Engaging adults in youth volunteering

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Acknowledgements

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Summary

Background and research objectives

The political profile of volunteering has risen sharply in the last decade as a key part of strategies related to civic renewal and building stronger communities. In particular, a range of initiatives have aimed to encourage young people to engage in volunteering. Research and evaluation that followed has provided a rich set of evidence on why young people volunteer and the benefits associated with this kind of activity. Political attention has focused less on volunteering amongst adults or volunteering in settings where volunteers and beneficiaries are from different age groups. In light of this policy background, the National Centre for Social Research was commissioned by the Centre for Understanding Behaviour Change (CUBeC) to carry out a qualitative study to explore:

> - *The motivations to enter volunteering;*
> - *The barriers and facilitators to entering and remaining as a volunteer; and*
> - *The factors that can change behaviour to encourage and retain volunteers.*

This report focuses on the three key stages along a route to becoming a volunteer at which points various factors could influence whether or not people volunteer. These were the motivators and de-motivators affecting the initial decision to consider volunteering with young people; the barriers and facilitators to entering volunteering once the motivation is there; and the factors affecting whether individuals continue to be volunteers.

Research design

The study comprised of six focus groups in two geographical areas: a metropolitan area and a non-metropolitan area. Focus groups were conducted in each area involving professionals responsible for managing volunteers in the youth sector; volunteers in the youth sector; and non-volunteers who would like to do volunteering work with young people. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling approach in order to ensure diversity of participants across the key groups. Diversity was achieved in relation to age, gender, ethnicity and levels of experience with volunteering.

Motivators and de-motivators to considering volunteering

Two categories of factors that motivated individuals were identified as intrinsic or extrinsic to the act of volunteering:

Intrinsic	Extrinsic
centring on giving something back to the community (e.g. skills, experience) within the context of a perceived need	*centring on achieving a personal outcome from the volunteering experience – particularly as a pathway to employment*

De-motivators to thinking about volunteering were attributed to factors ranging from the personal to the socio-political:

- **Personal characteristics** of non-volunteers (e.g. self-centredness).
- **Narrow understanding of volunteering** (i.e. what it entails and who does it).
- **Negative perceptions of the culture of the voluntary sector** as being target driven and disorganised.
- **Socio-political factors** such as a distrust of the Big Society and, by association, volunteering.

The research also uncovered factors specifically related to motivations for volunteering with young people:

- **Perceptions about young people** as being vulnerable or a group where volunteering could make the greatest difference; alternatively, negative perceptions of young people could put adults off getting involved, such as fears for personal safety, perceptions of them being a difficult group to work with as well as concerns around being labelled a 'paedophile'.
- **Personal gain:** adults felt they could benefit from the experience of volunteering with young people, e.g. wanting to understand their own children better.
- **Social benefit:** the difference volunteering could make to a community, such as making it a safer place.

Becoming and remaining a volunteer – practical barriers and facilitators

Once motivated, there were three key factors that acted as barriers and facilitators to individuals entering and remaining as volunteers. A first key issue was seen as lifestyle; in particular the stage of life an individual was at:

- Different stages of life were seen to bring into play factors around time and money which could either facilitate or act as barriers to entry into volunteering.
- Underlying this view was the feeling that either having spare time or financial stability was a necessary condition to being able to volunteer.
- Financial stability and time were seen to be experienced in varied ways by individuals at different life stages so that, for example, older people and recent graduates were seen to have more time on their hands to volunteer than young professionals or those with family commitments.
- Alternatively, it was felt that lots of busy people volunteer so it was a case of organising your time more effectively.

Where people were either at the 'correct' life stage or managed their time effectively, two other sets of practical factors came into play. These included general practical considerations such as centralised bureaucracy (particularly Criminal Records Bureau checks), as well as factors more specifically related to the practices of the voluntary sector. This latter set of factors were also seen to be instrumental in shaping an individual's decision to continue volunteering and included:

- The willingness and ability of the voluntary sector to be flexible in their practices. This included offering flexible time commitments to volunteers and being flexible in the roles they offer volunteers (e.g. based on their changing needs once they enter volunteering).
- Making volunteering accessible and inclusive as possible. This included making volunteering accessible to those with disabilities and simplifying the application process (e.g. forms) which may make opportunities inaccessible to some parts of the population.
- Valuing volunteers in terms of how they are recruited (e.g. responding to enquiries promptly) and how they are treated once they are recruited (e.g. providing a welcoming environment, treated appropriately but as equal to paid staff, given opportunities to develop and financially reimbursed for expenses).

A key finding in relation to this was that, although these are practical factors only affecting those already motivated to volunteer, persistent frustration with these barriers can act as a de-motivator for those previously keen to volunteer.

Changing behaviour

Based on a discussion of the above barriers and facilitators at the different stages of the volunteering journey, a number of strategies to motivate individuals, to help them enter volunteering and to continue as volunteers emerged.

Motivations to volunteer with young people
- Better promotion of the full range of volunteering opportunities using case studies of previous volunteers to show what adults have to give.
- Tackling negative perceptions of young people and providing a realistic picture of the challenges they face.
- Providing opportunities for inter-generational interaction.

Entering volunteering
- Flexibility of opportunity in terms of activities offered and time commitment.
- Listening to what volunteers want to get out of volunteering and providing a welcoming environment.
- Improved partnership working within the voluntary sector to ensure that volunteers not suitable for one organisation are passed to others rather than lost completely.
- Simplification of bureaucratic processes such as application forms and safety checks.

Retaining volunteers
- Valuing volunteers by involving them in decision-making about their role, treating them with respect and, where appropriate, in a similar way to staff.
- Investing in volunteers in terms of support and development.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In the last decade, volunteering has increasingly been seen as a central act of citizenship and a central pillar of strategies related to civic renewal. This development reflects an acknowledgement of the perceived benefits for volunteers and society more generally of engaging in pro-social activities (Ellis Paine *et al* 2010). The rising political profile of volunteering has seen a range of policy initiatives aiming to create opportunities for, in particular, young people to become involved in volunteering and other activities with a positive social or community focus. Evaluations of the Millennium Volunteers' programme and, more recently, v – the National Young Volunteers' Service – have demonstrated positive links between involvement and improved confidence and civic mindedness for the young people involved (NatCen *et al* 2011).

Less political attention has been specifically focused on volunteering amongst the adult population, despite the over 25s accounting for a large majority of volunteers. However, under the umbrella of the Big Society, Government is supporting active citizenship by encouraging volunteering for all age groups, including young people. Initiatives such as Community Organisers and Community First aim to encourage social action and enable people to contribute positively and make a difference in their local community. The Department for Education (DfE) also funds projects in the voluntary sector that aim to increase capacity in the voluntary sector.

Extensive research exists on why people do and do not volunteer, some of which is cross-cutting (Low *et al* 2007), with other studies focusing on volunteering in specific sectors (e.g. Taylor *et al* 2003; Ockenden 2008). In the wider context of growing concern over relations between different age groups, there remains a gap in knowledge in relation to people volunteering in a setting where beneficiaries are exclusively from a different age group. The overall aim of this study is to address this question in relation to adults volunteering in a youth setting.

1.2 Research aims and objectives

The aim of this study was to understand the barriers and facilitators to adults volunteering in positions that bring them into contact with young people. The key objectives of the study were to:

- o describe the motivations and drivers to enter volunteering;
- o explore the barriers and facilitators to entering and remaining as a volunteer; and
- o identify factors that can change behaviour to encourage and retain volunteers.

1.3   Overview of the study design

Six qualitative focus groups were undertaken in two areas: one a metropolitan area and one a non-metropolitan area. In each area focus groups were conducted with each of the following groups:

- Professionals responsible for managing volunteers in the youth sector
- Volunteers in the youth sector
- Non-volunteers who would like to do volunteering work with young people.

