



ESRC

ESRC Seminar Series

Mapping the public policy landscape

The value of volunteering



Foreword



The European Social Fund (ESF) is one of the most significant financial instruments employed by the EU Member States to support actions under the EU Social Agenda. The Social Agenda addresses a number of priorities including promoting economic growth and jobs, and combating poverty and social exclusion.

At a time of European and domestic introspection with regard to the ESF and social agenda targets, the Third Sector European Network (TSEN) and Community Service Volunteers (CSV) have come together to highlight the relevance of volunteering to those groups who are the furthest from the labour market, and its ability to enhance both employability and social cohesion.

This publication is intended to raise awareness of this potential amongst policymakers and others, and encourage the 'mainstreaming' of volunteering in the second part of the UK ESF programme and other related government initiatives. In so doing, it draws on contributions from academics and UK policymakers, volunteers themselves, and case studies of projects and good practice presented at the seminar '*The Value of Volunteering – helping to build an inclusive and cohesive society*' held at the Royal Society, London, on 2 November 2009.

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) organised the seminar with TSEN and CSV, thus providing an opportunity for the consideration of fresh thinking and approaches. '*The Value of Volunteering – helping to build an inclusive and cohesive society*' is one of a series of ESRC public policy seminars, which seek to encourage evidence-based policy through exchanges between researchers, third sector representatives and policymakers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Ian Diamond'.

Professor Ian Diamond AcSS
Chief Executive, Economic and Social Research Council

The contributors

As Executive Director of Community Service Volunteers (CSV), **DAME ELISABETH HOODLESS** is responsible for over 200,000 volunteers working across the UK – helping children to read, supporting GPs' patients, protecting trees and rivers, encouraging blood donors and mentoring young offenders to reduce crime. She is President of Volonteurope (a European network of volunteer agencies), Vice Chair of Innovations in Civic Participation (USA), and Chairman of the International Association for National Youth Service. A former Islington Councillor, she is currently a volunteer youth court magistrate.

DR JEREMY KENDALL is a senior lecturer at the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research at the University of Kent in Canterbury. His research interests include the voluntary and community sector/third sector and organised civil society in the United Kingdom, Europe and globally; the mixed economy of welfare; and social policy in general. He has published widely on these topics nationally and internationally. In the UK he is affiliated to the Third Sector Research Centre and is a member of the Voluntary Sector Studies Network.

FRANCES TOMLINSON is senior lecturer in Organisation Studies and Management at London Metropolitan Business School, and an associate member of the Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University. Her research interests lie at the intersection of identity, difference and organising practice; and recent studies have investigated group working amongst international postgraduate students, models of good practice in education and employment services for refugees, and inter-organisational partnership in the voluntary sector. She is currently engaged in researching equality and diversity practice in voluntary and community organisations.

CSV IPSWICH MEDIA CLUBHOUSE is a digital multimedia centre equipped with music and community art facilities, and home to Ipswich Community Radio 105.7fm (www.icrfm.co.uk) and Ipswich Community TV (www.ictv.org.uk). The centre provides volunteering and training opportunities in different areas of media and creative arts to improve people's employability and help increase diversity in the media.

In working towards a socially inclusive society in which all individuals can achieve their potential, **MERSEYSIDE EXPANDING HORIZONS** (MEH) brings together local voluntary, private and public sector agencies to promote and generate multi-agency and cross-sector working around key issues relevant to social inclusion. MEH works in partnership to deliver innovative programmes such as projects supporting disadvantaged individuals into training and self-employment; provides grant support to third organisations working with excluded groups; leads a consortium of specialised services and grants for social enterprise development; and providing specialist support to third sector organisations accessing European working opportunities.

Dutch charity **HUMANITAS**, which has provided temporary support for people in the Netherlands since 1945, calls for a society in which people are active in shaping their own lives and take responsibility for living together. Today, 10,000 volunteers – trained by the Humanitas Academy and supported by Humanitas professionals – offer help to those who are elderly, homeless, handicapped, or seeking asylum. In total, Humanitas volunteers work 1.75 million hours every year for the benefit of more than 35,000 people.

SARAH BENIOFF joined the Cabinet Office, Office of the Third Sector, as Deputy Director for Participation in July 2007. Her current role includes development of government policy and programmes on adult and youth volunteering, charitable giving and philanthropy, campaigning and voice, and support for small community groups. Previously, she was Chief Executive of the Community Development Foundation (CDF), a non-departmental public body, focusing on research, policy analysis and grants management programmes in the field of community development.

ZOE ALEXANDER joined DWP's Employment Group earlier this year, with responsibility for designing the volunteering component of the six month offer to Jobseekers. Since then she has overseen the design and procurement of the Community Task Force – part of the Young Person's Guarantee due to be introduced in January 2010. Previously, she worked for the Personal Accounts Delivery Authority and was a private secretary to John Hutton and Peter Hain between 2006/7.



Executive Summary

Key points:

Volunteering In Europe in the noughties – what would Beveridge have thought?

