

Young People's Volunteering and Skills Development

The National Youth Agency

**Research Report
No RW103**

***Young People's Volunteering
and Skills Development***

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| Contents | Page |
|--|-------------|
| i. Preface | 3 |
| 1. Executive summary | 4 |
| 2. Background | 9 |
| 3. Methodology | 9 |
| 4. Literature Review | 13 |
| 5. Broad issues emerging from the fieldwork | 16 |
| The research process | |
| Motivations for volunteering | |
| The importance of skilled support | |
| Comparisons between learning from volunteering and other settings | |
| Impact on other areas of life | |
| 6. Fieldwork findings | 21 |
| 6.1 Skills development: an overview | 21 |
| 6.2 Personal skills | 26 |
| Self-confidence | |
| Communication skills | |
| Self-awareness | |
| Self-management | |
| Planning | |
| Taking responsibility | |
| Improving own learning | |
| Problem solving and decision-making | |
| 6.3 Interpersonal skills | 32 |
| Teamwork | |
| Managing relationships | |
| Active listening skills | |
| Leadership | |
| Negotiation | |
| 6.4 Understanding contemporary issues | 37 |
| Understanding society | |
| Understanding diversity | |
| Rights and responsibilities | |
| Preparation for work | |
| Financial understanding | |
| 6.5 Recognition and accreditation | 42 |
| 7. Conclusions and recommendations | 44 |
| 8. Appendices | 48 |
| Definitions of volunteering; projects visited; steering group membership; personal and social development skills framework; recording forms and questionnaires; toolkit of research methods; and publications consulted for the literature review. | |

Preface

The research team would like to thank all the young people and workers (paid and unpaid) who took part in this project. Time and time again, the researchers returned home, often late at night, exhausted but reinvigorated by their visits to projects. They were enthused and inspired by young people's own accounts of their volunteering experiences, their sensitivity to each others' needs, their commitment to what they were doing, and their understanding of how they had changed as a result. They were equally impressed by the workers who encouraged, supported and challenged young people, many with difficult personal circumstances, to grow and develop through volunteering.

The project has provided evidence, in young people's own words, for what is often asserted about the potentially powerful impact of volunteering on young people's lives and their relationship to the communities in which they live. We hope that this report does justice to their voices and experiences.

The project steering group and team

The project was supported by a steering group with representatives from the main stakeholders, the Department for Education and Skills, the Learning and Skills Council, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the national youth volunteering organisation v. The thoughts, suggestions and comments they contributed from a range of perspectives enriched the planning and evaluation of the project. Special thanks go to Chris Hutchings at the DfES for his sensitive and thorough oversight of the project.

The project team brought together National Youth Agency staff and consultants with a range of skills and experience. The project was managed by Pete Loewenstein. Emma Shuttlewood was the project administrator. The fieldwork was co-ordinated by Maureen O'Callaghan and was carried out by Clare Cooper, Merlynne Francique, Kerry Harrison, Pete Loewenstein, Maureen O'Callaghan, Dave Phillips, Helen Rand and Michele Rogers. Kerry Harrison and Carolyn Oldfield undertook the literature review. Carolyn Oldfield analysed the data and wrote the report.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Background

In October 2006, the Department for Education and Skills commissioned The National Youth Agency (NYA) to undertake a six-month research project to explore the skills, knowledge and attitudinal development that young people derive from volunteering. The project was envisaged as a first stage in identifying the range of skills gained through volunteering that can be translated and potentially accredited to provide evidence for employability.

The research remit was tightly defined as focusing on skills and learning developed through volunteering. While the researchers gained much interesting information about young people's experiences of volunteering generally, there was no intention to analyse this or to consider issues related to quality in volunteering. The invitation to projects to participate in the research also stressed that The NYA was not seeking to evaluate or endorse the volunteering activities of individual organisations.

2. Methodology

The work was undertaken between November 2006 and March 2007. It combined fieldwork with young volunteers (and workers) in 30 diverse projects throughout England, with a review of relevant literature. In all, 215 young people aged 11 to 25 were interviewed, of whom 57 per cent were female and 43 per cent male. Approximately 20 per cent were from Black and Minority Ethnic communities, and just over 10 per cent had some kind of disability. Due to the relatively small sample, however, no attempt was made to analyse the data by gender, ethnicity or other characteristics.

The data gained were coded against a framework for personal and social development skills previously developed by The NYA. This groups skills under the headings of personal skills; interpersonal skills; and understanding contemporary issues.

3. Key findings

- Young people identify for themselves a wide range of personal and social skills developed through volunteering, but opportunities to reflect on and articulate this learning are often underdeveloped.
- The fieldwork findings clearly support the evidence of the literature review that young people can and do increase their self-confidence and self-esteem, develop a range of communication skills and improve their ability to work with other people through volunteering.
- Volunteering can act as a catalyst for young people to engage more effectively with other learning, or in some cases re-engage with formal learning or training, putting them in a position where they can develop skills and potentially gain qualifications.
- Many young people also develop practical skills related to their specific experiences of volunteering.

Three themes emerged strongly from the project: the potential contribution of volunteering to young people's learning and skills development; the specific skills that young people identified and articulated; and the need for mechanisms to promote this learning and development.

The potential contribution of volunteering to learning and skills development

3.1 Starting where young people are

The fieldwork confirmed the findings of the accompanying literature review that volunteering can engage young people at all levels of achievement, from high achievers to those who are on the margins of society. Some young people provided powerful personal evidence about how volunteering has helped them turn their lives around, while for others volunteering was explicitly seen as compensating for previously unsatisfactory experiences. For some young people volunteering acted as a catalyst to re-engage with learning, while others identified ways in which volunteering helped them engage more effectively with formal education, as a result of better organisational and time management skills, or improved their relationships with other people.

'I've got a lot more confidence. Volunteering has changed my life. I got bullied at college, so through coming here and volunteering I've gained back the confidence that I lost.'

'I was getting into trouble, but with volunteering I've grown through this. Most of the things I use everyday have come from, or been developed and improved by volunteering.'

3.2 Volunteering is different

Some young people explicitly contrasted the skills and learning developed through volunteering with their experiences in other settings. They stressed that volunteering brought them into contact with a wider range of people than their experiences at school or at work, requiring them to develop skills of teamwork, leadership, negotiation and conflict resolution, and enabled them to take on roles that would surprise people that knew them in other settings.

'You can't just ignore someone if you have a problem with them, you have to sort it out and you learn how to do that, how to talk to the person and be able to get on with them again.'

'Volunteering gives you a chance to interact with different people – work doesn't allow you to do that.'

3.3 Preparation for employment

Most young people interviewed could identify how their volunteering was helping prepare them for employment. Volunteering had created opportunities to test out different career options, gain practical experience and acquire skills related to specific types of employment. In some cases, experiences of volunteering had directly helped them to get interviews and jobs. Many other young people believed that volunteering had helped them develop more general skills for being an effective employee and colleague in the workplace.

'Being a volunteer completely changed my outlook on life and what I wanted to do as a career, I realised that I wanted to do a job that helps people.'

'School only gives you basic IT skills, here it's workplace IT.'

'I've learnt to respect myself and that other people will also respect me too.'

'I am now more responsible than before, I am more aware that as a volunteer people depend on you, if you do not turn up, something just does not get done.'

3.4 Balancing the benefits

Despite this clear understanding of what they gained from volunteering, many young people also highlighted the importance of giving - and being seen to give - something to their communities through volunteering. Discussions of volunteering often appear to assume that instrumental and altruistic motivations (i.e. getting and giving) are opposed. However, it appears that for many young people, these two aspects are mutually dependant and reinforcing, rather than conflicting. In particular, there seems to be a strong relationship between young people's sense of how their activities benefit their communities, and their increased self-esteem and self-worth when their contribution is recognised.

Skills development

3.5 Skills identified by young people

Young people consistently reported improvements in self-confidence and communication, followed by teamwork and managing relationships. This supported the findings of the literature review. When given opportunities for more in-depth reflection through individual interviews, young people also often identified skills related to taking responsibility, preparation for work, problem-solving, and planning.

Mechanisms

3.6. Reflecting on experiences

The literature review undertaken for this project identified a recurrent theme of a lack of mechanisms for assessing volunteers' learning outcomes and helping them reflect upon their experiences. This was confirmed by the fieldwork, which found that most young people had only limited experience of reflecting on their learning through volunteering, and welcomed the opportunities to do so through this project, particularly with other young people. The approach taken by the project was important in facilitating this, since it sought to 'drill down' beneath the broad categories of skills to find out the precise impact and outcomes for individual young people.

'You don't notice a lot of the skills that you develop as you are using them everyday, they become normal.'

3.7 The interplay of skills and outcomes

During this process of reflection, many young people revealed a sophisticated understanding of the interplay of skills and outcomes, with a particular focus on experiential learning - 'learning by doing'. Their comments frequently stressed the way in which different skills reinforced each other, and the relationship between developing skills, having the confidence to use them, receiving positive feedback, and further skills development - the creation of a 'virtuous circle'. While this is important for our understanding of the processes of skills development, it also indicates the difficulty of categorising interlinked skills under specific headings.

'You get much more confident about performances, at first you are nervous, but then you do it and it goes well, so the next time you are less nervous and you reassure the younger ones.'

'I might be scared, but I don't show it. I just show them how to do it. It has built up over time. I know what to do so am more confident.'

3.8 Validating different starting points

Both the literature review and the fieldwork highlighted the importance of recognising different starting points and motives for volunteering among young people. For some, involvement in volunteering is a conscious decision, perhaps to gain specific experiences or because they want to change something. For other young people, volunteering represents a progression from using services themselves, often with encouragement from youth workers or other practitioners, while others simply see volunteering as a way of spending their time or adding to their social circle.

'I had a really good incentive to get involved because I wanted to gain experience and an insight into this area of work – testing out by doing it.'

'I first came training. The senior coach asked me to help him and I started volunteering. I did the community sports leaders' course.'

3.9 The importance of the social dimension

Elements such as making friends and enjoying themselves may feature more highly for some young people than an explicit commitment to skills development. Those working with young people, however, need to be in a position to help them draw out their learning at the earliest possible stages – recognising that the social and fun elements may be essential prerequisites for skills development.

'We were together all the time and got on really well so we all became mates who had developed and grown up together and helped each other through things.'

3.10 The importance of recognition

The research confirms the importance of young people receiving recognition for volunteering, but reveals wide variations in how young people interpret this - from simply being thanked to receiving formal accreditation or qualifications. While a minority - usually those who were already achieving well in formal education - did not see formal recognition as important, most young people involved in the research wanted their skills to be at least recorded through certificates and evidence for CVs. This was seen as particularly important for those who had little or no other evidence of achievement. Some - but not all - wanted formal accreditation.

'I think I've always been a fairly confident person, but now I can back it up with evidence that says I'm good with people.'

'I have always offered to help but it was nice to hear I would get a certificate for it, especially as I didn't do well at GCSEs. I took my MV certificate to the interview, it definitely helped me get the job. The increase in confidence helped. I wouldn't have got it if I was my old self, I just went in there like I wanted it.'

4. Recommendations

1. The research findings need to be disseminated more widely, and appropriate organisations identified to take forward its recommendations.
2. Summary reports should be produced to draw out the implications of this research for specific groups, such as young people themselves; information, advice and guidance professionals; and employers.
3. Clear definitions of volunteering (based on existing definitions), which clarify how activities that young people are likely to be involved in count as volunteering, should be produced.