Recruitment was undertaken through the use of umbrella voluntary organisations and an external recruitment agency. The sample was purposively selected in order to ensure diversity of participants across the key groups. The primary sampling criteria used included:

- Age: participants across the age range of 35-70 were selected.
- Gender: mixture of men and women were included.
- Experience of volunteering: those with less than five years and five or more years were selected.
- Experience of managing volunteers: those with less than 5 and 5 or more years experience of managing volunteers were selected.

Focus groups were conducted using topic guides developed in consultation with the DfE (see Appendix A). The topic guides set out key areas to be covered and ensured consistency across the groups, whilst also enabling the researcher to explore flexibly the range of issues raised in different groups and to respond and follow up on new subject areas raised by respondents.

The groups lasted approximately 1.5 hours and were conducted at central locations that were convenient for respondents. Assurances of confidentiality were given at the start and end of each group. Respondents were given a thank you payment at the end of the group. All of the focus groups were digitally recorded with the respondents' consent.

1.4   The route to volunteering

During the course of the study it became clear that the barriers and facilitators to volunteering are layered, and occur at different stages in the decision-making and practical process of becoming a volunteer. Here, the section outlines this process in a linear fashion, which may not always reflect the reality of how it would be experienced, but acts as a useful way to present the findings and structure the remainder of this report.

Figure 1.1 **Factors affecting becoming and remaining a volunteer**

Journey to volunteering   *Non-volunteer*

| Considering volunteering | → | De-Motivators |

Motivators

| Becoming a volunteer | → | Barriers |

Facilitators

| Volunteering | → | -ve experiences |

+ve experiences

| Continue volunteering |
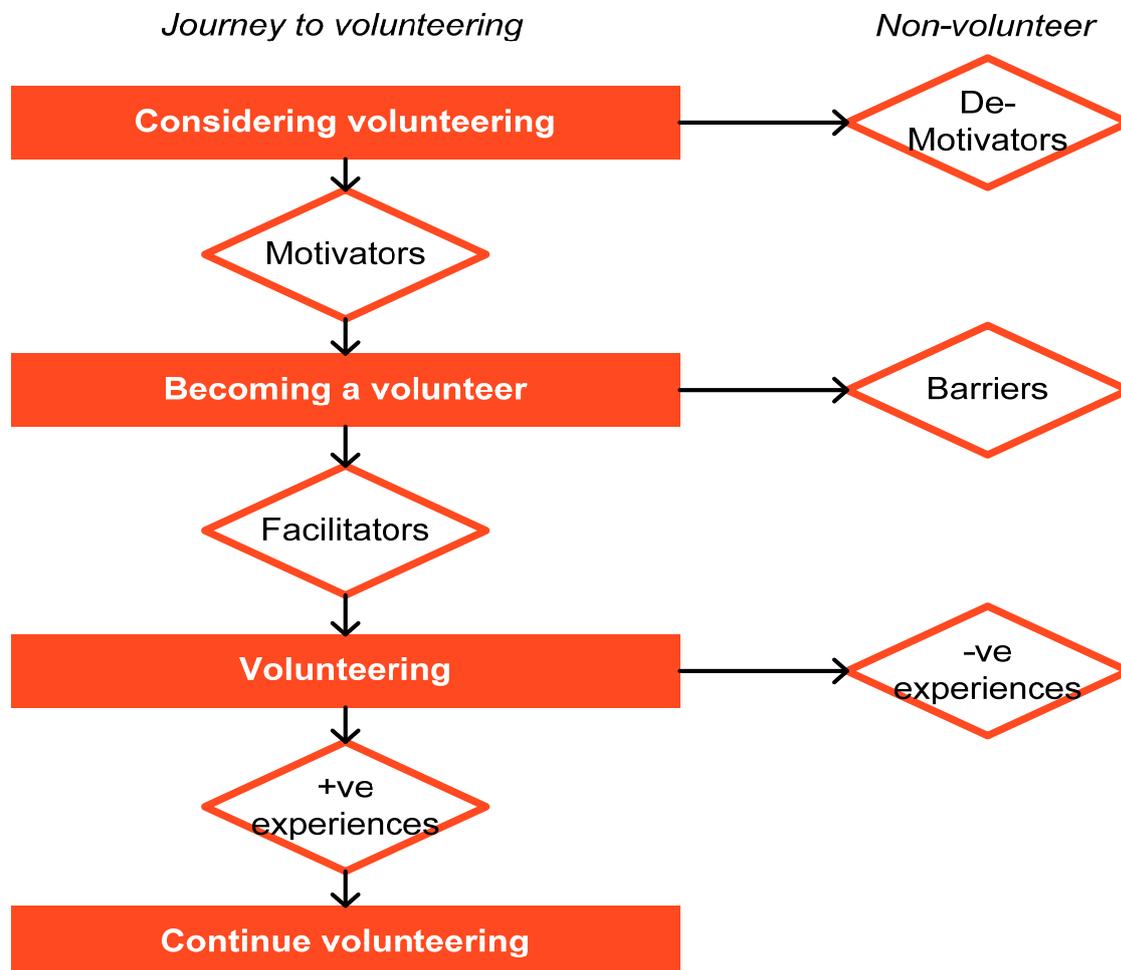
As noted in Section 1.1, there is extensive literature on why people volunteer and the factors that act as barriers to volunteering. The findings of this study certainly echo many of these sentiments yet it became clear during analysis that barriers and facilitators are not all relevant at the same point. In fact there are a number of stages, illustrated by Figure 1.1, at which a range of factors can work positively or negatively towards an individual becoming or remaining a volunteer.

The diagram illustrates that there are three stages at which factors can influence whether people volunteer. The remainder of the report focuses on the key transition points in this model and the factors identified and influencing which route is taken. The first set is motivators and de-motivators. Chapter two describes how these affect the decision to consider becoming a volunteer. Those who are de-motivated obviously do not become volunteers, but those who have the motivation to volunteer then face a second set of factors that either facilitate or act as barriers to actually becoming a volunteer. These

factors are described in Chapter three. Finally, there is a third set of factors for those volunteering that affect whether they continue to do so.

It is worth noting that for any one individual, the factors that are unique to their route through this process are likely to be multiple and possibly difficult to disentangle. In reality, for example, there is some overlap in these stages such that barriers that are repeatedly faced can become de-motivators. Furthermore, the remaining chapters describe the factors that influence motivations to volunteer in general but also identify where these are specific to adults volunteering with young people.

2 Considering volunteering

This chapter discusses the factors that influenced decisions to become a volunteer at the outset of the journey. The motivators and de-motivators that emerged from the data were largely relevant to volunteering in general. However, this chapter will highlight factors that affected the decision to be a volunteer specifically with young people where relevant.

Journey to volunteering   *Non- volunteer*

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┌─────────────────────────────┐              ◇ De-
│  Considering volunteering   │─────────────▶   motivators ◇
└─────────────────────────────┘
              │
              ▼
         ◇ Motivators ◇
              │
              ▼
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│   Becoming a volunteer      │
└─────────────────────────────┘
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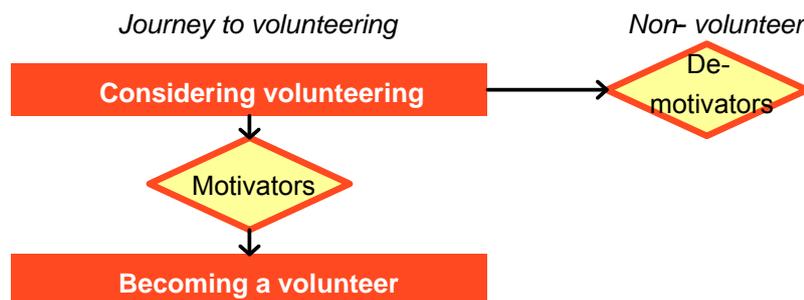
The chapter will begin with a discussion of the factors that motivated respondents to think about volunteering with young people in 2.1 and will then move on to discuss the de-motivators in Section 2.2. Section 2.3 will provide a summary of the key findings.