- We need to be sensitive to the extent to which the EU's emphasis on market-making might limit its ability to promote non-consumerist developmental models. The UN and Council of Europe's pluralistic pro-volunteer agendas should be explored as additional sources of ideas and arguments.
- Sweden could be a source for insights in terms of learning from specific countries. However, such exploration of policy options should be sensitive to the contrasting ways in which civil societies' infrastructures are organised across Europe.
- Gaps between the promise of policy and actual delivery must be subject to greater critical scrutiny at both European level, and at national level in Britain and other European countries.

Refugee women – from volunteers to employees

- Volunteering should be highlighted in refugee resettlement policies, and refugee volunteering should be given practical support.
- Funders should recognise volunteer participation as a core organisational activity and provide funding towards the costs of supervision, training, childcare and volunteer expenses.
- Voluntary and community organisations should prioritise the role of volunteer coordinator; review the application of their equal opportunities policies to volunteers as well as to paid staff, and identify groups under-represented amongst their volunteer force.
- Employers should recognise applicants' voluntary experience in the same terms as paid work experience; ensure their requirements for qualifications, experience and language skills reflect what the job really demands; and incorporate issues affecting refugees into equal opportunity policies and practice.

Volunteer perspectives

- "During my time volunteering I felt I gained ambition and a motivation to do something with my life... I felt the whole experience turned me into a leader and a great communicator, and I'm now very optimistic." – Liam Clements
- Since being a volunteer Paul Murphy has secured a full-time paid position, with his employer stating that "Paul's experience through his voluntary work was invaluable to his application for this post".

Policy perspectives

- The UK Government introduced a new national brokerage service in May 2009 to match Jobseeker's Allowance claimants reaching six months of unemployment to volunteering placements that meet their needs and keep them close to the labour market. Between April and July, 1,200 jobseekers took up placements through the programme.
- Volunteers add greatly to the delivery of public services, particularly in addressing the needs of those that the Government can find hard to reach. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations estimates that the economic contribution of volunteers in 2007/08 was £22.7 billion.
- The Office of the Third Sector (OTS) is funding a National Talent Bank to provide volunteering opportunities for people whose working patterns have been affected by the recession.
- OTS has created an Access to Volunteering programme to enable more disabled people to volunteer, with a view to improved health and employment outcomes.
- The recommendations of a 2009 report by Baroness Julia Neuberger – which focused on the potential of involving more volunteers, including ex-offenders, in the Criminal Justice System – are now being taken forward by the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office.

Introduction

Volunteering plays an important role in today's society in changing people's lives for the better – by giving a sense of belonging and well-being; by offering the opportunity to give something back to society; and by helping to alleviate poverty, and social and labour market exclusion. Volunteering can also make a valuable (if sometimes poorly understood) economic contribution. Because it can be time-consuming, volunteering has been seen by some as getting in the way of economic activity. However, research suggests that volunteering activities are increasingly associated with economic growth.

Third sector organisations are at the centre of this success, as they create opportunities for an ever-increasing number of citizens wanting to volunteer. More than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, with three out of ten claiming to be active in this way. Figures generated by the John Hopkins University Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project suggest that volunteers represent the equivalent of three to five per cent of the economically active population in many countries, and make a US\$400 billion contribution to the global economy.

In modern times, the power of volunteering has been recognised by European and domestic institutions charged with the design and implementation of one of the most significant financial instruments employed to support actions under the EU Social Agenda – the European Social Fund (ESF) – which recognises voluntary activity as a positive outcome, especially for disadvantaged groups.

In 2005 European member states committed themselves to spending large proportions of current ESF funds against targets relating to economic growth and jobs – as set by the Lisbon Strategy – with the aim of making the EU more dynamic and competitive. Whilst social inclusion remains an ongoing concern of the ESF, this is not matched in practice by dedicated resources nor outcomes appropriate to those furthest from the labour market. The current programme, based on payments by hard economic outputs, appears to incentivise providers to work with those who are closer to the labour market.

The UK has always been at the forefront of third sector activity. It is the only country to have an Office of the Third Sector or equivalent in central government, and its long tradition of philanthropy remains a model that the rest of Europe looks to. The UK has been seen as the most innovative member state in the way that ESF funds are used through third sector. However, in recent times the introduction of competitive tendering in England for fewer but much larger contracts, combined with a reliance on payments by outputs, has created new challenges to third sector involvement in current employment programmes.

Such a radical shift seems to have produced unintended consequences which might preclude in effect the full exploitation of voluntary activity as a positive force to enhance social and labour market inclusion. Although the current programme makes positive references to voluntary and community action, and contains a commitment to working with the multiply disadvantaged, there is a growing concern that the emphasis now falls squarely on skills and employment in a way that ignores the complexity of social exclusion.

The importance of this question is intensified by the current global crisis which, it is acknowledged at the highest levels, affects the poor disproportionately. The European Commission (EC) considers the ESF to be an important tool with which member states can tackle the effects of crisis. However, for the funds to reach those who are the most disadvantaged in the labour market, a more sophisticated targeting of ESF outputs is needed – such as voluntary activity.

Now is an appropriate time for politicians policymakers, academics, third sector representatives and volunteers themselves to critically discuss these and other issues and, more broadly, to explore the contribution volunteering can make in helping to building an inclusive and cohesive society at both EU and UK levels.