4. Volunteering projects should be encouraged to develop flexible programmes that are as inclusive as possible and which maximise skills development. They should use explicit mechanisms to record, review and evidence development of skills, knowledge and attitudes.
5. A toolkit should be developed for volunteering projects to help young people reflect on and articulate the skills they develop through volunteering in ways that will support more formal accreditation.
6. This research provides a solid base-line of the skills that could be included in a package of accreditation measures and programmes. Any accreditation packages need to be flexible and wide-ranging, from local certificates to awards and whole qualifications, suited to varied volunteering contexts and the distinctive requirements of different volunteers. The accreditation options should mesh in with awards and qualifications that are currently used to accredit volunteering and related activities.
7. Any accreditation measures being developed should be compatible with current awards and qualifications, and integrate with planned future provision and measures, such as the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the Specialised Diplomas. Any framework used to accredit personal and social development skills in volunteering should be the same as that used to develop PSD provision in the QCF and the Foundation Learning Tier.
8. The recognition and accreditation of volunteering should be built into all appropriate programmes and measures being developed by Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the Learning and Skills Council.
9. Funding streams should incorporate requirements for organisations to offer young people opportunities to identify and articulate the skills developed through volunteering.
10. Work should be undertaken with UCAS to encourage greater recognition of volunteering in university selection processes.
11. Volunteering organisations' existing good practice in fostering skills development and accreditation should be identified and shared at national, regional and local levels.
12. Consideration should be given to continue to bring together steering group members, plus other relevant bodies (e.g. the Cabinet Office), to assess progress on the recognition of skills developed through volunteering.
13. Further research should be undertaken to:
 - Determine the impact of different economic and social contexts on the development of skills through volunteering;
 - Gain greater insight into the practical skills gained as a result of volunteering; and
 - Explore the role of adult practitioners (and older peer models) in supporting young people's entry into and progression through volunteering.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Department for Education and Skills commissioned The National Youth Agency (NYA) to undertake a six-month research project to explore the skills, knowledge and attitudinal development that young people derive from volunteering. The project focused on skills that are valued by young people, employers and educationalists, particularly those related to personal and social development and a range of practical skills. It emerged from concerns about a lack of hard evidence about the value of volunteering to individual young people. Furthermore, relatively little work has been done to assess the precise outcomes of volunteering on young people's skills development, aspirations, knowledge and attitudes, and how their experiences can be translated into evidence for employability. The project was envisaged as a first stage in identifying the range of skills gained through volunteering that could be accredited in a variety of ways. It is hoped that the national youth volunteering organisation will be able to use the results of this project to work with others to develop accreditation options.

2.2 The research remit was tightly defined, focusing on skills and learning developed through volunteering. While the researchers gained much interesting information about young people's experiences of volunteering, there was no intention to analyse this more generally, or to consider issues related to quality in volunteering. The invitation to projects to participate in the research also stressed that The NYA was not seeking to evaluate or endorse the volunteering activities of individual organisations.

2.3 The definition of volunteering adopted by the project was based on Volunteering England's definition, supplemented by the detail contained in the Compact on Volunteering. This allows for a broad interpretation, encompassing activities such as project management, peer support, campaigning and representation, as well as helping other people.¹

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The project combined fieldwork with young volunteers (and workers) in 30 projects across England with a review of relevant literature. The literature review took place between November 2006 and January 2007, and the fieldwork was undertaken between December 2006 and February 2007. Most projects were visited once, but six projects were visited twice, allowing for more in-depth exploration of the skills gained through volunteering.² Two kinds of records were obtained: reports of group sessions from the 30 projects, and a further 29 reports based on interviews (face-to-face or telephone) with individual young people. In addition, young people and workers were also invited to complete questionnaires to assess whether specific skills had gone up, down or remained the same.

3.2 Projects were chosen to ensure that they offered a range of approaches and volunteering opportunities. The fieldwork sites selected included organisations which explicitly focused on volunteering and those which offered volunteering opportunities

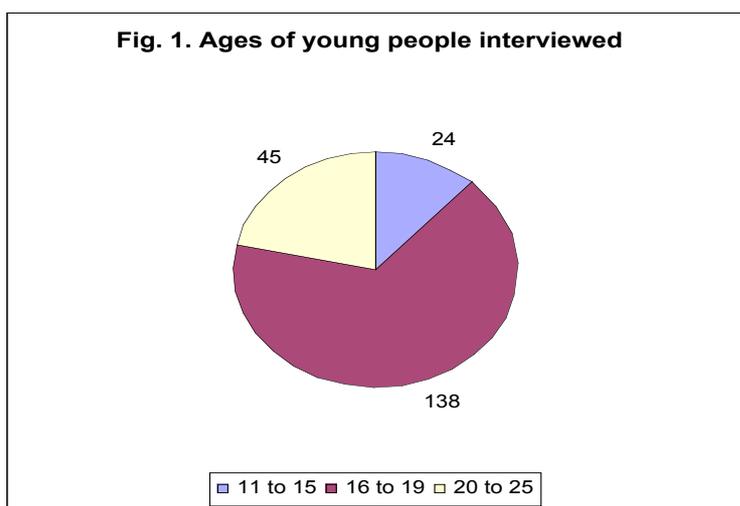
¹ See Appendix 1 for the definition of volunteering circulated to the researchers.

² It was originally envisaged that the fieldwork sites would be visited twice, but this was not done in all cases for a number of reasons: in some instances enough information was gained in a single visit; it was difficult to bring the same young people together for two visits; and some groups met together relatively infrequently, meaning that a second visit was not possible within the project's timescale.

within a broader menu of activities. This meant that some young people identified themselves as volunteers, but others did not. The research therefore included introductory discussions to draw out young people's understanding of volunteering and consider which activities could be defined as volunteering.

3.3 While some projects focused on specific volunteering activities such as creative arts, community safety or peer support, others offered a broad menu of volunteering activities. These included sports coaching, peer education, representing other young people, media work, environmental action, campaigning, working with children or older people, helping run youth projects, developing websites, awarding grants to other young people, volunteering in hospitals and hospices, supporting young carers, fundraising, working in charity shops and international volunteering.³

3.4 The fieldwork sites were also selected to ensure that between them, they involved a diverse range of young people and captured a variety of experiences. Due to the relatively small sample, however, no attempt was made to analyse the data by gender, ethnicity or other characteristics. In total, 215 young people were interviewed, of whom 123 were female and 92 male. In terms of age, 24 participants were aged 11 to 15 (12%), 138 were aged 16 to 19 (68%), and 45 were aged 20 to 25 (20%).⁴

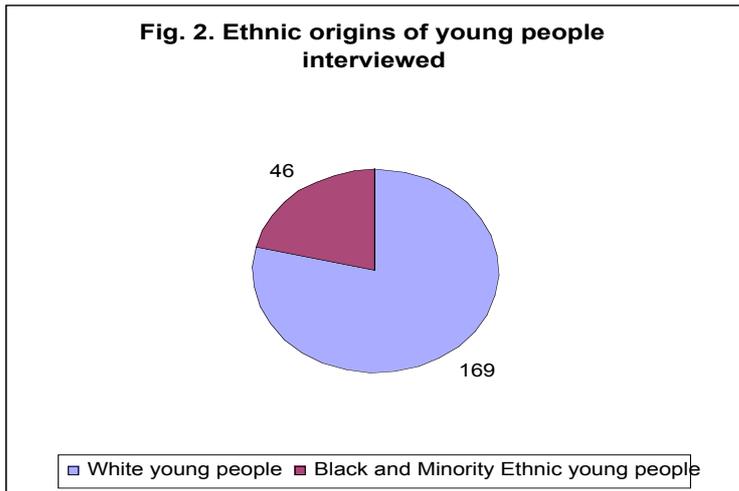


Base = 207 young people

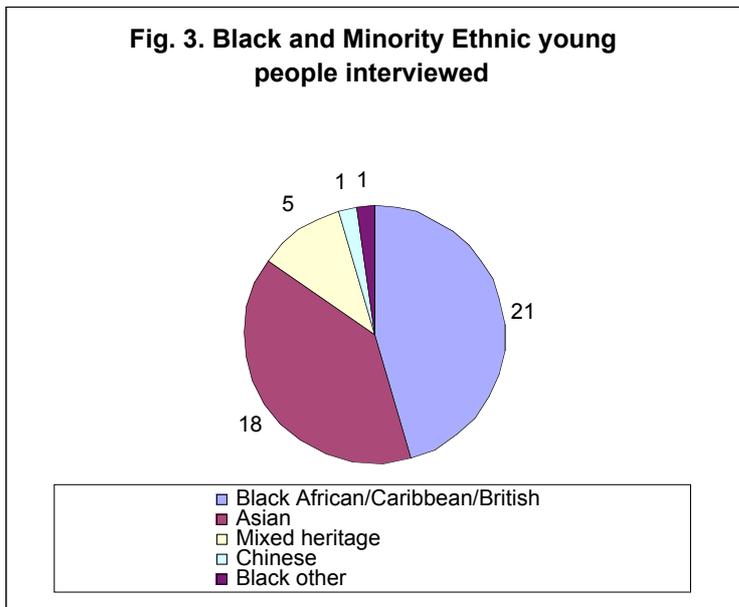
Approximately 80 per cent of participants (162 young people) were white and just over 20 per cent (46 young people) were from Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

³ See Appendix 2 for details of the projects visited and the volunteering opportunities they offered.

⁴ Information on the ages of eight young people was not recorded.



Base: 215 young people



Base = 46 young people

3.5 Just over 10 per cent (23 young people) had some kind of disability, including learning, physical and sensory disabilities, and mental health issues. Other life experiences revealed by the young people interviewed included being in care, young parents, having been in prison, long-term unemployment, being a carer or asylum seeker, dyslexia, substance misuse and homelessness. Between them, the organisations involved young people across different levels of learning and academic attainment, from young people with significant learning disabilities to university students and graduates, in some cases working together on the same projects.

3.6 Other criteria used to identify fieldwork sites included their ability to take part in the time available, and to bring together groups of between six and 12 young people who were willing to be interviewed on one or two occasions. Workers were asked to make the practical arrangements for the visits and, in some instances, to be interviewed about

volunteers' progress, but otherwise to play a low key role to ensure that their views and interventions did not directly affect what young people said.

3.7 The research team comprised five NYA staff and four consultants, with one of the consultants taking on responsibility for coordinating the fieldwork. Each project visit involved two researchers, in order to separate facilitation and recording roles. The researchers used a variety of methods according to circumstances, including group discussions, individual interviews, questionnaires and a range of activities and exercises developed in advance by the research team.⁵ Two types of data were collected: numerical data on the frequency of mention of specific skills, knowledge and attitudinal change by young people, and more detailed information based on recording young people's own comments about their learning and development through volunteering. These data were coded against a framework for personal and social development (PSD) skills developed as a result of a detailed mapping exercise undertaken by The NYA on behalf of the Network for Accrediting Young People's Achievement in the winter of 2005.⁶ This groups skills under three broad headings: personal skills; interpersonal skills; and understanding contemporary issues (such as understanding society and diversity and preparation for work). This was adapted to give examples of more specific applications under each specific skill, in order to promote consistency of recording.⁷ In addition, young people and workers were also invited to complete questionnaires to assess whether specific skills had gone up, down or remained the same.

3.8 A small steering group was set up to oversee the project, including representatives from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the national youth volunteering organisation v, with NYA staff and consultants in attendance.⁸

⁵ See Appendix 6 for more information on the toolkit of methods used.

⁶ This work was commissioned by the QCA to support the development of the Personal and Social Development strand of the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT) and the Qualifications and Credit Framework. The framework has been used to develop commonly used and shared PSD Units, which have been agreed in March 2007 and which will be trialled and tested in the FLT in 2007-08.

⁷ See Appendices 4 and 5 for the skills framework and questionnaires.