2.1 Motivators to volunteering

The diagram below summarises categories of factors that motivated both volunteers and non-volunteers to consider volunteering in the first place. These factors can be divided into two groups: those that were *intrinsically* related to the act of volunteering and those *extrinsic* to volunteering and related more to personal gain and/or personal circumstances. These will be discussed in turn in the following sub-sections.

Although respondents tended to refer to both sets of factors in mutually exclusive terms, it is worth noting that gaining a rewarding experience from volunteering straddles this distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Rewarding experiences were defined in terms of feeling good about participating in a volunteering activity and/or having the chance to sample new experiences as a result of volunteering, such as being able to work in another country.

Intrinsic factors

Extrinsic Factors

Reasons relating to the actual experience of volunteering and giving

Rewarding experience

Reasons relating to personal gain from volunteering
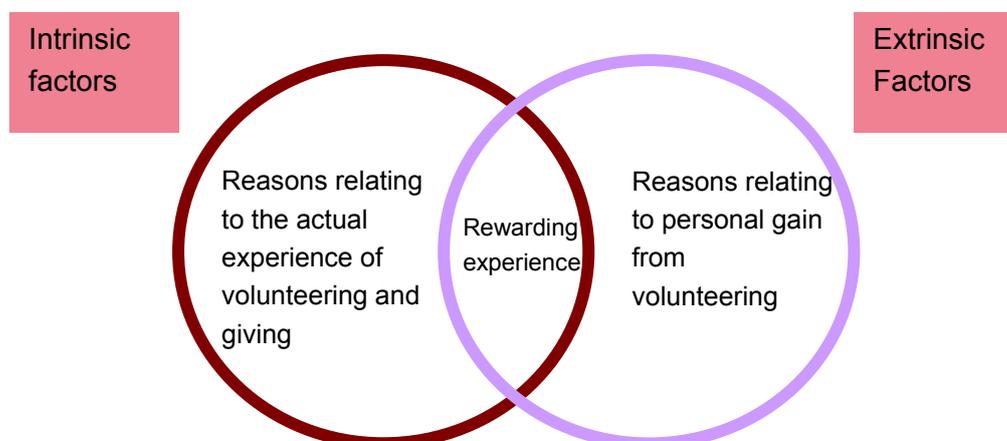
2.1.1   Intrinsic factors

These were factors intrinsic to the act of volunteering which motivated individuals and revolved around *giving* something back. There were two key intrinsic factors that respondents cited across all of the groups: wanting to give back to the community/young people and the desire to have a 'sense of belonging'.

Motivations related to giving back to the community focused on respondents sensing that local issues were not being addressed. These issues included, for example, a lack of youth centres and provision for young people in a local area and/or the challenges experienced by young people from refugee groups in integrating within mainstream cultures. The absence of these services motivated respondents to get involved in their communities through their volunteering efforts, whether this involved setting up additional provision (e.g. a new youth club) or working with existing voluntary sector provision.

These motivations could also be tied to personal considerations around respondents' own children such as wanting to act as a role model for pro-social behaviour and/or feeling that their own children would also benefit from the youth provision set up.

But actually more recently setting up the youth club, I was actually on the parish council and the village I lived in had a sort of number of houses built et cetera, and people were moaning about the kids just hanging around on the estate and I said, 'Well, I think we need to set up a youth club, then'. Of course, and then I did…So my motivation really was that, to provide something for the children in the village, which obviously would include my children as they got older, you know…

(Volunteer)

The desire to give back to the community was underpinned by a number of often intersecting factors, which are summarised below.

- *Personal experiences:* Respondents felt that their own personal experiences of issues such as homelessness both motivated and equipped them to help young people also face these issues. Respondents also spoke of their personal experiences of being supported in the past. Those that did receive support from volunteers in the past (e.g. help with substance abuse or homelessness, see case study 1) felt grateful and wanted to help others. Conversely, those that did not receive this support in the past wanted to ensure that it was made available to others and this served as a motivation to get involved in volunteering.
- *Experience of others*: This related to respondents appreciating the challenges experienced by friends and family in confronting certain issues (e.g. substance abuse) and wanting to ensure that others received support.
- *Role models*: Respondents were motivated by individuals in their life to take part in volunteering. This included other family members, particularly if there was a family history of volunteering, and mentors whom they looked up to.
- *Imparting skills:* Respondents felt that they had key skills which they could give to young people in order to help them in life. This included life skills, but also specific career-related skills which could help young people, such as experience of the media industry.

Case study 1: Personal experience as a motivator

| **John** |
| As an adult, John became homeless as a result of losing his house after divorce proceedings. He was forced to live rough and relied on the empathy and help given to him by a local voluntary organisation and his community to get through this experience. He has since found employment and is now in permanent accommodation. He felt grateful for the help given to him by volunteers when he was homeless and feels that he would like to share his experiences and help others in turn who have also been made homeless in his local community, particularly young people. |

In giving back to the community, respondents also mentioned the importance of the 'sense of belonging' this engendered. This sense of belonging related to individuals feeling a part of their own community and/or being part of the organisation of like-minded people through taking part in voluntary action designed to address the issues facing their community.

2.1.2 Extrinsic factors

In contrast to the 'giving' orientation of intrinsic factors, extrinsic reasons for wanting to be involved in volunteering were either about being *compelled* to volunteer, so that there were varying degrees to which someone could be considered a volunteer, or wanting to

gain a personal outcome from the volunteering experience. Personal outcomes were seen in terms of volunteering being a pathway to paid employment for respondents through various ways, including:

- o Improving experiences of working within a sector and/or client group (e.g. young people with disabilities).
- o Getting employment references from voluntary organisations.
- o Adding to the qualifications an individual has through participation in any accredited training offered by a voluntary organisation.
- o Improving an individual's curriculum vitae through the above means.
- o Helping individuals change their career direction through the above means.

Case study 2: Experiences of a manager

<u>**Fiona**</u>
Fiona is part of the volunteering programme at a small voluntary organisation. She is responsible for recruiting volunteers and ensuring they have a rewarding experience. As part of her recruitment role, she has interviewed many volunteers and feels they come from all walks of life and with different motivations. In addition to wanting to make a difference, she also feels individuals volunteer for other reasons and gives the example of someone who volunteered because they wanted to be a social worker and needed experience working with young people to be one.

Respondents also outlined three key ways in which individuals' volunteering involved some element of obligation or compulsion:

- o Through benefit regulations which encouraged respondents to volunteer at the threat of their benefits being cut.
- o Through corporate volunteering schemes which obliged respondents to take part in volunteering activities as part of the terms of their employment. This included, for example, banks asking their employees to undertake a fixed number of hours volunteering.
- o Through peer pressure in terms of feeling obliged to do volunteering work because friends and/or family are doing so.

2.1.3 Motivations to volunteer with young people

In addition to the above generic intrinsic and extrinsic factors, respondents also outlined their motivations for volunteering with young people more specifically. These motivations are summarised in the diagram below and relate to the young person, the adult and the community in general.

|	Motivation	Reason
Figure 2.2	**Motivations to work with young people**	
	Motivation	**Reason**
	Intrinsic (giving to the young person)	**Young people seen to be vulnerable and in need of adult input.** Young people seen to be at an age when they are potentially vulnerable to negative influences and experiences (e.g. drugs, sexual health issues, employment issues) and may benefit from the safe and non-judgmental form of support that adults outside of their family could provide.
		Maximising intervention impact. Young people were seen to be at an age when they are receptive to positive influences and so any adult intervention at this stage will have a greater positive impact on a young person's life than at a later stage. Respondents also felt that the difference made to a young person's life through volunteering is also more readily perceivable, and the possibility of observing this added a further motivation to be a volunteer.
		Knowing what a young person is going through. Respondents have experienced a range of similar issues that young people are currently facing and feel able to help young people negotiate these.
	Extrinsic (adult gaining something from the experience)	**To understand young people better**. Respondents who had children felt motivated to volunteer with young people in order to understand the issues faced by and mindset of their own children better. Those that did not have children wanted to volunteer in order to experience a young person's world today, which they may otherwise not have access to.
		Enjoyment. Working with young people is enjoyable insofar as it involves engaging in fun activities and keeping abreast of the latest trends in music and technology.
		Not having the confidence to work with adults. Voluntary sector managers felt that some adults come to volunteering work with young people as they lack the confidence to work with adults.
	Mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic (the community)	**To make the community a safer place.** To cut down on youth crime by supporting young people through their issues and keeping them busy through the volunteering work adults do.