The seminar 'The Value of Volunteering' (and this report which summaries it) is linked to the EU Social Agenda as part of project 'Together for Social Europe', which tests how member states go about meeting targets around inclusion and social cohesion. It is hoped that 'The Value of Volunteering' will usefully inform that process. And the seminar and report are timely for other reasons. The Lisbon Agenda expires in 2010 and, given its current prominence in the objectives of the ESF, now is a good time to ask what lessons can be learned.

Finally, The European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010) places special focus on the responses of member states to these issues, and on volunteering as a positive force for change. In 2011 the European Year of Volunteering has the stated intention of bringing the EC "closer to the people of Europe and its real concerns." Between them, these two European 'years' aim to help bridge the gap between government and citizens – sorely needed at time when low electoral turnouts point to creeping disillusionment with the European project, and a growing dissonance between government institutions and those they are designed to serve.



THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERS

Dame Elisabeth Hoodless, CSV Executive Director

As for the value to volunteers:

- School pupils increase their attendance and attainment when the curriculum includes service
- Community Service Volunteers transform their own lives, discover new careers and job opportunities
- Students improve their grades and skills when they volunteer
- Mental health service users improve their health and often secure jobs when they volunteer
- Senior volunteers find new meaning, fun and friends through volunteering, and
- All volunteers reduce their blood pressure and cholesterol levels (research from the University of Michigan) – good news for the NHS.

As for their impact on others, it is massive:

- Harvard Professor Bob Putnam has demonstrated the reduction of crime when neighbours volunteer together
- Newcastle University reports that a volunteer giving a child an hour a week can raise their reading level a year in a term (the figure for paid staff is much lower – kids work harder for volunteers)
- In Argentina, school volunteers transformed the economy of their village by investigating viticulture (wine making) on the web and transferring the knowledge to their seniors, and
- Child abuse and neglect is eradicated when volunteers strengthen families through frequent and regular visits. Mothers treasure their support and so do the relieved social workers.



Volunteering in Europe in the noughties – what would Beveridge have thought?

The value of volunteering is widely discussed on the national policy stage, and this debate is increasingly conscious of the European context. Jeremy Kendall speculates what British economist and social reformer William Beveridge would have made of this, and suggests that a small number of core concerns might have preoccupied the original architect of Britain's welfare system.

The value of volunteering has probably never been more widely recognised on British shores than it is now. Just as the third sector itself has been 'mainstreamed', the volunteering commitments upon which it depends have moved from the shadows into the policy spotlight. This double recognition has been driven by favourable political conditions; cultural and social trends; the prominence of new forms of academic argument that such activities are productive in terms of 'social capital'; and effective policy activism, or 'coalition building' by the third sector itself, volunteer supporting agencies and their allies in the state and elsewhere (Kendall, 2003). This suggests a relatively upbeat context for the British domestic pro-volunteering policy community.



When we try to expand our horizons, and ask if there are any consequences of the fact that efforts to build policy in this sphere now necessarily take place within the framework of the membership of the EU and other transnational public bodies – with ever greater explicitness, thanks to the efforts of TSEN and others – do we have reason to modify this optimistic analysis? There are indeed parallels at transnational level to each of the drivers of domestic policy noted above, with the promotion of volunteering now commanding international support:

- An increasingly confident European Parliament and the European Council have affirmed the importance attached to European volunteer initiatives within the EU
- There are encouraging signs that EU policy effort is now being nurtured in a way that recognises the significance of the efforts of other transnational bodies with relevance for Europe. This is important, because one of the success stories of multi-level third sector- and voluntarism-oriented initiatives in recent years originated in a broader arena than the EU – the United Nations International Year of Volunteering (IYV). Symbolically encouraging has been the emergence of informal relationships to ensure the co-planning of the EU Year of Volunteering with the 'UN + 10' Volunteering day (celebrating the IYV's global impact)
- Increased mobility across national borders has increased social needs for the sorts of culturally sensitive services often delivered by the third sector using volunteer labour. These needs reflect both the demands of migrating groups wishing to perpetuate the celebration of their heritage in new places and, in the case of vulnerable people, involve imperatives to provide protection against social exclusion and enable the meeting of fundamental human needs for security, dignity and shelter
- The notion of social capital – now so prominent in the British policy discourse – itself originates from overseas. The ideas have already been used to support policy claims about the advantages of volunteering and third sector-related activity transnationally, sometimes leading to real opportunities which might otherwise not have been forthcoming (as with the EU's global grants for social capital scheme)

- There are tentative signs that the Brussels level 'proto-policy community' – those policy actors claiming expertise in relation to the design and processing of third sector issues at the Brussels level – is now finding more space for volunteering. Brussels-based volunteering groups like the European Volunteering Centre struggled to generate a stable position in the first part of the decade, but over the past two or three years have better bedded down in the 'infrastructure' of volunteering and third sector specialists (through relationships with organisations like the Social Platform of European NGOs and the European Parliament's third sector intergroup).