⁸ See Appendix 3 for details of the steering group membership.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 The literature review examined a number of research and evaluation reports on young people's volunteering. They included independent evaluations of specific programmes, including Millennium Volunteers (MV),⁹ the Young Volunteer Challenge (YVC),¹⁰ Active Citizens in Schools (ACiS)¹¹ and the Prince's Trust Volunteer programme.¹² In addition, a small number of reports on local projects and publications from volunteering organisations advocating the benefits of volunteering were looked at. Some literature relating to citizenship education - particularly the post-16 citizenship pilot programme and the community involvement strand of citizenship education, and service learning was also examined. Appendix 7 gives details of the publications reviewed.

4.2 It is clear from the review that young people, and those working with them, believe that they benefit from volunteering. The evaluation of MV described the 'real impact of the programme' as related to the benefits accruing to young volunteers.¹³ Similarly, researchers identified a range of benefits for young people volunteering through ACiS, and noted that although the type of impacts were what respondents had expected, some thought they were much greater in scale than anticipated.¹⁴ The evaluation of Action Pays, a three-year programme supporting youth-led action, concluded that 'almost all the participants felt that the most important gains made were increased self-confidence, teamwork skills, having fun, cooperation, compromise, listening to others, communication, meeting people and making friends.'¹⁵

4.3 This theme of a mix of personal and interpersonal skills, particularly those related to self-confidence, communication and working with other people, runs throughout the literature. Around four out of five (or more) volunteers across different programmes identified improvements in self confidence, communication and working with others:

- Confidence: 84 per cent of MVs interviewed as part of the evaluation of the programme, 79 per cent of ACiS participants and 91 per cent of Prince's Trust Volunteer programme participants believed that their self-confidence had increased.
- Communication: 82 per cent of YVC participants, 91 per cent of Prince's Trust participants and 79 per cent of ACiS participants identified improved communication skills.
- Working with others: 81 per cent of MVs thought they were better at working with others, as did 79 per cent of ACiS and YVC participants.

⁹ Institute for Volunteering Research, *UK-wide evaluation of the Millennium Volunteers programme*. DfES, 2002. MV is a UK-wide government supported initiative designed to promote sustained part-time volunteering.

¹⁰ GHK Consulting, *Evaluation of the Young Volunteer Challenge Pilot Programme*. DfES, 2006. YVC aimed to increase full-time volunteering among young people from low-income backgrounds.

¹¹ Ellis, A, *Active Citizens in School: evaluation of the DfES Pilot Programme*. DfES, 2005. ACiS built on MV by seeking to engage 11-15 year olds in sustained volunteering activities through school.

¹² MORI, *A personal development programme for 16-25s, follow up survey of participants*. The Prince's Trust., 1997?

¹³ *UK-wide evaluation of the Millennium Volunteers programme*, p. ix.

¹⁴ *Active Citizens in School*, p. 41

¹⁵ Evans, R et al, *Does Youth Action Pay? An evaluation of Action Pays*. University of Hull, 2002, p. 23.

4.4 While not quantified in the same way, the final report into the Post-16 Citizenship pilot found that both young people and adults involved in the project highlighted the improvements in young people's confidence and communication skills, coupled with a greater knowledge and awareness of social issues.¹⁶ An evaluation of young people led action groups identified three main areas of impact resulting from their involvement in social action: confidence and self-worth, sense of personal identity, and the development of skills and abilities, including employment related skills such as ICT, organisational skills, team-working, negotiation and conflict resolution.¹⁷

4.5 In addition to the development of these personal and social skills, the literature highlights some less tangible aspects such as being treated with respect, feeling more engaged with others, and a sense of agency and achievement, which in turn affect young people's behaviour and willingness to engage in learning.¹⁸

4.6 Despite this clear acknowledgement of the benefits that can be derived from volunteering, many reports identify a widespread lack of understanding of the value of volunteering (and of specific programmes) among employers, teachers, Connexions and careers advisers etc. and highlighted the need to promote and publicise the skills developed through volunteering. This was an issue for MV in particular, where its slogan of 'put MV on your CV' was felt to be undermined by employers' lack of awareness of the programme. The need to promote a more positive image of volunteering among young people was also highlighted.

4.7 The importance of acknowledging young people's different starting points emerges strongly from various reports. The evaluation of YVC, for instance, notes that for young volunteers entering the programme with few or no qualifications, the benefits were framed in terms of 'improved confidence and, in many cases, increased familiarity with a "work situation"'. It suggested, however, that the programme had the most impact on young people with GCSEs, with the volunteering experience leading to a shift in aspirations and changed job ambitions.¹⁹ The evaluation of MV similarly notes that impacts on 'volunteers were clearly relative to their starting point and to their life experiences'; while some volunteers reported 'huge quantifiable personal gain', such as developing skills or identifying career paths, for others the benefits related to increased self-worth or self-confidence. The reviewers found that for young people who had experienced social exclusion, 'it was suggested that even the slightest gain in self-esteem or confidence could have a significant impact.'²⁰

4.8 A recurring theme in the evaluation of specific volunteering programmes is the lack of mechanisms for assessing volunteers' learning outcomes and enabling them to reflect on their experiences and the impact of these experiences. This was identified as a weakness in several programmes, including ACIS, the post-16 citizenship pilots and MV. In contrast, Student Volunteering England's 'No Substitute for Experience' project provides a framework for student volunteers to identify and articulate the skills they have developed

¹⁶ Craig, R et al, *Taking Post-16 Citizenship Forward: learning from the post-16 development projects*. DfES, 2004, 6.3.

¹⁷ Roker, D and Eden, K, *A Longitudinal Study of young people's involvement in social action: end of award report to the ESRC*. Trust for the Study of Adolescence (unpublished report) 2002, p. 17.

¹⁸ See, for instance, Lister, R et al. *Young People's Voices: citizenship education*. Youth Work Press, 2001, Ch. 4. This was also found in the evaluations of YVC and ACiS.

¹⁹ *Evaluation of the Young Volunteer Challenge Pilot Programme*, p. 61.

²⁰ *UK-wide evaluation of the Millennium Volunteers programme*, p. 51.

through volunteering and relate them to employers' needs.²¹

4.9 The literature indicates the existence of a range of views on accreditation. While many project staff agreed that accreditation was particularly useful for young people who had not achieved well in formal education, they argued that this should not involve exams or over-formal methods. Young people generally wanted some form of accreditation, but tended to think this should take the form of certificates or awards (preferably personalised) rather than exams. Awards offered by programmes such as MV or ACIS were generally valued by recipients but some are not well understood outside the sector.

4.10 Accredited training opportunities linked to specific volunteering activities appear to be most popular. The evaluation of the Community Merits Awards highlights the importance of certificates and qualifications for disengaged young people, for whom these were often the first evidence of achievement.²² The YVC evaluation found that training was most popular, and potentially most effective, when it linked to vocational aspects of volunteering placements, such as coaching awards, first aid or youth leadership.²³

4.11 Although this was not a specific focus of this review, some reports from volunteering organisations discuss the skills required by employers and higher education institutions and argue that volunteering can help develop these skills. Student Volunteering England, for instance, claims that volunteering provides an ideal base for developing the skills and competences identified by the Association of Graduate Recruiters in 'Skills for Graduates in the 21st Century'. These include self-awareness, communication, flexibility, negotiation, networking, team working and action planning.²⁴ CSV has also published the results of a survey of human resources directors of top UK companies, in which it reported that over 80 per cent of respondents believed that volunteers develop 'above-average' self confidence and teamwork skills, while 74 agreed that volunteers develop better communication skills.²⁵ The importance of these skills was stressed by HM Treasury's recent discussion paper on policy for children and young people, which states that: 'Non-cognitive skills (such as communication or team working) are also seen as a priority – in surveys of employers, skills gaps are often identified in the areas of communication, customer handling and team working skills'.²⁶

²¹ Student Volunteering England, *No Substitute for Experience: PDP and volunteering toolkit*. SVE, 2006.

²² Youth Justice Board, *Community Merit Awards: an evaluation*. YJB, 2005, p. 4. Piloted as part of the Youth Inclusion Programme, the awards aimed to involve the 50 most disaffected young people aged 13 to 16 in a given area in community renewal work, through providing rewards for participation.

²³ *Evaluation of the Young Volunteer Challenge Pilot Programme*, p. 45.

²⁴ *No Substitute for Experience*, p. 7.

²⁵ CSV, *The Value of Volunteering – developing 'soft skills' through volunteering*. CSV 2006.

²⁶ HM Treasury, *Policy review of children and young people: a discussion paper*. H.M Treasury, 2007, para. 1.15.

5. BROAD ISSUES EMERGING FROM THE FIELDWORK

5.1 This project endorses in broad terms the findings of previous research examined in the literature review and, through its attention to the components of different skills and the detail of young people's own descriptions of skills developed, adds greater depth and understanding to what this means for individual young people. However, before examining what young people said about their skills and learning through volunteering, it is worth highlighting some broader issues emerging from the research.

The research process

5.2 The project intentionally sought to engage young people who identified themselves as volunteers, and those who did not. It involved those involved in what is traditionally recognised as volunteering, and those who are on the fringes of volunteering, or who perceive their volunteering as incidental to their youth work or other activities. While this created difficulties for the researchers, who needed to start by establishing a common understanding of volunteering, the broad range of volunteering experience gives greater weight to the project's findings.

5.3 Some young people had difficulty in seeing their activities as volunteering, because they saw volunteering as activities which benefited others, not themselves. Others saw all their activities with a youth project as volunteering, perhaps because of the stress on youth work as voluntary engagement. Others were confused between volunteering, training and work experience. Workers' understanding was also critical and limited in some cases, leading them to either understate or exaggerate young people's involvement in volunteering.

5.4 The researchers sought to ensure that the skills that young people identified were specific to their volunteering experiences. However, the project indicates the difficulty of differentiating between skills and learning gained through volunteering, and those resulting from other interventions, such as the youth work which provides the context for volunteering, from particular life changes such as becoming a parent, or from simply growing up. This difficulty is, of course, not unique to volunteering.

5.5 Young people and staff welcomed the opportunities to reflect on the impact of their volunteering, particularly the opportunities for group reflection. This indicates the importance of building this reflection into volunteering programmes and activities. As sessions progressed, young people offered more sophisticated responses about skills and learning, indicating that the research project has stimulated real thought and self-assessment. One organisation adapted the skills framework used for the project to form the basis for peer research into the benefits of volunteering. The researchers noted that 'deeper exploration of issues' was possible as a result of young people having already engaged in this process.

5.6 During this process of reflection, many young people revealed a sophisticated understanding of the interplay of skills and outcomes, with a particular focus on experiential learning - 'learning through doing'. Their comments stressed the way in which different skills reinforced each other, and the relationship between developing skills, having the confidence to use them, receiving positive feedback, and further skills development - the creation of a 'virtuous circle'. Some young people also identified a repertoire of entrepreneurial skills, a current focus of interest among educationalists and

employers - the ability to take experiment and take risks, assess situations and adapt plans accordingly, think 'outside the box', develop their own projects and so on.

Motivations for volunteering

5.7 Young people identified a range of motivations for volunteering, which often changed as they became more involved. While some young people interviewed explicitly set out to volunteer to gain skills or experience in specific areas with future careers or study in mind, or because they want to help others or bring about change, others become involved in a less purposeful way. Members of one group, for instance, were offered a choice between school sport and volunteering (which extended beyond school hours). Many young people start 'helping out' in organisations where they have been service users as a result of encouragement by youth workers or other practitioners. As discussed below, it is clear that the role of youth workers or other 'significant adults' in engaging young people in volunteering and helping them identify their learning is critical.