Having discussed what motivates adults to volunteer with young people, the next sub-section will explore the factors that act as de-motivators to volunteering.

2.2 De-motivators to volunteering

The de-motivators to thinking about volunteering can be helpfully considered as a ripple that moves from individual to socio-political factors. This ripple effect is summarised in the diagram below, with each layer discussed in the following sub-sections.

Personal

Perceptions of volunteering

Culture of voluntary sector

Socio-political
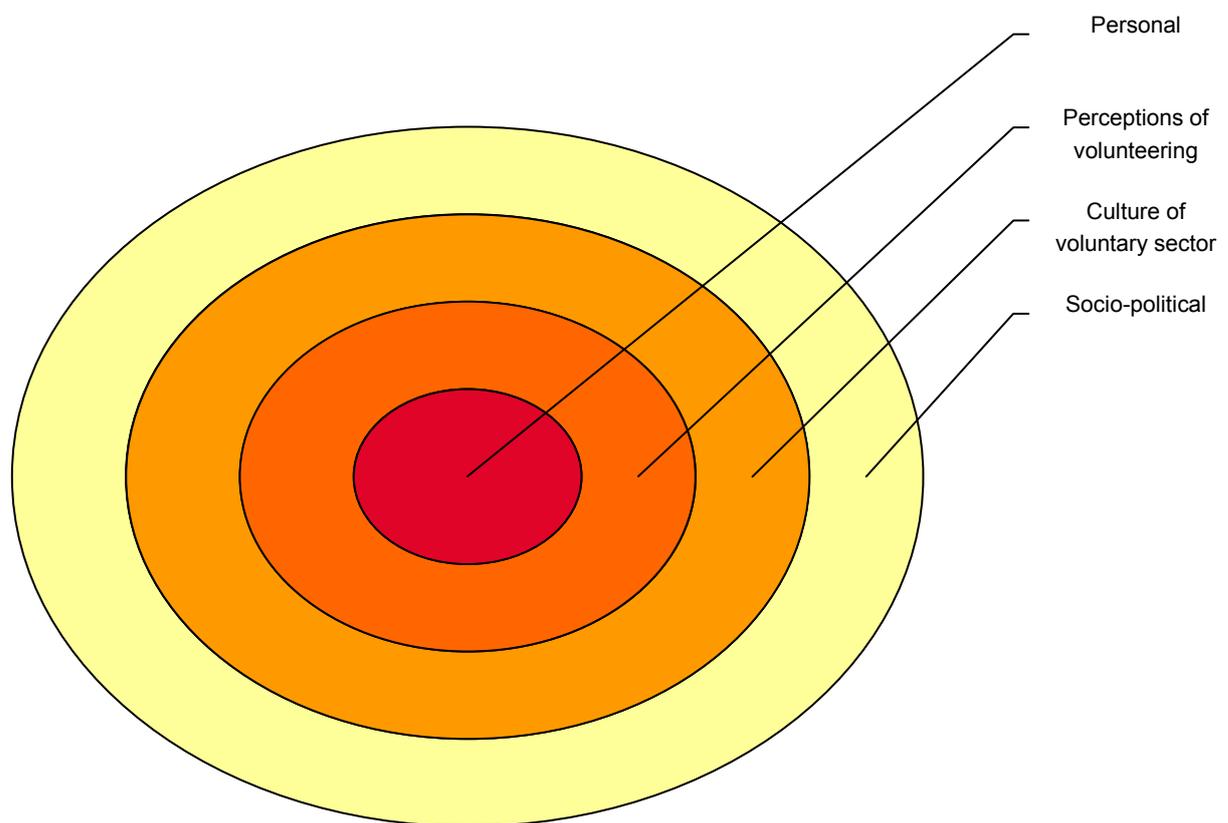
2.2.1 Personal characteristics

Personal characteristics of individuals that could de-motivate them to take part in volunteering activities were discussed most fervently in the groups with volunteers and managers. Respondents felt that there were two key personal characteristics that could act as barriers to thinking about volunteering: on the one hand, there was the issue of low self-esteem in terms of adults not feeling they had anything to offer by way of experiences or skills to young people or otherwise not feeling confident enough to work with young people. On the other hand, volunteers and managers felt that non-volunteers tended to be those that were self-centred and materialistic in orientation insofar as they were unwilling to do anything without monetary reward and/or did not take ownership of issues outside of their own immediate life.

I find this society is such, everything's so fast…you're, kind of like taught to be quite a self-centered point of view…I think that there is a mentality amongst a lot of people like, you know, 'I pay my taxes, that's what I pay it for; why should I do it [volunteer] as well?'…As long as somebody else does it…

<div align="right">

(Volunteer)

</div>

2.2.2 Perceptions of volunteering

Perceptions of volunteering were seen as a barrier across the groups. Two key conceptions about volunteering were seen to deter individuals from thinking about volunteering: what volunteering entails and who typically does volunteering activities. In terms of the former, respondents felt that there was prevalent a narrow view of what volunteering entails. For example, volunteers and managers were particularly keen to address the stereotype of volunteering as being nothing more than working in a charity shop or doing menial work at local church functions, instead promoting the rich and diverse range of volunteering activities available.

Similarly, respondents across the groups felt that there were unhelpful stereotypes of the type person who undertakes voluntary work, although some participants maintained this perception. Examples of these negative stereotypes ranged from the derogatory (e.g. "do-gooders", "hippies" and the unskilled who could not find employment) to those that over-emphasised the skills needed to be a volunteer (e.g. only "special" individuals or those with patience could volunteer with young people). These stereotypes were seen to undermine the view that 'ordinary' individuals could participate in voluntary work.

2.2.3 Culture of the voluntary sector

Perceptions of the voluntary sector were also seen to affect the motivations of individuals to want to volunteer. Managers and volunteers, as well as non-volunteers, acknowledged that the voluntary sector was sometimes seen to be too driven by the need to secure funding and this served to paint a picture of the sector as narrowly focussed on specific target groups, competitive and fragmented. These perceptions were seen to be a barrier to those who wanted to make a difference in their communities.

But I think also there's a danger not just with government but with charitable organisations that they tend to lose sight of what they're there for and, you know, the organisation itself becomes an end in itself and they build empires and you know?

<div align="right">

(Non-volunteer)

</div>

Both volunteers and non-volunteers also felt that the voluntary organisations could at times be disorganised in how they have dealt with interest from potential volunteers. For example, both volunteers and non-volunteers conveyed difficult experiences around making initial enquires with organisations around volunteering work and these not being followed up. This had the effect of some individuals not feeling inclined to think about

volunteering in the future (see Chapter three for a further discussion of how this culture of voluntary organisations translates into practices which act as barriers to individuals entering volunteering).