What does this mean for the co-evolution of British and European policy? Perhaps we should go back to basics in relation to welfare. William Beveridge's ideas in relation to voluntarism may be a good anchor for any such effort. He is, of course, world famous as the architect of Britain's 'welfare state' (Timmins, 2001). But he also laboured over the report *Voluntary Action*, referring to the importance for a democratic society of what he called the 'mutual aid motive in action' and the 'philanthropic motive in action'. As a New Liberal (as opposed to a neo-liberal), Beveridge was keen to recognise that the state could and should have a vital and proactive role in developing policy frameworks to nurture both solidaristic and sympathetic human motivations and their capacities for expression. It was important, he argued, both for the state to exercise self-restraint in the use of its own coercive power; and to actively counteract the undue domination of society by commercial market motivations. In other words, as a matter of principle, he wanted to ensure that British society found policy space to protect voluntarism, with its rich mixture of motivations and manifestations.

Of course, the institutional landscape has changed fundamentally since Beveridge's reports were penned, but we can at least speculate about how he might have reacted in principle to the current state of affairs. He would presumably have welcomed this sphere's greater policy recognition at national and international levels. Yet, it seems reasonable to suggest that he would be very worried that comparative data on the scope and scale of volunteering in Europe and associated third sector endeavour shows only average levels of commitment in Britain, and he certainly would have been concerned by the extent to which many social groups at risk of social exclusion have embraced volunteering opportunities to a limited extent.

Because policy responsibility for voluntary action remains – and will remain in the foreseeable future – basically a matter for national public authorities (and in many countries in Europe with federal type constitutions, sub-national public institutions), no doubt Beveridge would have seen the role of European and international policy processes and institutions as relatively modest. But some aspects of how international policy discourses and institutions are co-evolving with our own national frameworks would have concerned him. Three issues which, taken together, can form the acronym **BEVERIDGE** might capture at least some elements of an imagined neo-Beveridgean agenda.

Promoting a **B**alanced policy **E**mphasis on **V**alue

Beveridge's principled worrying about the balance between motivations struck in modern societies within and across sectors is an important place to start. At national level, it might be suggested that three basic policy storylines have mixed and sometimes competed in recent years (Kendall, 2009b):

- a *consumerist* discourse, in which volunteering tends to enter the frame as conferring a competitive advantage for the third sector over other sectors in quasi-market environments, linking to an 'instrumental' reading of social capital
- a *civil revivalist* discourse, underpinned by a relatively hierarchical world view, in which volunteers may evocatively be collectively valued as an actual or potential 'army' to be mobilised to help underscore civil order, going with the grain of traditional communitarian thinking; and
- a *democratic renewal* discourse, typically with a more localist, less regimented flavour, putting an accent on voluntarism as part of citizens' schooling in democracy through the chances for deliberation and collective participation that it engenders.

All three strands have had a role to play in recent domestic policy debates. If we are to try to thinking *internationally* in the spirit of *Voluntary Action* we need to ask how the involvements of the sorts of transnational institutions mentioned earlier may alter the balance struck between these components. Perhaps we would need to be sensitive to the extent to which the EU's constitutional emphasis on market-making could limit its ability to promote non-consumerist developmental models. Certainly, therefore, the UN and Council of Europe's pro-volunteer agendas, less constrained by pro-market imperatives, should also be explored as additional, valuable sources of ideas and arguments. And in terms of learning from specific countries with rich non-consumerist traditions, perhaps Sweden could be a particularly useful source for insights. Here a vibrant 'popular movement' tradition helps to sustain the sort of democratic, dual 'volunteer-member' led participation in society valued by those who emphasise the 'democratic renewal' strand of voluntary action (Olson et al, 2009).

Evaluating Realistically the Institutional options

Evaluating institutional options for policy transfer or emulation across borders, and in the face of great organisational diversity, should be another concern in the spirit of *Voluntary Action*. That study took care to assemble aggregate statistical data, while at the same time showing respect for diversity at national level with its references to different motives and forms of organisation. Applying this sensitivity to the European stage would require us especially to recognise that different countries have fundamentally different institutional arrangements for recognising and channelling voluntarism, reflecting deeply ingrained differences in cultural approaches and the legacy of historical policy decisions. This would suggest that the challenges of lesson-drawing across national boundaries – for example, in looking to Sweden not just for inspiration but for concrete policy guidance – are likely to be very significant. The exploration of internationally informed options for policy should, in the spirit of Beveridge, then, be measured and cautious.

Diagnosing and tackling Gaps between Expressions of rhetoric and the reality of policies and practices

Beveridge was ultimately concerned with enhancing citizens' lives, and promoting their life chances through efficient and fair policy implementation. Therefore, a final concern in the spirit of Beveridge could be to ensure that when pro-third sector European or international policy initiatives are actually adopted they are well implemented and evaluated in timely and rigorous fashion. References to the problem of gaps between rhetoric and reality in relation to policy in this sphere in Britain have to date been dominated by critiques of the implications of domestic public service reform for the third sector; and vice versa (Public Administration Select Committee, 2008).

However, several trans-European third sector policy initiatives have also been undertaken. We already mentioned the IYV and local social capital scheme – while the former was a marked success, the latter was to prove a major disappointment. Launched with great rhetorical flourish by the EC in the late 1990s, it was ultimately to prove very ineffective in terms of tangible policy impact. Such gaps between the rhetorical promise of policy and actual delivery in practice would surely have worried Beveridge. He would have wanted such initiatives to be more openly and consistently subject to critical scrutiny – at both the European level, and at the national level in Britain and other European countries.