5.8 Other young people may simply see volunteering as a way of spending their time; 'friends were talking about it, there was nothing to do in the evening so I came'. Several young people with disabilities indicated that volunteering was an alternative to 'being stuck at home', or 'looking at my bedroom walls'. For these young people elements such as making friends and enjoying themselves may feature more highly than an explicit commitment to skills development. It is, however, vital that those working with young people are in a position to help them draw out their learning at the earliest possible stages - recognising that the social and fun elements may be essential prerequisites for skills development.

5.9 In the volunteering world there is frequent discussion of the balance between instrumental and altruistic motivations - i.e. between getting and giving. This balance will differ between individuals and is likely to change over time for each individual. However, the findings from this research indicate that for many young people these two aspects are mutually dependent and reinforcing, rather than conflicting.

5.10 In addition to the importance of being sensitive to young people's motivations for volunteering, some visits highlighted the importance of responding to parents or carers' aspirations for their children and their understanding of the value of volunteering. This may be a particular issue for poor families, where young people's immediate ability to contribute to the family income may be seen as more important than potential longer term financial benefits from skills acquisition through volunteering.

The importance of skilled support

5.11 The importance of a 'significant adult' or older young person (peer role model) with the skills to nurture, support and challenge young people to develop through volunteering was evident throughout the research. While this role was frequently undertaken by a youth worker, it is the ability to provide personal support to young people and the commitment to helping them develop, reflect on their learning and apply it in other settings that is critical, rather than any particular job title. However, youth work skills and approaches provide a basis for engaging young people and putting them in position to develop skills

through volunteering.²⁷ Young people, particularly those with difficult lives, were clear about the importance of support from their workers. As one young person put it, ‘when [the worker] says, “well done, you’ve worked hard today”, I feel good, I really want to impress them’, while another reported that they had had ‘lots of encouragement from workers about using my experience to progress onto other things’.

Comparisons between learning from volunteering and other settings

5.12 While some young people found it difficult to distinguish between what they gained through volunteering and through other interventions, or simply as a result of growing up, others clearly differentiated between their experiences as volunteers and those in other settings.

5.13 Members of one group, whose activities led to a strong focus on teamwork, stressed how different their experience was from school: ‘you don’t learn any of these things at school [how to get along with people, to sort out conflict]; if you have an argument with someone at school you just ignore them, but here you can’t do that, you have to confront it.’ A volunteer from another project commented, ‘I learn a lot more in volunteering than I do in school.’

5.14 Young people also found that their volunteering allowed them to put skills into practice. ‘I’ve got a much better understanding of performing arts - college gave me the theory’, commented one young person, while another noted that ‘school only gives you basic IT skills - here it’s workplace IT.’ Young people at one project contrasted their experiences while volunteering with those at work, commenting that they had ‘learnt and applied more through volunteering than through my job’, and that ‘volunteering gives you a chance to interact with different people - work doesn’t allow you to do that.’ One young person with learning disabilities began volunteering because college no longer met her needs; she wanted to do ‘proper work’.

5.15 Volunteering appears to offer many young people a relatively quick win. The individual interviews and questionnaires revealed that many young people believed that their skills had improved after only limited experience of volunteering. However, in some cases, it seems that more experienced volunteers are more self-critical of their level of skills. One group, for instance, pointed to their increasingly sophisticated understanding of the needs of disabled young people, and their corresponding anxiety about whether they were responding appropriately to their needs. Another young person, reflecting on whether her decision-making skills had improved, wrote: ‘sort of – better in some ways, worse in others. Used to be more decisive, now make more considered decisions but I do agonise over it!’

5.16 Some young people related their volunteering to their own experiences of exclusion. One young man who was supporting young learners was driven by his experience of ‘second rate’ schooling: ‘I suffered at school because I am dyslexic... so when I see the young guys I know how it feels to be written off... that’s where my passion comes from... you have to have been there to understand and read their emotions’. Another young person, who had been in special needs education and transferred to mainstream in year nine to complete GCSEs, explained that ‘volunteering shows that no matter what your

²⁷ The National Youth Agency, *Ethical Conduct in Youth Work: a statement of values and principles from The National Youth Agency*. NYA, 2000.

background or your past experiences ... you can change yourself and help others'. Another volunteer stressed that he was able to relate to young people with problems because of his own experience: 'I am working with young people who have had problems. I have had a drink problem and lived on the streets before and so I know about that. You can work with people that are going through that and they know you understand what it is like. You can use this experience in a positive way.'

Impact on other areas of life

5.17 Young people's comments about the future demonstrate that they believed that the skills they had developed or hoped to develop through volunteering could be applied to different aspects of their lives. These included doing well in further or higher education, getting on in the workplace, setting up their own business, home and family, keeping out of prison, being confident in everyday situations or 'when things have gone wrong and you need to be assertive', and independent living.

5.18 Many young people believed that volunteering had positive effects on other areas of their lives, for instance, making them more able to benefit from formal education as a result of increased organisation and time management skills, and growth in confidence. One young person reported that they 'didn't used to be organised' but that they were now 'using what I've learnt to organise my workload'. According to another, 'I feel more confident volunteering. I used to be a bit shy. This helps with problem solving at college. I take the lead now, I have developed leadership skills.' Another young person commented that 'doing voluntary work has helped my studies - the experience gives you an idea of what it's like to work in an organisation rather than just studying'.

5.19 For a small number of young people, volunteering has provided a means of turning their lives around, confounding people's expectations or compensating for earlier failure. One young woman reported 'volunteering has taught me to stay calm. I am grown up, I am not a Street Rat. I am into doing something good, not sitting at the shelter on the estate. Most people thought I would be on benefits by now, living in a hostel.' Such individual testimonies confirm the findings of the literature review that volunteering can engage young people not involved in - or not doing well in - formal learning or training, putting them in a position where they can develop skills and potentially gain qualifications.

5.20 Many young people also stressed the transferability of skills gained through volunteering to all areas of their lives. According to one, 'I apply my experiences from volunteering daily. I'm broke and on benefits and I'm doing what I can to make my community better, some people are grateful and some people are ungrateful. I'm applying all of my skills to all of the work I do, in my family, in my own life and with my community.' Another commented that 'the confidence you learn from [the volunteering] helps bring the other things that you learn in your life together.'

5.21 Several young people also specifically noted that volunteering had helped them into employment. One young person, for instance, said that their volunteering had helped him get a job at a car body shop after being unemployed for over two years. He had volunteered to show he was able to work, and had developed a range of skills which he now used at work, including handling money and customer service skills. Other young people reported gaining work in areas such as play, as a result of their volunteering. Another young person reported that 'my experiences got me a job at Primark - [I] had to compete with 16 other people to get the job', while a third had gained employment in

gardening as a result of a voluntary placement. It was notable that staff in four of the projects visited had started at their projects as volunteers.

A, aged 15, has been volunteering for two years. She is involved in a range of activities including peer mentoring, conservation and representing other young people. 'Volunteering is useful for me, it helps you to mature, it gives you a sense of wellbeing and it definitely helps in your future career and is a good thing for your CV.'

'Through mentoring I've learnt listening skills, they make it easier to connect with the person, they are not used to it [being listened to]. I've learnt to be more non-judgemental and not to judge on first impressions. I've got a lot more confident and understanding. Through [youth council/parliament] I've learnt how to speak to people in certain situations, like to the public. I've learnt confidence because you know how to do something, this has an impact on your social groups and friendships.'

I can reach a top B in singing now, that's something I couldn't do before and I've learnt that through volunteering as a vocal coach.'

In year 7 I was getting into trouble, but with volunteering I've grown through this. Most of the things I use everyday have come from, or been developed and improved by volunteering. It's had a complete impact on my life. You don't notice a lot of the skills that you develop as you are using them everyday, they become normal. I really enjoy doing what I do, it is a much better way of learning. I'm partially dyslexic and this is a handicap at school, so volunteering is a much easier way for me to learn.'

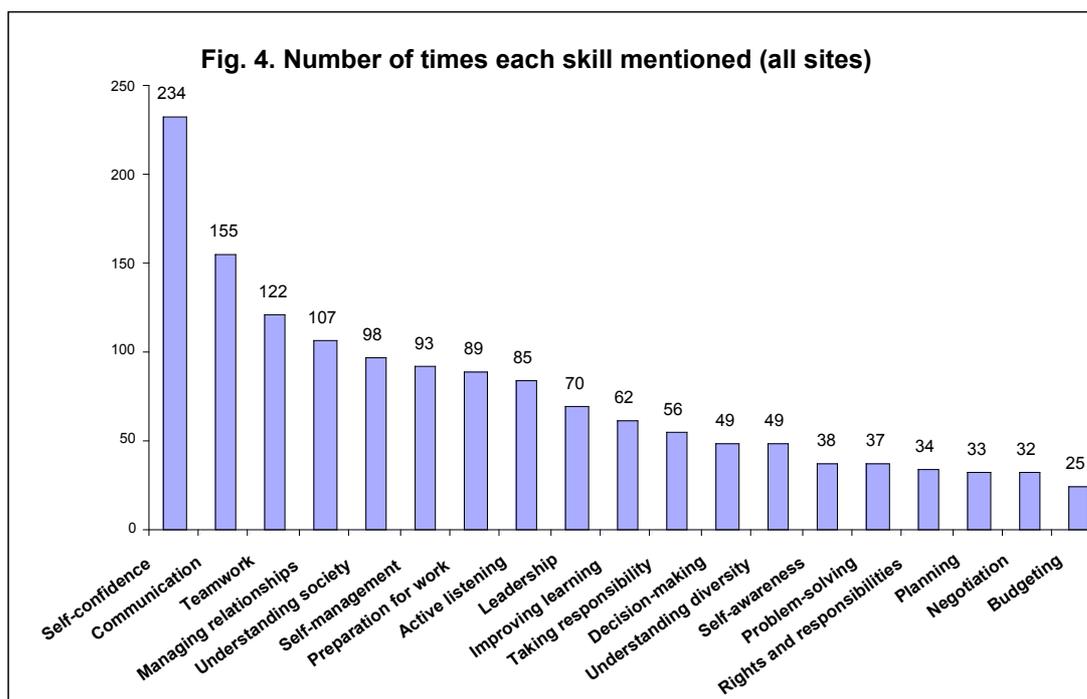
6. FIELDWORK FINDINGS

Skills development: an overview

6.1 The researchers used a range of methods to draw out young people's perceptions of the skills they had developed through volunteering. These included group and individual discussion, a range of exercises, and questionnaires. Young people's comments were coded against the Personal and Social Skills Framework, which groups skills under the three broad headings of personal skills, interpersonal skills, and contemporary issues.

6.2 These data were then analysed on the basis of how often each different skill was mentioned in the sessions. This is a fairly crude measure, but provides an indication of which skills young people are most likely to develop through volunteering. It should be noted, however, that many of the skills are closely related, and categorising statements under single headings was sometimes difficult and at times inevitably somewhat arbitrary. Moreover, as discussed above, young people themselves clearly saw different skills as interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

6.3 The findings support the evidence of the literature review that volunteering can increase young people's self-confidence and self-esteem, develop a range of communication skills, and improve their ability to work with other people. Analysis of the group sessions demonstrates that self-confidence and communication skills were the personal skills most frequently identified, followed by the interpersonal skills of teamwork and managing relationships.