2.2.4 Socio-political factors

There were three key socio-political factors that were seen to adversely affect motivations toward volunteering. These are outlined below:

o *Disagreement with/distrust of the 'Big Society'.* A perspective held across the groups expressed that the Big Society may politicise volunteering by bringing it under the banner of a particular political party manifesto. This was seen to have a potentially adverse effect on those who may otherwise have thought of volunteering but who may not share the political views of the parties responsible for the Big Society.

o *The economic ramifications of volunteering.* This was a view closely allied to the distrust of the Big Society idea and related to concerns around the growth in volunteering taking over the role of the state in providing care for its citizens and the impact that volunteering may have on paid employment. For example, non-volunteers expressed concerns that their decision to volunteer may lead to fewer paid employment opportunities within an organisation.

o *Lack of community feeling.* Managers in particular mentioned that there is a lack of community cohesion within certain areas due to various reasons, such as transient populations. This lack of cohesion is seen to result in the type of attitude described in 2.2.1 where individuals do not feel sufficiently invested in an area to care about addressing the issues facing it.

2.2.5 De-motivations to volunteer with young people

Fear of working with young people was a key theme that emerged during the group discussion for why adults may not be inclined to volunteer specifically with young people. This manifested itself in three ways. On one level, respondents mentioned the fears around personal safety when working with challenging groups of young people, such as those with substance abuse issues and offenders. Secondly, there was also an acknowledgement that adults often had negative perceptions of young people as 'trouble makers' epitomised by the image of 'hoodies', which further exacerbated the issue.

Participant 1: If we're going to [talk about] volunteering with young people, there are people that actually don't like young people….Are fearful of young people.
Interviewer: WHY ARE THEY FEARFUL?
Participant 1: Because of the media…The stereotypes of the young people.
Participant 2: You're wearing a hoodie and you've got trainers and

Participant 1: You're going to be abused.

Participant 2: And you're a violent person, you know?

Participant 1: More than three people together…They panic.

(Managers)

Respondents mentioned the underlying fear that adults may have about being labelled as a 'paedophile' should they volunteer with young people and be falsely accused by a young person of inappropriate behaviour. This seemed to be particularly an issue within the context of the tabloid coverage around this issue in recent years.

Finally, respondents also felt that young people are often perceived to be a difficult group to work with in terms of being uncommunicative and unresponsive to adult input. This may result in some adults fearing that their input may not be needed or appreciated by young people should they volunteer.

2.3 Summary

Factors that motivated individuals tended to be either intrinsic, centring on giving something back to the community, or extrinsic, centring on achieving a personal outcome from the volunteering experience. Motivations to volunteer specifically with young people related to perceptions about young people (e.g. as being vulnerable or a group where volunteering could make the greatest difference), to adults wanting to gain something from the experience of volunteering with young people (e.g. wanting to understand their own children better) and to the difference volunteering could make to community (i.e. to make it a safer place).

Demotivations to thinking about volunteering were attributed to factors ranging from the personal to the socio-political. These factors included personal characteristics of non-volunteers (e.g. self-centredness), limited perceptions of volunteering (i.e. what it entails and who does it), negative perceptions of the culture of the voluntary sector as being target driven and disorganised and socio-political factors (e.g. distrust of the Big Society). In terms of volunteering specifically with young people, perceptions of young people were attributed to discouraging volunteering. These perceptions tended to focus on the fear of working with young people, including fears around personal safety, perceptions of young people as a difficult group to work with and concerns around being labelled a 'paedophile'.

The next chapter will move on to consider the next two stages of the journey together – the barriers and facilitators to entering volunteering and remaining a volunteer once an individual is motivated to volunteer with young people.

3 Becoming a volunteer

The aim of this chapter is to describe the practical barriers and facilitators to becoming and remaining as a volunteer. Some of these factors also affect the ability and desire of individuals to continue to be volunteers once they have entered volunteering. This builds on the previous chapter by identifying the factors that affect whether those people who are motivated to volunteer are actually able to achieve that aim and, if so, whether they are able to persist in being volunteers. These factors largely apply to volunteering in general, rather than specifically with young people, and the findings echo much previous research in this area. It should also be noted that not only can negative experience lead to people stopping volunteering – a change of circumstances may be equally important, yet it is of more benefit to policy and practice to focus on minimising negative experiences.
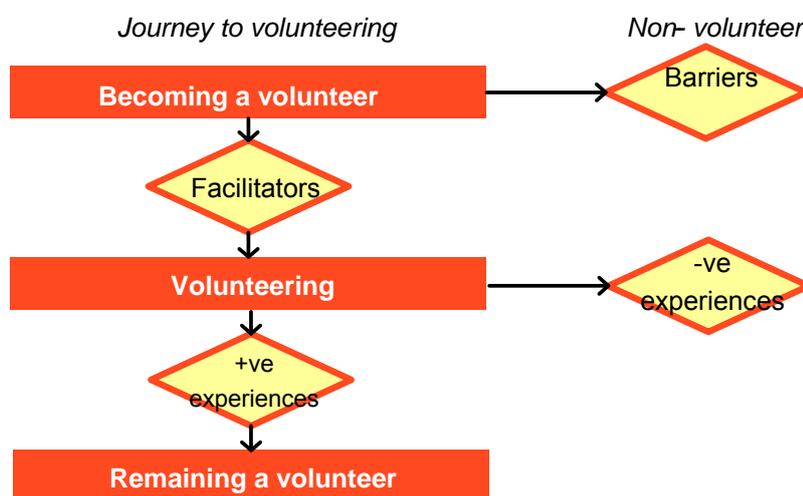
The chapter presents the findings under three headings: lifestyle factors, practical considerations and the practices of the voluntary sector. These are illustrated in the figure below, with those factors at the base of the pyramid being the fundamental conditions that respondents described as needing to negotiate first before considering entering into volunteering with young people.
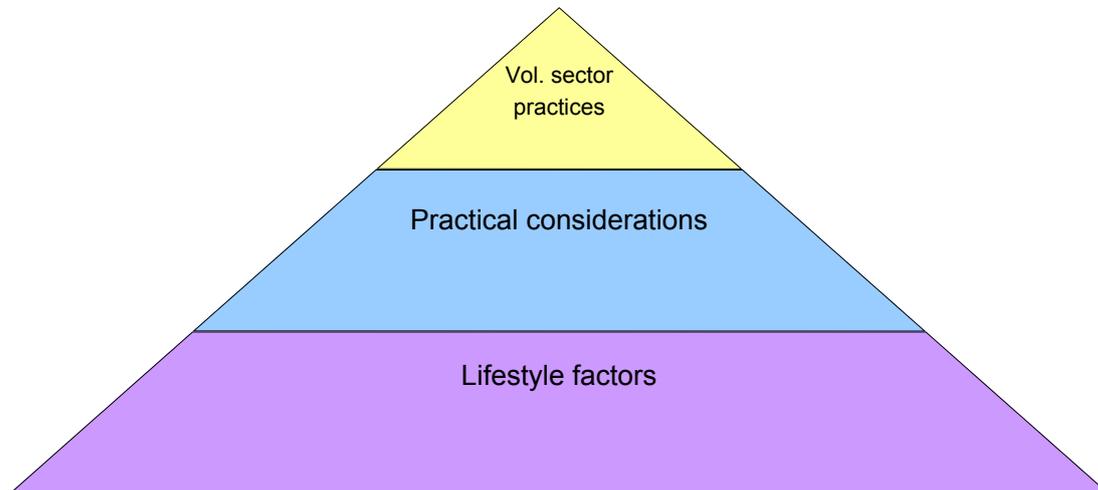
3.1 Lifestyle factors

The point people were at in their lives had a significant bearing on whether they would volunteer or not. A number of lifestyle factors appeared to need to come together for a motivated individual to be able to become a volunteer, such that being at the right point in life was in some cases a necessary condition to be able to volunteer. This point, however, manifested itself in three different ways and revolved around age, time and money.

Firstly, people with spare time to give were seen as being able to volunteer. This was described with reference to older people who may have retired or work fewer hours than previously and young people that have just left university but have yet to find work. Other types of people were seen to have less time to volunteer, including young professionals or those working long hours, those with families and other commitments such as caring responsibilities. However, volunteers and managers in particular felt that time was more of a barrier to those who were less motivated to enter volunteering and/or those not able to organise their time effectively.