Refugee women – from volunteers to employees

With refugees disadvantaged in the employment market, volunteering is seen as a way for them to acquire experience, skills and confidence. Dr Frances Tomlinson makes a case for the value of refugee volunteering to be properly recognised and resourced; for volunteers to be better protected by equal opportunities policies and practice; and for volunteer experience to be given parity with that arising from paid work.

Government policy for refugee integration places particular emphasis on employment. Yet compared to other ethnic minority groups, UK refugees are more likely to be unemployed or under-employed (Bloch 2008; McKay et al 2006). Factors associated with their relative disadvantage include employers' concerns regarding refugees' employment status; the non-recognition by statutory authorities, employers and professional bodies of qualifications and experience gained overseas; and refugees' poor English language skills and unfamiliarity with UK employment systems and practices. Physical and mental health problems resulting from the trauma experienced by many refugees can also affect their pursuit of paid employment.

Research study: volunteering as a pathway into employment

Volunteering is advocated as a means for refugees to acquire UK work experience and references and to improve their language skills, confidence and understanding of UK work cultures. Our research (Erel and Tomlinson 2005) focused on refugee women because of the size of the employment gender gap – refugee men are four times more likely than women to be in paid work (Bloch 2008), but there is also evidence that more women than men volunteer. We documented the volunteering experiences of 35 refugee women in order to identify the barriers they faced in making the transition from voluntary to paid work, and how they overcame these barriers. We also carried out case studies of six community and voluntary organisations in order to identify areas of good practice in working with refugee women as volunteers and potential employees.

Refugee women's experience

Although facing shared structural and attitudinal barriers, refugee women are not a homogenous group – reflected in the diversity of the organisations in which they volunteered, and the roles and activities they undertook. Their initial engagement with volunteering came through a variety of contacts – including friends, family or neighbours; their children's schools; English Speakers for Other Language courses; faith groups; or as clients of community organisations or other agencies. Their voluntary engagement can be broadly divided into three overlapping areas:

- **Volunteering as mutual support and helping others** – included assisting with interpreting in schools, hospitals, GP surgeries and advice centres; giving back to organisations that had helped by, for example, folding clothes or packing food parcels; befriending elderly people in order to escape loneliness and boredom; and contributing to causes in their countries of origin through campaigns and fund raising – activities that also gave opportunities to practise English and build friendships and networks
- **Community participation and engagement** – much of women's volunteering took place in refugee community organisations (set up by refugees from particular cultural or ethnic groupings). Activities such as providing advice and guidance; working in finance, fundraising or reception; organising parenting classes, supplementary schools and mother-tongue classes; and conducting outreach and development work enabled them to apply skills from previous occupations such as teaching, health care and administration. Some had set up their own community groups and, beyond the boundaries of their own ethnic communities, had served on bodies such as tenants' forums, regeneration forums and credit unions



- **Structured volunteering and work placements** – women's use of their voluntary experience to develop their skills and knowledge was enhanced by organisational volunteer programmes that provided support, supervision, training and access to external courses. Such programmes are available in 'mainstream' voluntary agencies and more established refugee community organisations. Work placements, usually organised as part of formal training or education, replicate more closely the demands of paid employment than conventional volunteering but tend to be of short duration.

Women without work permits, or whose qualifications and experience are not recognised, or who speak limited English, or have family responsibilities or health problems that preclude their participation in employment, find volunteering a meaningful alternative. Half the women in the study were currently employed and they linked their finding work in community development, educational outreach, health promotion, childcare, administration and advice to their volunteer experience. Most had found jobs in organisations where they were already known – either as volunteers, or via networks and contacts established through volunteering. Their employment prospects were enhanced through 'strategically' volunteering in more than one organisation in order to access different kinds of experience and training, or through combining voluntary with paid work. 'Gate openers' were important at all stages of women's trajectories and volunteer coordinators could be particularly helpful, encouraging and supportive – sharing information on job opportunities and training, and offering coaching in writing applications and preparing for job interviews.

The progression from unpaid to paid work was rarely straightforward, but instead involved setbacks and disappointments. Volunteers may feel marginalised, or that their experience is overlooked when jobs come up. We found that refugee women sought employment in the environments in which they volunteered and where their experience as refugees and ethnic minority community members was valued. However such jobs are in limited supply, often part-time and usually short-term. It was highly unusual for women with professional qualifications gained in their country of origin to be employed in that profession. Although women spoke positively of the new career possibilities that their voluntary work had opened up, they also reported the difficulty, time and expense that were involved in attempting to re-qualify in their original profession in the UK.

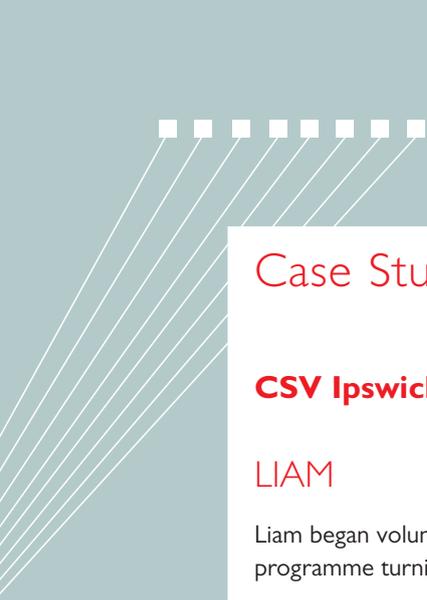


Conclusions and recommendations

Our study reveals the variety and depth of refugee women's volunteering and its contribution to a wide range of groups and organisations. It highlights the negative impact of policies that restrict asylum seekers' participation in education and training, and it confirms that although voluntary work can enhance job prospects it is no guarantee of employment.