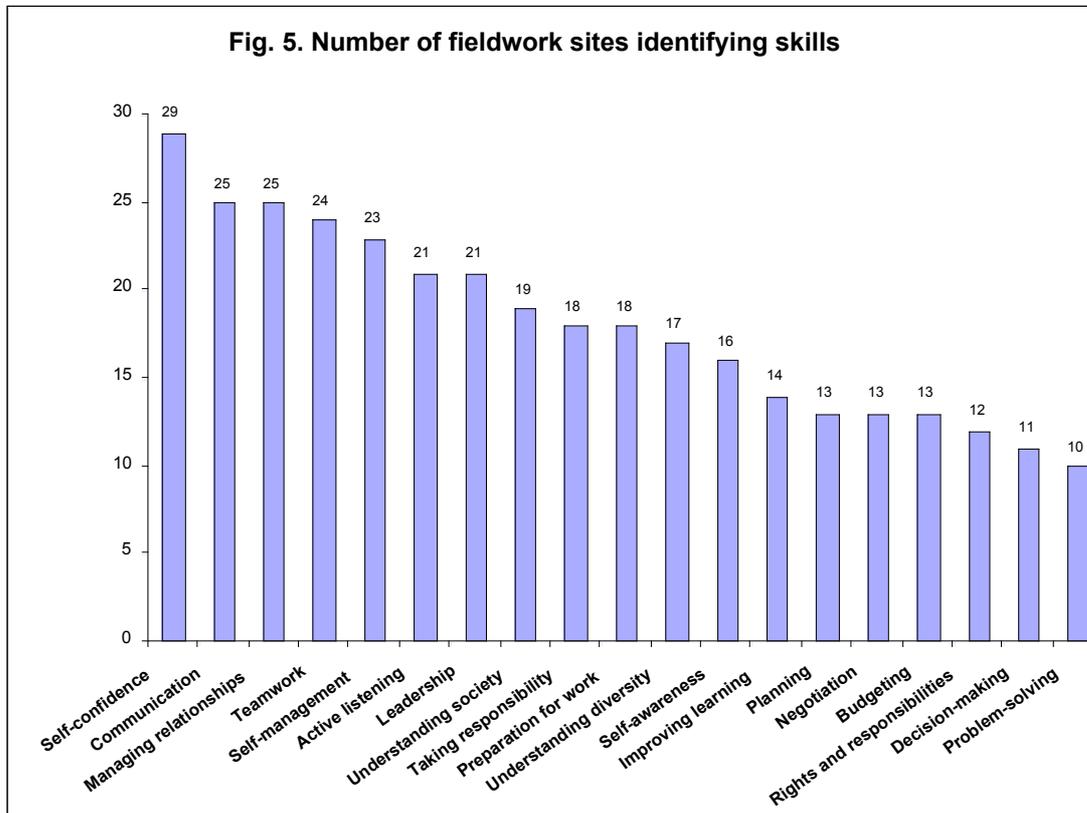


Base: 205 young people at 29 sites²⁸

6.4 It is possible, however, that ranking skills by the number of times they are mentioned may result in some distortion if, for instance, some skills are repeatedly mentioned by a

²⁸ Although 30 sites were identified and visited, young people at one site had no experience of volunteering, and were therefore excluded from this analysis.

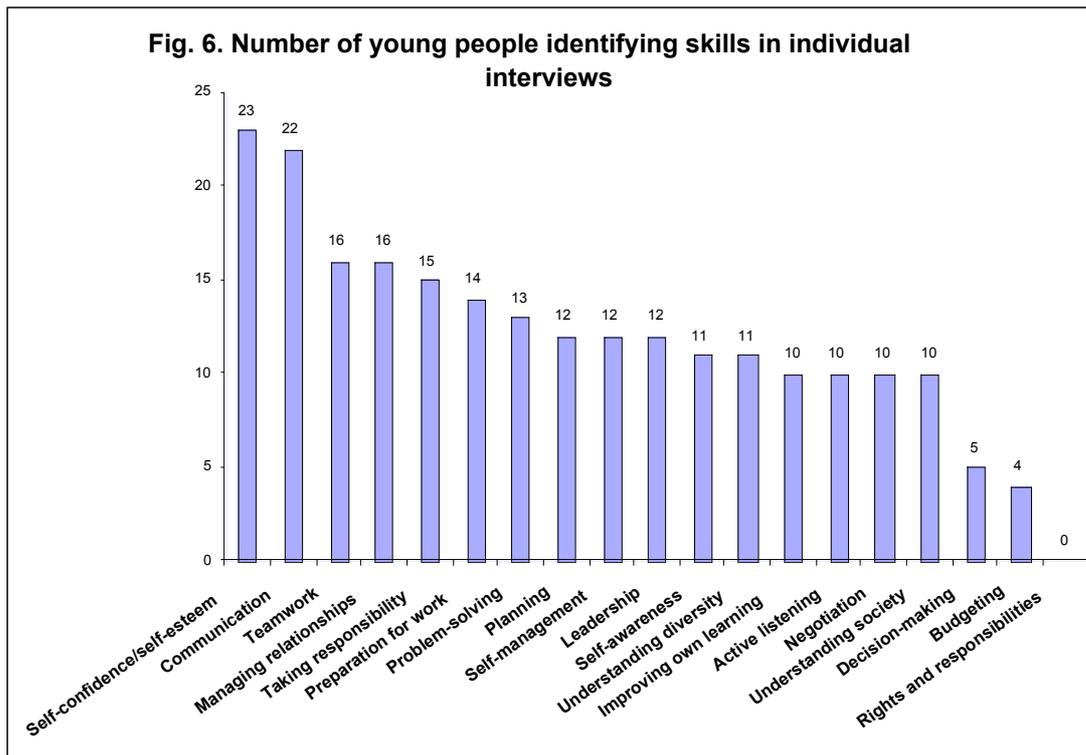
relatively small number of individuals. Alternatively, all or most of those involved in a particular organisation may identify the same skills, because of the particular focus of their volunteering. The analysis therefore also looked at the number of fieldwork sites which identified each skill - i.e. a particular skill was identified by one or more young people during group or individual sessions at that site - in order to get a better picture of skills development across the range of volunteering activity. Figure 5 shows the results.



Base = 29 sites

6.5 Looking at the findings in this way confirms the dominance of self-confidence, communication, teamwork and managing relationships in the skills identified. Among most of the other skills, there are only minor variations in their ranking between the ‘numbers of mentions’ and ‘number of fieldwork sites mentioning’ measures. However, decision-making, problem-solving and improving own learning skills score lower on the latter measure, perhaps suggesting that skills in these areas are developed in a relatively small number of projects or activities. Understanding society also comes lower down the rankings. This may be accounted for by the passion with which some young people spoke about their commitment to societal improvement and change, resulting in repeated mentions.

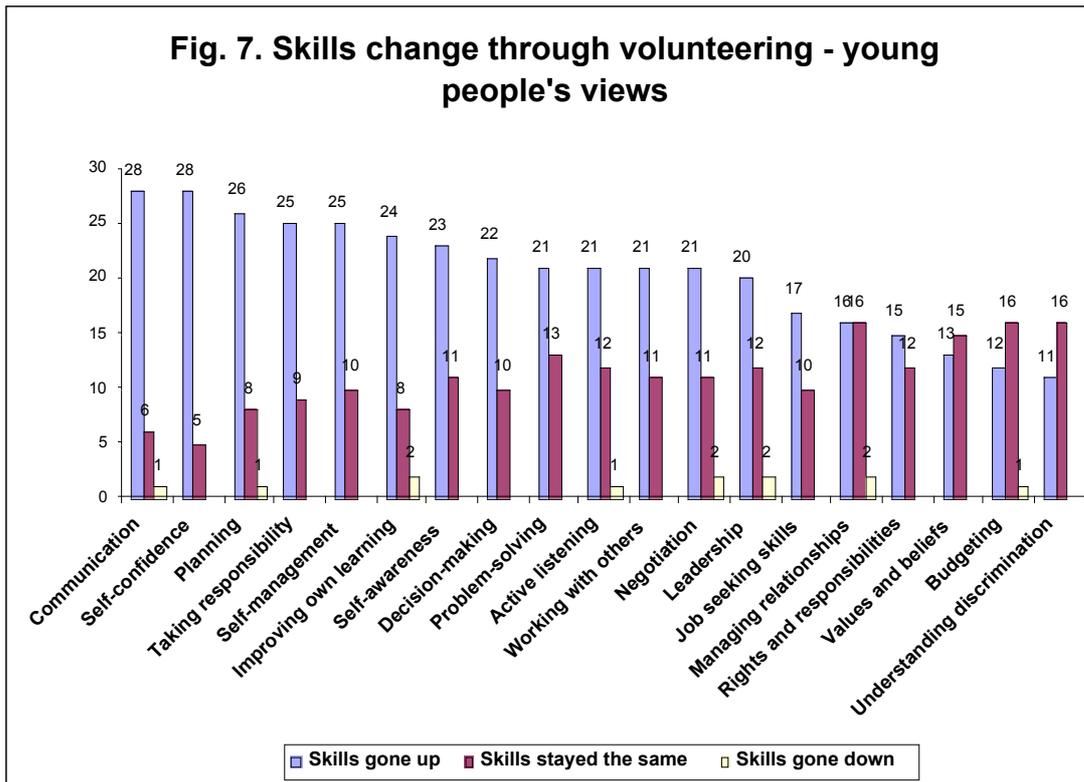
6.6 Individual interviews were carried out with 29 young people from 10 projects. Analysis of these shows that the ‘top four’ of self-confidence, communication, working with others and managing relationships were once again the most frequently cited skills. But the next three skills identified include taking responsibility and problem-solving, which were relatively infrequently identified in the group sessions.



Base = 29 young people

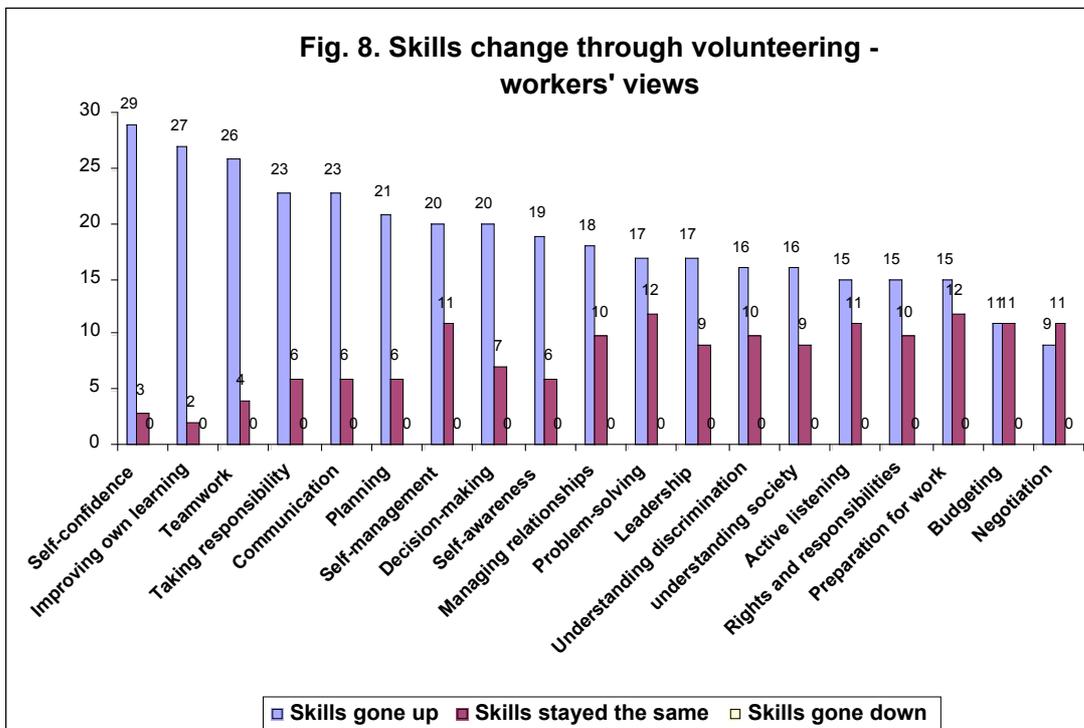
6.7 While it is difficult to draw any conclusions from this small sample, this suggests that the opportunities for more in-depth reflection provided by individual interviews may have allowed young people to recognise skills acquisition in areas not readily revealed in the group sessions. Had it been possible to carry out more individual interviews, therefore, it is possible that a slightly different range of skills might have been identified after the ‘top four’.