> *I must be honest… I hear that so often, 'I haven't got the time [to volunteer]'. And people look at me and I say, 'Well, look, I work full time and I do X, Y and Z' so I think time is actually an easy get out for a lot of people not to volunteer.*
>
> *(Volunteer)*

Although the focus groups may not be nationally representative, this was certainly borne out by the sample of volunteers involved in this study who were volunteering alongside career and family commitments, reflecting findings of other research that a large

proportion of volunteering is carried out by a small number of 'core' volunteers (Mohan, 2011).

Financial stability was also seen as an important factor in two ways. Firstly, people without financial stability had found or were seen to find it more difficult to volunteer, given the extra time and effort involved in improving their own financial position.

> *Participant 1: That you have to, I have to earn money so [participant can't volunteer]. Well, as in I couldn't volunteer full time because I have a mortgage to pay. Very simple, really.*
> *Participant 2: And you have to work harder and longer, for the most part, which is [a barrier to volunteering]*
>
> *(Non-volunteer)*

In contrast, participants who were financially stable felt they were able to take time off work or give up their time for free in order to volunteer. Broadly speaking, this reflects findings from social surveys that capture levels of volunteering, which suggest that there is correlation between volunteering and income levels (De Souza *et al* 2011, Low *et al* 2007).

Finally, skill levels were seen as an important factor in whether motivated individuals could become a volunteer. This appears to manifest itself in two contrasting ways. Firstly, participants stated that they felt likely to be able to volunteer when they knew they had skills to offer the voluntary sector. Managers echoed this sentiment, suggesting that it can be easier to place a volunteer that has useful skills and knowledge that could be passed on to young people. Conversely, it was also the case that the need to acquire skills could be a facilitator into volunteering. This is particularly the case where volunteering is linked to educational courses and accreditation for younger adults or those considering a career change.

3.2 Practical considerations

Participants also reported a range of practical factors as acting as barriers and facilitators to becoming a volunteer. Two types of practical consideration were identified: those relating to bureaucracy and those relating to chance and opportunity.

Bureaucratic requirements were considered a significant barrier to becoming a volunteer or setting up volunteering opportunities. This concern had a number of dimensions, the most prominent of which appeared to be the need to complete a check with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). While participants understood the rationale for CRB checks for those working with children and young people, the procedure was heavily criticised.

Participants noted that the issue of cost and also the inconvenience involved, particularly where an advanced check involved a meeting with a local authority official, meant that some people would 'just never get round to it' and consequently not be able to fulfil a volunteering opportunity when one presented itself. Furthermore, amongst volunteers and

non-volunteers there was frustration that CRB checks could not be transferred between organisations.

Case study 3 Experiences of a non-volunteer

> **Frank**
>
> Frank is a teacher who had previously thought about volunteering with young people over his summer holidays. As a teacher, he acknowledges the importance of safety checks to ensure that young people are properly cared for. However, Frank has already completed a CRB check for the school he works for and does not see why he needs another one if he is to volunteer with young people. Not only does he find this inconvenient, he also feels that his summer holidays will be over by the time the CRB check is completed – thereby stopping him from volunteering.
>
> (Non-volunteer)

Participants also noted that not enough information was available on when a CRB check is needed and how to go about completing one. It was felt that there is a role for voluntary organisations to play in this, with volunteers noting that they had been encouraged to volunteer by the host organisation covering the cost of the CRB check and organising the paperwork.

A lack of information, on the other hand, was felt to potentially exclude some people from volunteering with young people, with some believing that anyone with a criminal record, irrespective of the nature of the offence, would not be able to volunteer due to the need to have a CRB check.

> *I think it's perception as well because some people…That do have a criminal record, they don't know that you can still do volunteering even if you do have a criminal record.*
>
> *(Manager)*

Other bureaucratic barriers to volunteering related to the requirements of health and safety legislation. Participants noted that health and safety requirements for outdoor activities were not only a hassle for volunteers but also generated fear about what they were liable for as volunteers.

> *I grew up in [name of town] but, you know, I, we went to youth groups quite a lot and my partner as well, he grew up round here and he had a youth group but that just seemed to stop and I'm not entirely sure why…I'm not entirely sure why that stopped, whether it was cos of the onset of like CRB checks, health and safety and all of that sort of stuff, or, you know, the people just didn't want to get involved in that because of liabilities or whatever but it just seemed to be that things stopped and nothing replaced it.*
>
> *(Non-volunteer)*

This is an example of a practical barrier to volunteering hardening attitudes amongst those considering volunteering and ultimately acting as a de-motivating factor. Furthermore, various legislative requirements had also been off-putting for participants who were already volunteers, but had ambitions to set-up local voluntary organisations or centres for young people.

A second set of practical considerations related to chance and opportunity. These included:

- Participants' entry into volunteering with young people being facilitated simply by being asked by a friend or family member to become involved.
- Participants becoming involved in volunteering through their work or other organisations they were involved in, such as helping with their children's clubs or assisting within migrant community organisations.

In other studies on facilitators of volunteering, this has been conceptualised as social capital and social networks, yet data from focus groups is not sufficiently in depth as to apply the same conceptualisation here. However, the importance of knowing the right people or organisations is clear. The flipside is an indication of this, with non-volunteers noting that finding the right organisation or type of opportunity had not always been possible as they did not necessarily know people who volunteered or where to find information on how to do so.

3.3 Practices of the voluntary sector

In addition to the practical factors imposed by legislation and context, participants also identified barriers and facilitators that related specifically to their experiences of the practices of the voluntary sector. It is worth noting that these issues were not specific to youth sector volunteering and that they were identified not only by volunteers and non-volunteers, but also by managers. Three distinct issues were identified as influencing whether motivated individuals became a volunteer: the flexibility of practices, the extent to which practices were inclusive and, underpinning these two issues, the extent to which the practices valued volunteers.

Flexibility in voluntary sector practices was considered important for mitigating or possibly exacerbating some of the other barriers mentioned in previous sections. Three related issues were identified.

- It was felt that voluntary organisations can mitigate the impact of potential volunteers having limited time by offering flexible rather than rigid time commitments. Managers acknowledged that this would be preferable, although, to enable planning, some certainty in terms of the availability and time commitment of volunteers is required. Despite this, participants reported that being able to volunteer *'almost at the drop of a hat'* had facilitated their own volunteering.

- Being flexible to volunteers' ability to travel was also seen as important. Participants described experiences where the distances of travel required were not appropriate or reasonable, particularly where they did not have access to their own vehicle.

- Finally, participants noted that volunteers valued flexibility in the type of opportunity open to them. This includes offering a range of opportunities and tasks for new volunteers, but also offering existing volunteers the opportunity to change their role to reflect changing circumstances, needs and lifestyle as described above.

Linked to this, a second dimension of volunteering practices that was considered to affect becoming a volunteer was accessibility and inclusiveness. This was described as the extent to which voluntary organisations open their opportunities to all or ensure they are accessible to all. There is slight tension in the data here. Other studies have shown that targeting certain groups of the population to volunteer had broadened the overall diversity of the volunteer population and enriched the volunteer experience (NatCen *et al* 2011), and this was acknowledged by volunteers and managers. An alternative view, however, identified this approach as excluding certain groups.

Furthermore, where volunteering opportunities are technically open to all, there was a view expressed across the groups that complicated application forms and procedures can render these opportunities inaccessible to some parts of the population. Similarly, some opportunities were seen as not accessible to people with some types of disability; managers noted the need to ensure that the opportunities that were open to these individuals were made fully accessible.

Some disabilities will bar volunteers…Depending on your [voluntary organisation's] accommodation, 'cause you can't always afford the best accommodation, and sometimes where you're based may not be wheelchair accessible…Because you're on the top floor and there's no lift, and you cannot afford [premises on ground floor].