Our main recommendations include:

- Policymakers should formally recognise that refugee volunteering is valuable civic engagement that makes an important contribution to UK society. Volunteering should be highlighted in refugee resettlement policies, and refugee volunteering should be given practical support
- Funders should recognise volunteer participation as a core organisational activity and provide funding towards costs of supervision, training, childcare and volunteer expenses
- Voluntary and community organisations should prioritise the role of volunteer coordinator; review the application of their equal opportunities policy to volunteers as well as to paid staff, and identify groups under-represented amongst their volunteer force
- Employers should recognise applicants' voluntary experience in the same terms as paid work experience; ensure their requirements for qualifications, experience and language skills reflect what the job really demands; and incorporate issues affecting refugees into equal opportunity policies and practice.



Case Studies

CSV Ipswich Media Club House

LIAM

Liam began volunteering with CSV Media Club House in November 2007 – with an original 13 week programme turning into a year-long stay.

Previously inactive for two years, and by his own admission lacking motivation to seek further training or employment, he was initially dubious of the effects of volunteering but prepared to give it a go. It was this willingness to 'have a go' that saw Liam excel. He became a role model for other less experienced young people – chairing youth forums, mentoring volunteers where needed, and offering advocacy to those less confident. Liam is now employed as a care worker for local elderly people, which he enjoys greatly, and is devoting his energies to becoming a youth worker. He stays in touch with staff at CSV and promotes volunteering to other young people.

Liam considers one of the high points of his time as a volunteer to be his involvement in the Riley's project – a drop-in at a pool hall for adults with learning difficulties developed as a joint-project between CSV and Suffolk County Council. Liam and Ashley Maw, the Council's Community Inclusion Facilitator, worked together to plan how both the project and his volunteering opportunity would progress, with Ashley commenting: "Liam's input was very important, and helped shape the activity into what it has become. He has developed really well and his confidence with the adults he was supporting has grown greatly."



DURING MY TIME VOLUNTEERING I FELT I GAINED AMBITION AND A MOTIVATION TO DO SOMETHING WITH MY LIFE. IT HELPED ME BECOME BETTER ORGANISED... AND THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR ME WAS BEING ALLOWED TO GET EXPERIENCE OF WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND WORKING WITH PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER.



The drop-in pool project has now been handed over to a local charity. Looking back on his CSV volunteering opportunity, Liam comments: "I would one day like to see the project expand so that more young people could be given the unique opportunities and experiences I have had, and the motivation to do something with their lives. I'd like to see the project run year after year as it gives opportunities which very few other places give to young people."

He concludes: "During my time volunteering I felt I gained ambition and a motivation to do something with my life. It helped me become better organised, my timekeeping improved massively, and the most important thing for me was being allowed to get experience of working with young people and working with people from all over: I felt the whole experience turned me into a leader and a great communicator, and I'm now very optimistic. When I left CSV I missed it as it gave me so many opportunities and experiences."

Merseyside Expanding Horizons Access Enterprise Project

PAUL

Until recently, Paul, a 40 year old family man, had been unemployed for ten years. A former painter and decorator, he was forced to give up his job to become the main carer for his partner, who has a bi-polar diagnosis.

In June 2008, after eight years of being a carer, Paul joined the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) as a volunteer, and very quickly used his knowledge and experience to help people and increase his own career prospects.

In spring 2009 he saw an advertisement for a volunteer mentoring opportunity on the Access Enterprise project and applied in the belief that his indirect personal experience of mental ill health, along with his direct experience with the CAB, would stand him in good stead.

Access Enterprise is a project for people who have experienced mental ill health and mentally disordered offenders. Beneficiaries are supported to explore entrepreneurship and self-employment as an alternative to traditional routes to employment.

Tailored to individual needs, the project includes input from business and employment advisors, and a volunteer mentor who provides guidance and emotional support at this time of transition. Volunteers on the project also self-develop through training, and individual and group supervision.

Following an interview, Paul was invited to attend induction training, which covered themes such as values and beliefs; stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination; communication skills; and empowering and enabling.

Since being a volunteer mentor Paul has secured a full-time paid position as an Outreach Information Advice and Inclusion Officer with Knowsley Carers Centre in Liverpool, with his employer stating that "Paul's experience through his voluntary work was invaluable to his application for this post".





Humanitas

ANNE

Dutch charity Humanitas supports people who need temporary help, such as those who are elderly, lonely, homeless, handicapped, or young and seeking asylum. Leo Coenders explains that behind these activities lies a belief that people who learn to control their own lives are happier and have more self-esteem.