6.8 In an alternative approach to gaining young people’s views on the skills they had developed, 35 young people completed questionnaires on whether specific skills had increased, decreased or stayed the same as a result of their volunteering. They were also asked to rate their skills on a five point scale from very low to very high. Figure 7, on the next page, shows that once again, self-confidence and communication emerge as the most commonly improved skills. Again it is difficult to generalise about such a small sample, but it is interesting to note that young people were equally split between whether their skills in managing relationships had gone up or stayed the same - 16 respondents in each case. Most of those who reported no change in this area were fairly confident about their abilities, with 14 of the 16 stating that their skills in managing relationships were medium or high. A small number of respondents identified one or more skills as having gone down. It is possible that there may be various reasons for this: projects not providing opportunities to develop specific skills; young people becoming more self-critical as they gain more experience through volunteering; or simply misunderstanding the questionnaire.



Base = 35 young people

6.9 Workers from five organisations also completed questionnaires giving their views of 32 young people's individual skills development through volunteering. Figure 8 shows the results.



Base = 32 young people

6.10 Again, it is a very small sample, but it is interesting to note that unlike the young people, no workers identified any skills as having gone down, and they appear slightly less likely than the young people to believe that skills have remained unchanged. Like the young people, however, they identify the most improvement in personal and interpersonal skills, rather than contemporary issues.

6.11 Young people also reported developing a variety of practical skills as a result of their volunteering, for instance ICT and office skills, gardening, food preparation, creative skills, and the ability to work with specific groups, such as children or people in hospital. Many of them explicitly linked these skills to potential career areas and improved employability in general, and this will be considered in the discussion of preparation for work in section of this report.

Personal skills

6.12 This heading embraces a range of skills, attitudes and knowledge related to individuals' sense of their own identity and their ability to manage themselves. It covers qualities and skills such as self-awareness, self-confidence and self-esteem; setting goals and identifying how to achieve them; communicating effectively in different mediums; and solving problems and making decisions. The broad term of 'self-management' includes a range of skills and attributes, such as self-discipline, anger and stress management, managing time effectively, patience and adaptability.

Self-confidence

6.13 The young people interviewed repeatedly stressed that volunteering had increased their self-confidence, self-esteem and self-belief. Their comments, however, reveal how far this is intertwined with developing other skills. In particular, increased self-confidence seems to be strongly linked to improved communication skills, particularly among those who indicate that they were previously shy, nervous about meeting new people or socially isolated.

6.14 Many young people also stress the experiential learning provided through volunteering, the 'learning by doing', which reinforces their sense of their own abilities. Some of their comments explicitly contrast this with previous expectations of failure. Another theme which emerges strongly is their sense of other people believing in them. As a result of their volunteering, they feel good about helping others, and therefore better about themselves, and believe that they are valued by other people.

- *I now feel more confident, not so daft. Now I believe I can do it. Having to talk to young people more made me realise I could do it.*
- *I think I've always been a fairly confident person but now I can back it up with evidence that says I'm good with people, that gives you even more confidence.*
- *You get more confident about performances, at first you are nervous, but then you do it and it goes well, so the next time you are less nervous, and you reassure the younger ones who are finding it nervous. We tell them they have done well and that gives them more confidence.*
- *If somebody helps me I can help other people. I am more confident, I don't go into things thinking I am going to make mistakes.*
- *Involvement [in MV] came about after I was going through a low patch and not really successful in any direction. I was really lacking confidence and self-esteem and this gave me an opportunity to do what it says on the strap line: to build on what I was into.*
- *Through volunteering, I now have greater confidence and self-esteem. I can now talk to people I do not know.*
- *By doing something you wouldn't normally do you gain confidence.*
- *I've learnt to respect myself and that other people will also respect me too.*

B, aged 20, has been volunteering for three years. 'At the end of college I wanted to do something different so I went into Connexions and asked about volunteering and they put me in touch with [the organisation].' He helps organise two groups at a day centre for children and adults with disabilities, has organised a fundraising disco, and has taken part in various practical projects.

He identifies a range of skills he's developed: 'planning skills from organising the disco to raise money for the day centre. I had to check out different venues, book the place, book the DJ, I did a role play with someone from [the organisation] and they helped me write down what I would say, then I practised it, and then I felt confident to call the DJ and book him.

'Independence and independent travel on the metro. I didn't do this before, but now I can go places independently, [the project worker] went in the next carriage so I could see him, I knew he was there if I needed him, and I got used to it, now I can travel where I want to go independently, I feel confident to do it now. Social skills, I've met lots of new people and new friends.

'I've got a lot more confidence. Volunteering has changed my life. I got bullied at college, so through coming here and volunteering I've gained back the confidence that I lost.'

Communication skills

6.15 The young people interviewed identified a wide range of different communication skills they had developed through volunteering. These included:

- Effective use of different communication methods, including letter writing, e-mail, making telephone calls, body language, British Sign Language and Makaton.
- Writing to specific formats, such as taking minutes, writing newspaper articles, composing press releases, or filling in forms.
- Public speaking, for instance making presentations, carrying out interviews and representing the views of other young people.
- Taking part in group discussions and meetings; and
- Communicating with specific groups, such as children, older people, parents or patients.

6.16 Specific comments included:

- *I'm more polite than I used to be - I'm really much better on the phone.*
- *I've learned to communicate with other people - before I didn't talk to many people.*
- *My parents think I am doing well. They think I communicate more and have learned new skills, and that I talk with other people more than before.*
- *Gained experience in emailing clients, e.g. proper English and correct manner.*
- *Confidence— via presentations, talks, leading groups and running workshops.*
- *I gained lots of confidence through being able to communicate better.*
- *Communication skills - how to grasp children's attention. How to be assertive to get them to behave. Using gestures and body language to communicate.*

Self-awareness

6.17 Although relatively few young people identified changes in individual self-awareness, those that did tended to highlight the impact of volunteering on all aspects of their lives. In some cases, young people clearly identified volunteering as leading to major change in their lives.

- *Much more liberal, understanding my own values, have become more business minded, value life and being more positive about yourself.*
- *It takes you out of yourself. It means you don't take your baggage into the future and you move on from your own problems.*
- *My behaviour and attitude has changed. I used to be cheeky and daft, but not any more.*
- *I wouldn't be the person I am today without the experiences I've had from volunteering.*
- *I've built a relationship with my mum - I used to get into trouble - since being here I've become very happy and have become friends with my mum which is very important to me.*
- *Through mentoring I have been able to discuss things freely and really challenged myself and my opinions.*
- *Volunteering helped me to mature a lot, before I was leaning towards the stereotype, getting into trouble etc., but I've re-evaluated my life, youth work and working at the summer school has helped me mature and learn a lot about how I am. I'm more self aware of how my actions can affect others.*

E, aged 18, has been volunteering for two years. He has undertaken a range of voluntary activities with children and young people through youth clubs, summer schemes and church. He is also involved in a project supporting children in a developing country. He sees his volunteering as having 'affected me as a whole. It's given me direction, this is what I want to do, this is me. Before I was getting into crime, I'd stepped out, but now I've got drive to step back and help other people not make the same mistakes.'

He sees that he has developed a range of skills through volunteering, including communication skills through working with children and their parents; problem solving - relaying information, events, logging incidents, working at all different levels and team management - fundraising, organising and leading groups.

He describes seeing change and progression in young people as 'rewards in themselves', but accreditation also matters: 'having a certificate is good as proof, you can show to employers what you have achieved. Apart from GCSEs I don't have many academic qualifications, but volunteering shows dedication, it shows I've got qualification, commitment and references to work with youth. I've got a job interview doing youth work, so volunteering will hopefully help me with that.'

Self-management

6.18 Young people believed that their volunteering had helped them improve their behaviour in various ways and highlighted how this affected other areas of their lives.

Their comments focus on three main benefits:

- Better self-organisation, particularly time management and meeting deadlines;
- Improved behaviour, including patience; and
- Dealing with stress and anger management

- *Getting to both the library and the old people's home, I'm always punctual now and my time keeping is (now) excellent.*
- *I am good at organising my time, being able to say no and by keeping a diary.*
- *Meeting deadlines - keeping up to date with different tasks and projects.*
- *Coping with new sometimes stressful scenarios at the hospital.*
- *Patience through dealing with people on daily basis.*
- *I don't get worried that people are going to wind me up.*
- *I still lose it sometimes, but I now know how to stop.*

C, a partially sighted young man, is volunteering with an arts project, where he is developing databases and writing a newsletter. He identified a range of learning from his project, including ICT and money management skills, time management, independent living and managing relationships with other people. He had some experience of using Apple Macs at school, but 'being at [the arts project] kinda refreshed me on using Macs and gave me familiarity with newer operating systems. I'm now able to use it for real.' He has learnt about 'handling petty cash and purchasing stuff' for the organisation. He has learned how to deal with a variety of people (including managers) and to know when to keep quiet and stay polite. He's gained experience of getting to the project in time, including learning the bus routes and where to get off the bus. He had previously been at boarding school, so did not have much experience of independent travel.

Planning

6.19 Many young people considered that their planning skills had improved as a result of volunteering. However, there seems to be some ambiguity about what is understood by planning. In the context of personal skills it means individuals' ability to look ahead to set goals and identify how to achieve them. However, it also seems to have been understood in the sense of planning projects and activities, which will be covered under interpersonal skills.

- *I have a 'dream' book to help map ideas and form a strategy for the skills I need and when I need to learn them to reach my goals.*
- *My next goals ... doing more research into it, I am bettering myself. I am hard working not lazy.*

- *Enough is enough, you don't want to be just another statistic, a young female with a baby who can't continue in education. Being on welfare, I don't want to become that, I want to progress legitimately and prove what you can achieve.*
- *I think different, take things in more, think more about my career.*
- *I've realised I can get into this now, it is not as hard as you might assume.*

Taking responsibility

6.20 Skills developed in this area would appear to be closely related to individual self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as working with others. Young people referred to growing up and become more mature; taking responsibility for their actions; seeing projects through; and recognising that other people depended on them to do what they said they would do. Some young people with learning disabilities identified benefits in terms of increased independence.

- *I am now more responsible - if the bus is late I tell someone. I now try to confirm my attendance at meetings. I am now more responsible than before, I am more aware that as a volunteer people depend on you, if you do not turn up, something just does not get done.*
- *I have learnt new skills and acquired new responsibilities which have made me a more mature young adult.*
- *A worker reported that a young person with a learning disability feels she is more confident and 'grown up', better able to do things for herself, e.g. getting up and ready to attend [the organisation].*

F is a 19-year-old young woman of Cypriot origin. She has been volunteering for around three and a half years. 'I started doing a sports course - teaching kids was part of my course. I wanted to be a coach so my teacher said I should go to MV. Since she started volunteering, 'I've had to grow up fast. When I started the sports course I was still a kid. I've had to be more responsible. Through volunteering, she has learnt 'how to be part of team. Communication, teaching others a new sport. Sharing. I am more aware of myself. I don't show my nerves - I might be scared but I don't show it. I just show them how to do it. It has built up over time. I know what to do so am more confident.' She has also learnt about child protection and basic sign language.

She believes that 'it is important to get recognition. I feel I have achieved something. You see other young people going to centres - I don't want to be a NEET. They just need support rather than being labelled by services. I have taught kids that have ADHD. I got them to join me in the sports department.

'You have to do stuff to get somewhere, if you don't do stuff then you don't get nowhere.'

Improving own learning

6.21 Comments illustrating skills development in this area tended to focus on review and evaluation, and learning from experience.