(Manager)

This section has discussed the impact of the flexibility and inclusiveness of voluntary sector practices, yet underpinning this is the implicit value that these practices allow organisations to place on their volunteers. Participants described valuing volunteers in four ways.

- *Recruitment:* Participants noted the importance of responding to all enquiries from potential volunteers. Non-volunteers noted the de-motivating effect of repeatedly not being called back by organisations they had registered with (see also Chapter 2). Managers acknowledged that the voluntary sector can do better in this respect, particularly in terms of when identifying that a volunteer may not be appropriate for them, not just turning the volunteer away but passing them on to a more

appropriate organisation. However, it was also noted that limited resources do not always make this possible.

o *Treatment:* A welcoming and collegiate atmosphere was deemed as important for encouraging people to become volunteers. Once volunteering it was also suggested that volunteers are more likely to be retained if, as far as possible, they are treated as one of the staff. There were managers that cautioned against the legal complications of formally treating volunteers in an identical way, but rather proposed that volunteers should be treated appropriately but as equals.

o *Finance:* Ensuring that volunteers are not out of pocket and are reimbursed for expenses could affect whether an individual chooses to become, or remain, a volunteer.

o *Development:* This is linked to the flexibility issue discussed above, but participants reported that having the opportunity to develop as a volunteer was important, largely through being offered diverse roles. Managers also spoke positively about this approach in terms of retaining volunteers.

These aspects of valuing volunteers are illustrated in the quote below, where a volunteer reflects on the issue of retention.

...a big reason people just leave is because no one says thank you at the end of the day…But reimbursement is another tangible thank you. But the thank you at the end of the day, you know, especially if you have paid staff with volunteers, that they're there at the end of the day, they're used to having their soul sucked out of them, 'cos they get paid for it, but, you know, the volunteer wants recognition.

(Volunteer)

3.4 Summary

This chapter has described the practical factors that can act as a barrier or a facilitator to becoming a volunteer. A key issue was life stage: there was a view that either having spare time or financial stability was a necessary condition to being able to volunteer. Alternatively, it was felt that lots of busy people volunteer so it was a case of organising your time more effectively. Where people were either at the correct life stage or managed their time effectively two other sets of practical factors came into play. These included general practical considerations such as centralised bureaucracy, as well as factors more specifically related to the practices of the voluntary sector.

4 Conclusion – changing behaviour

This chapter will outline some of the key responses emerging from the discussions around motivating individuals to volunteer, supporting them to enter volunteering and to remain as volunteers. These responses must be seen within the context of the current economic climate and the need of voluntary organisations for a reliable body of volunteers.

4.1 Motivating individuals to volunteer

Key de-motivators	Possible responses	Whose role
Low self-esteem: not feeling able to offer anything to young people	**Better promotion of volunteering** • Voluntary organisations providing case studies about how volunteers have got involved in the past to provide an illustration of the different pathways to volunteering. • Promotion could also highlight some of the extrinsic and intrinsic motivations for volunteering highlighted in Section 2.1.3 in order to demonstrate what individuals could gain from and give to the volunteering experience.	Voluntary organisations
Negative perceptions of who does volunteering and what volunteering involves	**Better promotion of volunteering** – promotion should focus on: o Case studies to promote the different ways in which individuals can volunteer and give examples of the diverse range of people that do volunteer. o Voluntary organisations working closely with national and local media. E.g. positive experience of the v programme, whose marketing of its volunteering opportunities tackled the narrow views around volunteering and led to the recruitment of a diverse range of volunteers. o Voluntary organisations doing more outreach promotional work – e.g. having a high street presence and going into schools. o Encouraging high profile figures to volunteer. o Former and existing volunteers helping to promote volunteering through their social and professional networks.	Voluntary organisations Media Government Volunteers
Negative perceptions of the culture of voluntary organisations	**Raising profile of the third sector** o Better joined-up working between organisations to place volunteers (e.g. referring volunteers between organisations). o Voluntary organisations responding in a timely fashion to enquiries about volunteering opportunities.	Voluntary organisations

Fear of young people	**Better promotion of the issues faced by young people**	Voluntary organisations
	o Realistic images of what it means to be a young person and the issues they face promoted by govt. and charities.	
	More intergenerational working and volunteering	Government
	o Voluntary sector promoting more intergenerational work between adults and young people (e.g. in the National Citizen Service programme young people have opportunities to undertake voluntary work with older people).	

4.2 Making it easier for motivated individuals to volunteer

Key barriers	Possible responses	Whose role
Financial barriers	**Benefit regulations**	Government
	o Benefit agencies to continue to encourage the take-up of voluntary activities to promote entry to work.	
	Expenses	Voluntary organisations
	o Voluntary organisations being meticulous about paying any expenses incurred by volunteers.	
	o Participants suggested that the government should seek to encourage volunteers through indirect incentives (e.g. council tax reductions).	
Bureaucracy	**Clarifying and cutting the red tape associated with volunteering without compromising safety**	Government
	o Making CRBs portable – making CRBs transferable between organisations.	
	o Simplifying the process of completing CRBs – making the process of getting a CRB clear and the voluntary sector taking the lead in helping individuals complete these forms.	
	o Related to the above, providing clear and accessible guidelines on how CRBs work and how to complete them.	
	o Reviewing health and safety regulations and supporting community members to fulfil these when setting up voluntary activities in local area.	
	o Voluntary organisations simplifying their application forms.	
Lack of diversity in ways of being involved in volunteering	**Making voluntary opportunities more flexible**	Voluntary organisations
	o This needs to be seen within the context of voluntary organisations needing a reliable flow of volunteers for their resource planning.	
	o Voluntary organisations looking into offering flexible volunteering opportunities in terms of the length of time an individual needs to commit, the hours they need to do and where volunteering takes place (e.g. opportunity to do admin work at home).	

Making volunteering inclusive	o Where possible, ensuring that those with disabilities can access voluntary opportunities (e.g. providing information in Braille, having venues that those with wheelchairs can access).	Voluntary organisations (may need additional funding)

4.3 Making it easier for individuals to remain as volunteers

Key barriers	Possible responses	Whose role
Individuals not feeling valued	**Valuing volunteers** o Voluntary organisations thanking volunteers for their work verbally and by other means. o Voluntary organisations ensuring that expenses are reimbursed. o Voluntary organisations ensuring volunteers are treated with respect (e.g. given latitude to make mistakes). o Voluntary organisations treating employees and volunteers in a similar fashion wherever appropriate (e.g. how they are introduced to clients and ensuring employees and volunteers attend same social functions). o Volunteers given input into the decision making process within voluntary organisations. o Investing in volunteers in terms of ongoing training and strong pastoral care.	Voluntary organisations
Lack of diversity in volunteering experience	**Investing in volunteers** o See above emphasis on ongoing training. o Strong mentoring of volunteers to gauge changing needs. o Giving volunteers the flexibility to change roles to meet their evolving needs and keep their volunteering experience fresh and new.	Voluntary organisations

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Appendix A   Topic guides

Topic guide for managers and volunteers

1. Background

Aim: to ease participants into the discussion and to establish a rapport between participants and between participants and the facilitators.

- Introductions
  - Name
  - Nature of the volunteering work they do and with which group of young people / nature of the managerial responsibility they have with volunteers
  - Which organisation they volunteer/work for
  - How long have they been engaged in volunteering work / been a manager

- Who are the volunteers in the youth sector?
  - What type of people volunteer
  - How would you describe these people
  - Are there any people who don't volunteer in that sector
  - Who are the key people and how important are they to the sector

2. Motivations and experiences and views on the importance of volunteering

Aim: to explore their reasons for volunteering/ perceived reasons for their staff volunteering, what pathway they followed and their overall experience

- Explore **how** they/their volunteers came to be a volunteer in the youth sector?
  - How did they first get involved?
    - Was it something they always wanted to do?
    - Did they fall into it? How?
      - Prompt for family/social links, professional links etc...