“Respect can help people develop valuable self-esteem, and the role of Humanitas volunteers can be crucial in this regard. However, we also believe that people must want our help if they are to make good use of what we offer – we don’t believe in trying to solve people’s problems ourselves, which creates dependency, but in encouraging them to learn to help themselves. This requires us to be patient, as most people can learn only one thing a day, and there are often many things to be learned. Finally, if our volunteers are to find the time and energy to help people improve their lives, then they too require our support.”

Forty-five year old Anne, a divorced mother of twin boys, had debts of €22,500. She worked 30 hours a week as a secretary, and her salary was marginally too high for her to qualify for assistance – for example, exemption from taxation and help with membership fees for sports clubs.

At the boys’ school a social worker suggested they receive counselling, but Anne couldn’t afford it. Nor could the boys participate in activities in and out of school. However, she was able to buy them new bikes and a computer on credit, although the interest was worryingly high. She wanted to give the boys a solid base for a good future – but how? She simply didn’t know what to do next.

How was Humanitas able to help?

In the Netherlands, local government has a duty to assist people experiencing financial difficulty, with money and legal measures available for restructuring and clearing debts. However, Anne was reluctant to go to the Town Hall and ask for help.

A Humanitas volunteer helped Anne to work through the application form and select documents to prove her status, and discussed with her possible questions she could expect at the Town Hall. After two sessions Anne had enough confidence to complete the application form herself.

Anne had accumulated a pile of letters – some opened, and some not. Anne and the volunteer opened the envelopes and discussed what could be thrown away to reduce the pile. Anne considered the merit in filing letters at suitable intervals, and the volunteer agreed to help her set a routine for as long as was needed.

The volunteer then helped Anne to take an overview of expenses – detailing her outgoings and identifying the more and less expensive months – with a view to better grasping the problem. This has helped Anne to a position where she can start restructuring her debt.

Whilst she is restructuring her debt, Anne will have to live on a small income. The volunteer is helping Anne to develop relevant skills – for example, learning to saying no to ‘offers you can’t refuse’.



WE DON’T BELIEVE IN TRYING TO SOLVE PEOPLE’S PROBLEMS OURSELVES... BUT IN ENCOURAGING THEM TO LEARN TO HELP THEMSELVES



Office of the Third Sector

Sarah Benioff of the Office of the Third Sector (OTS) explains how government programmes and initiatives will help volunteering to fulfill its potential in employability and social inclusion, and add to the evidence base of the contribution volunteering makes to society.

OTS is at the heart of the British Government, and our vision is of a thriving third sector which enables people to change society. We are responsible for, or involved in, the majority of government programmes and policies concerning volunteering.

Volunteering is of significant importance to OTS for a number of reasons. One of these is the important role that volunteers perform by assisting those in need of support. Volunteers add greatly to the delivery of public services – particularly in addressing the needs of those that the Government can find hard to reach. This contribution is significant – in economic terms the National Council for Voluntary Organisations estimates that the contribution of volunteers in 2007/08 was £22.7 billion.

Equally important are the societal benefits that volunteering brings. The Government's Citizenship Survey provides strong evidence that volunteering contributes to bringing communities together and increases an individual's sense of pride in their area.

The value of volunteering in supporting people and improving communities is proven by strong quantitative and qualitative data. With regard to the role of volunteering in improving employability and increasing social inclusion, the evidence is often more focused on qualitative or case study evidence. This is an area that OTS is seeking to improve through the new Third Sector Research Centre.

The Government has a number of programmes to realise the benefits of volunteering for employability and social inclusion. With regard to employability, DWP has a scheme to create volunteering opportunities for individuals unemployed for longer than six months. In addition, OTS is funding the creation of a National Talent Bank to provide volunteering opportunities for people whose working patterns have recently changed as a result of the recession.



...VOLUNTEERING CONTRIBUTES TO BRINGING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER AND INCREASES AN INDIVIDUAL'S SENSE OF PRIDE IN THEIR AREA....



With regard to social exclusion, two of the groups most at risk are disabled people and ex-offenders. OTS has created an Access to Volunteering programme to enable more disabled people to volunteer, with a view to improved health and employment outcomes. With regard to ex-offenders, in March 2009 Baroness Julia Neuberger (the former Government Champion for Volunteering) produced a report which focused on the potential of involving more volunteers, including ex-offenders, in the criminal justice system. The recommendations of this report are now being taken forward by the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office.

These programmes and initiatives will help enable volunteering to fulfill its potential in employability and social inclusion. Equally importantly, they will add to the evidence base of the contribution volunteering makes in these areas and answer some of the key questions posed by *'The Value of Volunteering – helping to build an inclusive and cohesive society'*.



The Department for Work and Pensions

Zoe Alexander of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) outlines the background to government policy on volunteering for jobseekers, and discusses a new programme aimed at matching jobseekers with placements tailored to their needs.

The Government recognises the important role that volunteering can play in enabling people to build skills and confidence for work, and has long made provision to allow all benefit claimants to volunteer without effecting their entitlement.

The role of volunteering becomes particularly relevant in the context of the economic downturn, when it can provide a valuable route for customers to build and maintain skills for work where jobs may not be available.

In recognition of this, the Government introduced a new national brokerage service in May this year to match Jobseeker's Allowance claimants reaching six months of unemployment to volunteering placements that will meet their needs and keep them close to the labour market.