- *I value learning a lot more... you have to think how you can manage and support a group, and think critically about your own learning and how you can support a group to develop their ideas, to be empowered and to make changes in their community’.*
- *Be more organised - through planning projects, reviewing my work, evaluation, action planning.*

D, aged 24, supports young adults in skills for life sessions. ‘I’d finished studying but needed experience so thought volunteering would be a good way. I had a really good incentive to get involved because I wanted to gain experience and an insight into this area of work - testing out by doing it.’

He’s learnt ‘how to communicate better through mixing with learners and understanding their backgrounds, how to get on with young people and provide the right support and dealing with conflict. I’m a fairly determined person and have always wanted to achieve. This has given me an opportunity to learn from mistakes although I do take it seriously and see myself as part of the staff team. I’m not complacent just because I’m volunteering.’

Volunteering ‘will give me more confidence in interviews because I can now apply it to real life experiences.’

Problem solving and decision-making

6.22 Some young people believed that volunteering had improved their analytical skills, their ability to respond flexibly to changing situations, weigh up options and make judgements, and to work with others to solve problems. Several young people referred to experience in making decisions gained through involvement in Youth Opportunity Fund or other panels which assess grant applications from other young people.

- *I now make decisions about my own voluntary placements. Before I allowed others to make decisions for me. I am now learning to weigh up options and make my own decisions. Because I believe in myself, I am now more confident in what I decide.*
- *Learning Adobe Acrobat has taught me to approach other problems with an open mind, because of how I deal with editing using this software.*
- *Through volunteering I can deal with difficult situations and make decisions.*
- *[Has learned] to think on feet more, think out of the box - not just the obvious.*
- *Know how and when to change sessions quickly.*
- *Judging when to report something to a medic or nurse at the hospital.*

Interpersonal skills

6.23 This heading embraces a range of skills, attitudes and knowledge relating to working with other people. It includes teamwork - working together to achieve common goals; leading and organising projects and activities; working with different kinds of people, for instance across age differences; negotiation and dealing with conflict; and active listening - understanding other people's views and ideas.

Teamwork

6.24 Working with others and teamwork were identified as key areas of skills development through volunteering. Young people stressed the benefits of working together, but also acknowledged the challenges that this brought. Their comments highlighted various aspects of teamwork, including getting things done, developing trust and making friends, supporting and helping each other through challenges, improving the quality of their work, and working through disagreements.

- *I could already work well as part of a team but volunteering helped me build on this.*
- *I have learnt that work gets done quickly with more than one person.*
- *I now like working in a team and making things happen.*
- *Working with new people I'd never met before and having to completely trust them.*
- *Volunteering has supported and improved teamwork skills over a short period of time.*
- *Discipline: you have respect for others, you respect ... older members, you learn assertiveness, friendship and being one big family, you earn respect.*
- *Making new friends - we were together all the time and got on really well so we all became mates who had developed and grown up together and helped each other through things.*

G, aged 16, has been volunteering since last summer. He has volunteered at a Caribbean festival, Black History Month events and a fashion show. He got involved through his youth organisation, which asked for helpers. He thinks he's developed a range of skills: 'communication with customers and the team. You can't just ignore people or they will think you are out of order. I feel more confident volunteering. I used to be a bit shy. It helps with problems solving at college. I take the lead now, I have developed leadership skills. I'm more open to say what I feel, not to keep it bottled up.' When asked about accreditation, he said 'I do want people to recognise me, it makes me feel a bit happier. Certificates would be useful for CV or portfolio'.

Managing relationships

6.25 While teamwork focuses on relationships within groups, a linked set of skills relates to young people's ability to manage relationships with people outside their group. Aspects of this include working with different kinds of people and understanding their needs, dealing with people in authority and networking. Some young people contrasted their exposure to different people through volunteering with their experiences in school, where they remained with people of the same age and within friendship groups.

- *You get to be around all different people and people of different ages, this is good because at school everyone is the same age and you don't really mix, but in [organisation] you are with people from all different ages so it's good you learn to mix.*
- *Learned how to work with other people both older and younger without major problems.*
- *Learned how to speak quietly and gentle to other people and have made many friends.*
- *Networking - meeting new people from other organisations and working together.*
- *Patience with rude customers and how to react with them.*
- *To not lose temper with groups and to go over things as many times as needed.*
- *I need to treat people properly if I want respect.*
- *You learn not to judge people, how to listen, and builds confidence working in a big group, [it] gives you people skills - how to get along and include people.*

H, aged 14, has been volunteering for six months. 'First I was on the youth committee - [the worker] asked if I would volunteer. I help with admin and doing phone calls. I have learned to speak better over the phone, and I write down messages for others. I've also gained more computer skills and can work the databases at the club.' When asked how he's changed, he says 'I take much more interest in other people, I look out for those involved and talk with them - before I would have just left them to it.' Through his volunteering he will get a first-aid certificate. 'I also got a certificate for the project I did and have gained two parts of the Duke of Edinburgh Award. It will be useful for jobs in the future.'

Active listening skills

6.26 Active listening includes the ability to listen to other people's viewpoints, reflect what people have said back to them and encourage them to develop their own solutions. While these skills were reported fairly widely, as might be expected they appear to be particularly strongly associated with mentoring and peer support.

- *Through mentoring I've learnt listening skills - you learn it through training exercises, it makes you aware of how much you don't listen in everyday life.*
- *Learnt to respect other people's opinions.*
- *[Learned] to see beyond what people present, gain empathy with others in different situations.*
- *Talking to one another, playing, helping each other share feelings.*
- *People listening skills - learnt from mistakes, seen that when you listen you get a positive result.*
- *It's improved my communication skills, and experience of confidentiality, boundaries, like how far to take it and when to leave it.*

I, aged 22, is volunteering at a local art gallery running activities for children. She identifies a range of inter-related skills she has developed through volunteering: 'my planning skills were underdeveloped. I left most of the planning to others because I was not confident in this area. However, since running art workshops my skills in planning and time management have improved greatly. I realise that the workshop outcome is dependent on my ability to publicise the workshop, plan the content etc. I am now more confident in doing these, as well as talking to others and solving problems which might arise. I have also become more assertive in being able to communicate what I want.

'The project also gave me an opportunity to work with people from other cultures and backgrounds and in the process I became better at listening and understanding others' viewpoints and opinions. I am now also more aware of the need to compromise and more willing to consider alternative thinking/ways of doing things than previously.' Other skills she has developed include applying for funding.

She thinks that volunteering should be recognised through a system of credits which could be used elsewhere. She has now secured a job working with children, and believes that this is due to the skills she gained through volunteering, such as practical experience of organising children's activities, and the contacts she made.

Leadership

6.27 Several comments identified this as an area where volunteering offered opportunities not available in other areas of their lives. The notion of leadership differed between projects. Some had clear progression routes, offering some specified leadership roles which young people were able to aspire to. In most projects, however, leadership opportunities appear to be less formalised, with different individuals assuming the lead for different projects. Young people were also involved in teaching or coaching roles, both inside and outside their groups.

- *As a project leader, volunteers look to me to provide leadership. On our outward bound course I had to work as a leader for the group, working out where we were, make decisions and have confidence in my decisions.*
- *Volunteering gave me the opportunity to lead where I did not have the chance to before, in doing so giving me added confidence and empowerment in knowing who I am and what I want to do.*
- *You have to be motivated enough to give that group a different experience or the group will feel like you don't care.*
- *The [hierarchy] helps, you can move up to captain for team. Captain has to make sure everyone gets there on time.*
- *I run recruitment events for students, plan the programme, organise the publicity, do the risk assessment, cost breakdown and who to target for sponsorship.*
- *On occasions, have assumed a leadership role, this has been made possible through growing confidence in myself and skills in communication, oral as well as written.*
- *Scout leaders taught me to light fires, now I teach the cubs to light fires. Will improve on this skill by teaching- 'see one, do one, teach one'.*
- *I can look at somebody's goals and help them get to it, I can help people to tackle things one step at a time.*

Negotiation

6.28 This was a key area for some projects, particularly those involved in activities which demanded close team work and cooperation. These young people stressed their ability to make judgements about situations; to resolve conflict - both within their own organisation and with other people that they were working with; and to be prepared to compromise to achieve results.

- *When you get into conflict, stay calm and understand what people are saying. I stay calm and don't kick off.*
- *I am also now aware of the need to compromise and more willing to consider alternative ways of thinking/ways of doing things than previously.*
- *You learn how to deal with the public and how to handle conflict.*

- *You learn how to handle conflict, and how to sort out arguments, in [the organisation] you can't just ignore someone if you have a problem with them, you have to sort it out and you learn how to do that, how to talk to the person and be able to get on with them again.*
- *Volunteering on a team project certainly created opportunities for me to practise my negotiation skills, even if they hadn't been well used in the past.*
- *Know when to step into situations and when to step back.*

J, aged 16, has been volunteering for around five years. He got involved as a member, taking part in karate, boxing and trampolining, and now helps new members. From his volunteering, he's developed 'confidence, ability to commit to something, able to work in a small group and get over disagreements.' His behaviour was 'not so good before', but he's 'calmed down now, self-disciplined, can keep head down.' He has also learned 'how to deal with money and people who aren't so strong and experienced', and understands how committees work. He sees the project where he volunteers as good 'because it gets people off doing drugs etc, gives us responsibilities.'

Understanding contemporary issues

6.29 This heading embraces a range of skills, knowledge and attitudes relating to individuals being able to act more effectively in the wider world. At a broader level, it includes individuals' understanding of their role in society, both locally and globally and how their actions can have an impact; the development of values and attitudes which encourage their active involvement in communities; understanding and valuing cultural diversity; and the awareness of power relationships. More specifically, it covers skills relating to financial management such as budgeting and, importantly for this research, skills related to preparation for work and employability.

Understanding society

6.30 Many young people interviewed appear to be strongly committed to improving their communities and the lives of other people. They stressed the importance of knowing that their actions were making a difference to others, of being able to see change, and being recognised for their contribution. They identified how their values and priorities had changed, so that they now understood the importance of volunteering in strengthening local communities and developing social capital. They also described how they had developed knowledge and understanding of local structures and processes so that they could use their time effectively to bring about change.

- *Before I began volunteering I really wanted to help others, but I felt that it was too hard to do this by myself. And I didn't really know. Now I realise that every little bit you do does help.*
- *I have always been bothered but volunteering made me get up and do something.*
- *I enjoy seeing the impact I have on people. Young people get older and they recognise you, they talk to you about their life, it shows the results of the work for those young people.*
- *Valued, I really feel like I'm making a difference in my community.*
- *Made me focus on something important. I now enjoy helping other people. It gave me a reason to get out of the house.*
- *I'm a mum, I'm very determined to make change in the community I live in for me and for my daughter to grow up in, things have to change right now.*
- *Have become more willing to help people. Even though you are not earning you are still gaining satisfaction.*
- *Interacting with different people and gaining a wide variety of knowledge on how society functions.*
- *It has made me value my community. It's made me think that I can make a difference, think more about gaps in [the area].*

K, 18 is a Black Caribbean young woman who describes herself as ‘very driven to volunteer, I’m passionate and committed to working with young people’. She has set up her own project, ‘it’s for young people and communities, aimed at young people involved in gun crime, working with young people to make a difference in their communities, and has also been involved in international volunteering. She identifies a range of skills gained through volunteering: ‘communication skills, networking, I can speak to people I can write a letter and get in tune with people, I can grab someone’s attention and keep them focused. You have to think how you can manage and support a group to develop their ideas, to be empowered and make change in their community. I’ve worked in voluntary and statutory organisations and have got skills from working in all different environments. You get out what you put in, you get quality [volunteering] from always being available to pass on your skills, to signpost others and to build up relationships.’