- Explore their/their volunteers' **motivations and reasons** behind wanting to be a volunteer/manager
  - What attracted them to be a volunteer?
    - Career related   reasons (e.g. needing experiene to work in a particular profession)
    - They   were compelled to (e.g. bored, as condition of any benefits they are claiming)
    - Their   own experiences of an issue or those of friends and family (e.g. illness)
    - Wanting   to do good/give back
  - Why did they choose to volunteer in the youth sector in particular?
    - Like working with young people
    - Enjoy specific activity they're involved in– sports, music etc…
    - By default due to links with organisation
    - Other reasons

- Explore what **role** they give to adults volunteering in the youth sector
  - Do they see it as important? Why?
    - Why is it important for young people?
    - Why is it important to adults?
    - Why is it important to society?
  - If not, why not?

- Their overall evaluation of their/their volunteers' volunteering/ **experience** in the youth sector

(NB: Allow respondents to fully describe their experiences before prompting. For each experience, prompt whether they consider these to be a challenge/rewarding experience)

  - What has been particularly rewarding?
  - What has been particularly challenging? What impact this had on their motivations to be a volunteer?
  - Whether they've considered stopping volunteering and for what reasons
  - What lessons can be taken forward from both rewarding and challenging experiences to make volunteering with young people a more rewarding experience

3. Barriers and facilitators

Aim: to explore the key barriers and facilitators to starting volunteering work and staying in it

- Explore **key factors** that made it possible for them to **enter** volunteering work with young people

(NB: for managers, tap into their tacit knowledge of the factors that make it easy for adults to volunteer. Allow respondents to spontaneously comment on this before prompting)

  - What practical considerations helped them - without which of these would volunteering not have been possible?
    - Time
    - Finances
    - Help from voluntary organisations (e.g. completing CRB checks)
    - Work commitments
  - What other factors helped them
    - Personal experiences
    - Attitudes
  - Explore whether there are other factors which they may not have experienced which could help people to become a volunteer

- Explore **key factors** that made it challenging for them to **enter** volunteering work with young people

(NB: for managers, tap into their tacit knowledge of the factors that make it a challenge for adults to volunteer. Allow respondents to spontaneously comment on this before prompting)

  - What practical considerations hindered them
    - Time
    - Finances

- Help from voluntary organisations (e.g. completing CRB checks)
  - Work commitments
  - What other factors hindered them
    - Personal experiences
    - Attitudes
  - Explore whether there are other factors which <u>they may not have experienced</u> which could hinder people becoming a volunteer

- Explore **key factors** that made it possible for them **remain as** volunteers
  (NB: for managers, tap into their tacit knowledge of the factors that make it easy for adults to remain as a volunteer. Allow respondents to spontaneously comment on this before prompting – using similar prompts to the facilitators).
  - Ask them to rate the importance of these challenges *(NB: Researcher can do this on flipchart with post-it notes so can rearrange or can invite respondents to do this – e.g. allocating stars to each factor)*
  - How can the key challenges they have identified be addressed?

- Explore **key factors** that made it challenging for them **remain as** volunteers
  (NB: for managers, tap into their tacit knowledge of the factors that make it challenging for adults to remain as volunteer. Allow respondents to spontaneously comment on this before prompting – using similar prompts to the facilitators)
  - Ask them to rate the importance of these challenges *(NB: Researcher can do this on flipchart with post-it notes so can rearrange or can invite respondents to do this – e.g. allocating stars to each factor)*
  - How can the key challenges they have identified be addressed?

4. Overall reflections

Aim: ending the focus group with a positive discussion on how to encourage voluntary work

- Do they know people who are keen on volunteering with young people but put off for some reason
  - Who are these people
  - What reasons are they put off
- Views on how volunteering work with young people can be **encouraged**
  - How should it be promoted?
  - What support do people need to enter and remain as volunteers?
  - What would encourage them to do more volunteering?
  - Where should this support come from?

End

- Ask if there is anything we have not covered about the volunteering work with young people
- Thank them for taking part
- Reassure about confidentiality and field questions
- Distribute respondent payments

Topic guide for non-volunteers

1. Background

Aim: to ease participants into the discussion and to establish a rapport between participants and between participants and the facilitators.

- Introductions

  [NB: Can do the usual round robin introductions or, to improve the dynamic, ask each respondent to introduce themselves to their neighbour and get their neighbour to say something about them – depending on time and size of group]
  - Name
  - What they do for a living
  - Whether they have done any voluntary work before
  - Whether they have considered voluntary work with young people and how close they got to doing it (*NB: All of them should have, but this is a cross-check*)

2. Views and motivations around volunteering

Aim: to explore views on volunteering work with young people and their reasons for not volunteering

- Explore views on **the key issues** currently facing different types of young people – what is it like to be a young person today?
  - Emotional
  - Social
  - Work-related
  - Educational
  - Community issues

- Explore views around whether (and which) young people need **any support** to deal with these issues

  (*NB: Could use flipchart here to map the support needed for each of the above issues*)
  - What kind of support do they need?

- Explore views around **where this support** should come from
  - Family
  - Government
  - Educational system

- Explore views on the **role of volunteering** in providing this support
  - Do they see the adults volunteering to be important in providing support?
  - If not, why not?
  - If so, why?

- Explore their main motivations for wanting to do **volunteering** work with young people
  - Career related reasons(e.g. needing experience to work in a particular profession)

- They were compelled to (e.g. bored, as condition of any benefits they are claiming)
- Their own experiences of an issue or those of friends and family (e.g. illness)
- Wanting to do good/give back
  - ○ Why have they considered volunteer/work in the youth sector in particular?
  - ○ What makes it different to volunteering that they might do in other sectors?

3. Barriers and facilitators

Aim: to explore the key barriers and facilitators to starting volunteering work

- Explore **what makes it challenging** for them to **enter** volunteering work
  (NB: Allow respondents to spontaneously comment on this before prompting)
  - ○ What practical considerations hindered them
    - Time
    - Finances
    - Help from voluntary organisations (e.g. completing CRB checks)
    - Work commitments
    - Change in circumstances
  - ○ What other factors hindered them
    - Personal experiences
    - Attitudes toward volunteering
    - Experiences of volunteering
  - ○ Explore whether there are other factors which they may not have experienced directly but which could hinder people from volunteering
  - ○ Ask them to rate the importance of these challenges *(NB: Researcher can do this on flipchart or can invite respondents to do this – e.g. allocating stars to each factor)*

- Explore what could **have been done to help** them enter volunteering work:
  - ○ How can the key challenges identified be addressed?
  - ○ What kind of support would have helped them?
    - What advice and guidance?
    - What practical support?
  - ○ Who should provide this support?
    - Family
    - Voluntary organisations
    - Work

4. Overall reflections

Aim: ending the focus group with a positive discussion on how to encourage voluntary work

- Views on how volunteering work with young people can be **encouraged** more generally
  - ○ How should it be promoted and who by?
  - ○ What support do people need to become volunteers?
  - ○ Where should this support come from?

End

- Ask if there is anything we have not covered about the volunteering work with young people
- Thank them for taking part
- Reassure about confidentiality and field questions
- Distribute respondent payments

Appendix B   Sample characteristics

		Managers	Volunteers	Non-volunteers
Gender	*Male*	5	8	8
	Female	8	7	8
Ethnicity	*White*	9	9	13
	BME	4	5	2
	Other	0	1	1
Age	*25-49*	Not monitored	9	8
	50-70	Not monitored	6	8
Type of organisation	*Youth-specific*	9	Not monitored	N/A
	Generic	4	Not monitored	N/A

N/A = not applicable

Volunteers and managers also varied in terms of the numbers of years they had been involved in volunteering.

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