The offer at six months

Many Jobcentres already have contacts with local volunteering centres, allowing them to refer customers who they think will benefit from a period of volunteering. We wanted to formalise this arrangement during the economic downturn, and offer a clear route for jobseekers reaching six months of unemployment to find suitable placements.

To do this, we commissioned BTCV in England, WCVS in Wales and VDS in Scotland to put in place a national brokerage network to take referrals from Jobcentre Plus – making use of existing links between Jobcentre Plus and volunteering organisations, and extending them where required. When a customer is referred to a broker, they discuss their development needs and are directed to a placement that reflects their employability aims.

Between April and July, 1,200 jobseekers took up a volunteering placement through the programme. The following case studies, provided by BTCV, illustrate how the placements are meeting the varied needs of our customers.

Nigel is an author who has over 30 years experience, and over 20 published books to his name.

He also has experience as a graphic designer and has written articles for magazines and newspapers. He is currently out of work and was looking for something that would take him out of the house and provide him with a fresh challenge. BTCV found him a place with a local furniture recycling project in desperate need of someone who could put together advertising and press information. Nigel is going to attend once a week to help them out, and both parties are really pleased with what they are going to get from the agreement.

Stewart has been out of work for a long time and has experienced some significant personal problems of late, including a marriage break-up and getting a criminal record.

He wanted to return to his first love, which is the theatre and arts-related activity. As he has a criminal record BTCV was limited with the type of group we could place him with, but we finally found a touring theatre group who were very happy to take Stewart on. He is now officially on their books as someone who will help out at their events – stewarding, selling programmes and helping behind the scenes. Stewart is hoping this activity will help boost his confidence and lead to paid work in the future.

Barbara is in her late 50's. She recently moved down to Sussex from London and is keen to learn about her new area so she can find work. BTCV found her a placement in a local museum and she has now made some new friends and is aware of her geographical area, so finding work should be easier for her.

The Third Sector European Network (TSEN)

The Third Sector European Network Ltd. (TSEN) is a network of sub-regional, regional and national umbrella organisations as well as other regional/national organisations from the Third Sector, active in the promotion of social inclusion and active citizenship through the use of European Structural Funds as well as other EU funding.

In particular TSEN's regional members are the third sector support agencies for European funded projects in all nine English regions. These bodies provide technical assistance and encourage the development of voluntary and community sector and social enterprise projects to fulfil the objectives of the Structural Funds.

TSEN was set up in 1995 to bring together the key Third Sector organisations active in the field of EU Structural Funds in England: regional networks and national bodies such as the Industrial Common Ownership Movement (representing co-operatives and community enterprise, since superseded by Co-operatives UK) and CSV. TSEN now has 12 member organisations representing approximately 20,000 providers working across the European Social Fund Competitiveness and Employment Programme 2007-2013. Each member has a representative on the TSEN Board.

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Community Service Volunteers (CSV)

Founded in 1962, CSV is the UK's leading volunteering and training charity.

Every year, CSV involves over 150,000 volunteers in high quality opportunities that enrich lives and tackle real need. Between them, they help transform the lives of over one million people across the United Kingdom.

CSV trains over 20,000 young people and adults each year, helping them build the skills and confidence they need to progress to further education or employment or to set up in business.

We are dedicated to building the skills and capacity of the voluntary sector and share over 45 years of experience and expertise through our professional training and consultancy services.

CSV's vision is of a society where everyone can participate to build healthy, enterprising, inclusive communities.

Community Service Volunteers (CSV)

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Further Reading

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ESRC Third Sector Engagement Strategy:

<http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/KnowledgeExch/ESRCthirdsectorengagement.aspx>

ESRC Third Sector website: http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/index_voluntary.aspx

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ESRC research investments and resources:

Third Sector Research Centre: <http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/>

Centre of Charitable Giving and Philanthropy: <http://www.cass.city.ac.uk/philanthropy/index.html>

The Art of Happiness: Is Volunteering the Blueprint for Bliss?

Professor Paul Whiteley, University of Essex

<http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/PO/releases/2004/september/art.aspx>

Doing One's Duty: A Case Study of Volunteering in a Deprived Community

Professor Irene Hardill, Nottingham Trent University and Dr Susan Baines, Manchester Metropolitan University

http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Plain_English_Summaries/work_organisation/work_workers/index55.aspx

Relevant Public Policy Seminar Publications:

Active Citizenship and Community Relations in Northern Ireland

<http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/KnowledgeExch/2008PPSemPublications.aspx>

Engaging Citizens

<http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/KnowledgeExch/2006PPSemPublications.aspx>

From Local to Global

<http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/KnowledgeExch/2006PPSemPublications.aspx>

ICT, Social Capital and Voluntary Action

<http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/KnowledgeExch/2007PPSemPublications.aspx>

Individual Pathways in Participation

<http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/KnowledgeExch/2006PPSemPublications.aspx>

Other relevant websites and organisations:

Institute for Volunteering Research

<http://www.ivr.org.uk/>

World Volunteer Web

<http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/>



The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is the largest organisation for funding research on economic and social issues. It supports independent, high-quality research which has an impact on business, the public sector, the third sector and Government. The issues considered include economic competitiveness, the effectiveness of public services and policy, and our quality of life.

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