial expertise; expressive as well as instrumental goals);
- research into the nature of participation in collective action, clubs, societies and associations both face to face and via the internet (and the possible links between them);
- a greater emphasis on making organisations of this kind effective (on their own terms) rather than on the management of individual volunteers;
- an attack on unnecessary, inappropriate and disproportionate regulation which constrains and restrains voluntary action.

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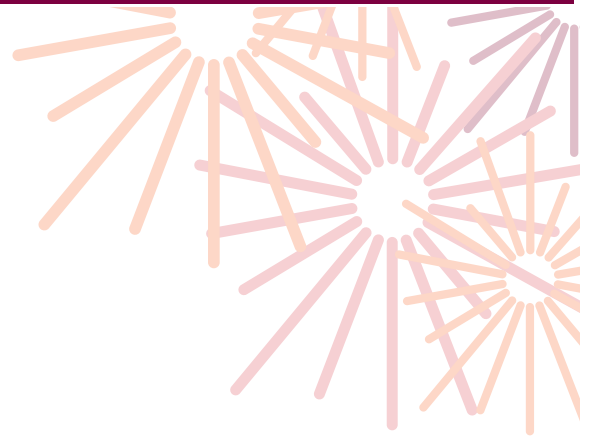
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The Commission on the Future of Volunteering has been established by the England Volunteering Development Council in order to develop a long-term vision for volunteering in England.

This research has been undertaken to inform the work of the Commission.

To find out more about the Commission visit www.volcomm.org.uk

The England Volunteering Development Council is a high-level representative mechanism for volunteering, engaging with both government and opposition parties in order to capture the collective intelligence of volunteer-involving organisations, of volunteering infrastructure providers and of volunteers to provide a powerful, co-ordinated lobby to steer government policy and community action.

To find out more about the Council visit www.volunteering.org.uk/evdc

The Volunteering Hub is one of the ChangeUp national hubs of expertise. The Volunteering Hub has been set up to develop the volunteering infrastructure. The Hub's objective is to enable far more people to

volunteer. The Hub wants these volunteers to be more diverse and to include many more under-represented groups such as rural communities, refugees and asylum seekers. The Hub wants more volunteers to be more active where they are needed most, with organisations working in the most deprived communities. The Hub wants all volunteers to be well managed and supported, so that they remain committed and motivated and continue to volunteer.

The Volunteering Hub is the Commission on the Future of Volunteering's principle sponsor.

To find out more about the Hub visit www.volunteering.org.uk/hub

Volunteering England is the national volunteer development organisation for England. Volunteering England's vision is of a society where people's potential and passion to transform lives and communities through volunteering is fully realised. Volunteering England provides the secretariat and accountable body functions for the Commission on the Future of Volunteering.

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The Commission on the Future of Volunteering

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