Understanding diversity

6.31 Young people believed that volunteering had brought them into direct contact with people and ideas they would not otherwise have experienced. They had broadened their understanding of different cultures, developed their awareness of discrimination and the experiences of specific groups, and become more able to challenge their own and other people’s preconceptions, including media messages.

- *I definitely became more open minded because of all the people I met - this has helped me empathise with different people from different backgrounds.*
- *You teach other people who don’t understand and treat disabled people different. Show them disabled people are really talented.*
- *I think you should treat everyone the same no matter their religion. I used to be unsure about different religions, but not any more.*
- *I’m totally non-judgemental, my beliefs have changed, I know how it is for asylum seekers coming into the UK and I can tell people how it is, I can dispel the myths you hear about them getting a car and a house etc, I know it isn’t like that, I know it from being with my mentee in her flat with only a bed and a table.*
- *Greater understanding of elderly people (old women aren't mean).*
- *What people from different schools are really like.*
- *In my volunteering I let people know what it is like to be different, I challenge prejudice about disability and being different through drama.*
- *I’ve learnt a lot about communicating with people with disabilities and also thought a lot about how people live their life with a disability and they don’t let it get in the way.*
- *One of the biggest things was going on an exchange, we went representing England, there were people from all different cultures, it was amazing, I felt really confident to talk to them and I could understand them straight away.*

Rights and responsibilities

6.32 Relatively few young people identified skills relating to rights and responsibilities, perhaps suggesting that they find this a fairly abstract concept.

- *Volunteering and then developing as a person has progressed my understanding of the rights and personal responsibilities of others and how this fits into the general jigsaw of life.*
- *Better understanding of responsibilities, values and beliefs.*

Preparation for work

6.33 Many young people interviewed explicitly referred to the role of volunteering in helping them get a job. They had clear ideas about how volunteering would help them get work and help them deal with workplace challenges in the future. They repeatedly highlighted the value of the communication, teamwork and organisational skills they had developed, or hoped to develop further, through volunteering.

6.34 Young people also highlighted their understanding of workplace demands and office routines; one young person, for instance, itemised their office experience: ‘photocopying, typing, emails, faxing, filing, answering the phone, taking messages, sorting post, opening and closing office’. The experience of a work environment can be particularly important for young people with learning disabilities.

At one organisation, a project worker helped L, a young woman with learning difficulties to articulate what she had learned through volunteering. Through her placement at a charity shop she had been taught to sort, ticket and price second hand clothes. She is now ‘good at it and very quick’. She uses a ticketing gun so has had to learn to be careful and learn about health and safety. She has ‘learnt to make tea and to ask other people how they like it’. She has become used to meeting and talking to new people, and leaves her flat on time to get to work early. She is on time for college as well. While she needs help with checking change and counting the clothes out of the bags, she couldn’t or wouldn’t have attempted this before.

6.35 Young people’s discussion of volunteering in relation to the future ranged from volunteering looking good on a CV, to more specific references to volunteering enhancing employability in particular areas. Some young people saw volunteering as a means of testing out different career options, while for others, volunteering had led them to change their minds about what they wanted to do. One young woman reported that ‘Being a volunteer completely changed my outlook on life and what I wanted to do as a career, I realised that I wanted to do a job that helps people.’

6.36 In general, and as might be expected, older young people and those with higher levels of academic attainment tended to be more specific about their career paths, and seek volunteering experiences which would further these. Specific careers mentioned included working with children; police and other uniformed services; law; care work; medicine; teaching; youth work; social work; performance and digital arts; gardening; and working with animals.

6.37 In contrast, some young people specifically stated that their volunteering would help compensate for not achieving well at school, or for not having higher level qualifications. One young person commented that they ‘didn’t get GCSEs, that is why I volunteer’, while another said ‘I would like to do sports and exercise science and be a teacher. I would like to help kids at school as I have the insight. I was here because I didn’t go to school.’

6.38 Job specific skills

- *A young person who wanted to be a doctor volunteered at a hospice: ‘I worked with patients, got to know their feelings about illness, their difficulties, mentalities. Learnt to be kind, always listening to them. It is a basic introduction about what I am up against.’*
- *I decided mentoring was what I wanted to do as a career, I looked at goals to set for myself to reach those goals and volunteering at [the organisation] was one of those.*
- *Long term I might want to progress into management - through volunteering you can gain lots of knowledge and experiences, take it step by step, learn from your mistakes.*
- *Volunteering let me try out different career paths with no pressure - decided I wanted to become a youth worker.*
- *It [volunteering] had a huge benefit for me because I got lots of encouragement from workers about using my experiences to progress onto other things and I’m now employed as a part-time coordinator.*
- *Communication skills and appreciation of other people’s differences and needs will help in a career in a care home.*
- *I’m volunteering in areas that I want to go into and work in the future so that will help me.*

6.39 General job skills

- *You put [the organisation] on your CV, it’s one of the first things I put down.*
- *My goal is to get lots of different experiences.*
- *I hope it will help me find out what kind of people I want to work with.*
- *Seeing how people work in different companies.*
- *Volunteering gives you more experience from a young age, it is easier to go to uni and work after having the experiences in volunteering work.*

M is an 18-year old Black Caribbean young man. '[The organisation] had a fun day thingy in the summer. [The youth worker] introduced herself and asked me about volunteering. I was 16 so I was able to volunteer. So I came back the next day and helped out in the office, filing, database, answering the telephone. It was between school and college so I had eight weeks' holiday. I didn't know about volunteering before I met [the worker].

He learned 'to talk to more people, like on the phone. The more often you do it you just pick it up after a while. Photocopying - by the fifth time I was better. I use this skill at college when I am doing coursework. I used to forget things, now I keep a diary. My dad says I am more organised than before. He can see in my room I have done the filing and different files for college work. I'm more confident in myself - didn't talk before, would sit in the corner.

'I have always offered to help but it was nice to hear I would get a certificate for it - especially as I didn't do so well in my GCSEs. I took my MV certificate to the interview, it definitely helped me get the job. The increase in confidence helped. I wouldn't have got it if I was my old self, I just went in there like I wanted it.'

Financial understanding

6.40 A minority of young people highlighted the financial skills they had gained through volunteering. These covered three areas: fundraising; financial routines; and improved money management, both in relation to work and personal lives.

- *Personally I have never been very confident with money and financial matters, however taking part in volunteering and then continuing on into a job has made me more aware of such management, plus giving me the opportunity to improve.*
- *How to budget yourself and think of what you want - learn how to budget your money in the future when living on your own money.*
- *Applying for funding for own projects - grants for young people programme, young people apply directly, had idea for project, wrote own application, what you will do with the money, then presented this to the funders.*
- *[I know} how to set up a bank account for a club.*

Recognition and accreditation

6.41 The young people were asked about what, if any, recognition and accreditation they received, and how important they thought it was.

6.42 Young people interviewed reported receiving a range of different forms of recognition, ranging from being thanked to formal accreditation. More formal forms of recognition used included Millennium Volunteers, national vocational qualifications, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and a module in volunteering as part of a degree. Young people had undertaken a wide range of training, including First Aid, working with children, teamwork and effective communication (all accredited by Open College Network), child protection, domestic violence, sports coaching, food hygiene, conflict resolution, counselling and introduction to youth work. They had also taken part in a range of locally recognised training.

6.43 Many young people stressed the importance of having their efforts and achievements recognised by others - ranging from simply being thanked and praised through to local and national awards and ceremonies. Comments on their experiences included:

- *The biggest highlight for me was going to London to see the Queen, I got a letter inviting me to tea with the Queen! It was a big reception with lots of celebrities, and other volunteers, we got invited for doing lots of volunteering.*
- *It's nice if people let you know you're recognised and appreciated.*
- *You wouldn't believe how it felt to be a winner [of MV award] - to stand there and hear your name - haven't come down yet.*
- *Just a thanks is good but I do have the certificates already.*
- *Awards make you smile, it's like getting a pat on the back and an acknowledgment of the time and effort you've put into something ... it says a lot about your character.*

6.44 For others, however, their own sense of bringing something to the lives of others was the most important aspect of recognition.

- *Seeing the little girl's face light up only took five minutes - that's special, it does not cost anything or time consuming.*
- *As long as you know you are doing it, seeing what the young people have learned - when you see they are having a good time, that's important.*

6.45 A minority - most of whom were achieving well in formal education - appear to reject certificates or accreditation as unnecessary, involving too much paperwork, or distorting their volunteering. Young people from one project, for instance, stated strongly that they liked the 'hours' based approach of MV, and were put off by the Youth Achievement Award: 'YAA is not so good because you have to try to fit your volunteering into it - can exclude some people.' A young person at another project also commented, 'I think the MV framework works well, I'm not sure why it's changed.'

6.46 For most young people, however, recognition by others and their own sense of achievement and self-worth went alongside, and could be reinforced by, more tangible recognition through certificates or accreditation. They therefore wanted to have their volunteering recorded in some way. While some felt that volunteering was undervalued by schools, universities or employers, most appeared to believe that having their volunteering

formally recognised in some way would enhance their future prospects. Their suggestions included qualifications, certificates, having volunteering count towards credits in school, points towards UCAS and job applications, references, medals, events and awards. Some comments stressed the importance of formal recognition for those who did not have other evidence of achievement, and several young people indicated that they were in this position:

- *I haven't got any certificates except what I've gained here. They will help me get into college or get jobs.*
- *If you take one look at my CV you probably think this guy is a complete loser, but with the accreditation it helps.*
- *I'm not doing well at school, so getting awards will help me get jobs or get into college.*

6.47 Other comments included:

- *We have a folder showing the number of hours we do. Then we get a certificate - can use it for our CV. It's good to have an achievement at the end - able to show we don't just sit around doing nothing. I put it down in my application to college. It shows you have a commitment to learn.*
- *I'm proud of everything I get. It's an achievement. I like to show people. You know if you go for a job ... they are like 'oooh, look what she has done'.*
- *Shows you have done a lot of things, you are a well rounded individual.*
- *Helps to raise profile, there is an incentive to get started.*
- *For me it was important - I got my gold star for 200 hours through MV and it meant there was a noticeable achievement rather than me saying 'I volunteered'. You can also include it on your CV.*
- *I don't mind if it's not accredited but as long as there is good evidence and proof for my CV.*

N, a 21-year-old young man, has undertaken a range of volunteering activities, including a placement at a local museum, radio work, working on a reception desk and helping out at a youth club. At the museum, he helps visitors get around, gives out guide maps, helps people with the equipment and generally talks to them. 'One person needed a wheelchair, I was on hand, I stayed with her and made sure she was safe.' Through his volunteering, he has learned how to 'communicate, to talk more, get to know people more. Get more friends ... nice people.'

He has gained confidence and experience through volunteering. 'I can go somewhere instead of staying at home. I can attempt anything. When I apply for jobs I'm confident because I know what I am doing, say on the radio, I can go into a room on my own. I can show other people how to use it. I can help people. I am a whiz on [reception]. I can get a job as a receptionist. I've got a good record.'

He has received certificates and attended parties and award ceremonies for his volunteering. He feels the certificates are important because he can show them to his families and friends. 'It means I can brag to people in a suit. It means I have done really well, I am not a total failure.'

7. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

7.1 The project has identified a range of personal and social skills that young people acquire through volunteering. In particular, these focus upon increased self-confidence and self-esteem, improved communication skills, and ability to work with other people more effectively. Many young people also develop a range of practical skills related to their specific areas of volunteering.

7.2 A review of relevant literature highlighted the role of volunteering in developing these skills. This was confirmed by the fieldwork, which sought to translate broad categorisation of skills and learning into more precise descriptions of how young people applied these skills and the consequent outcomes.

7.3 A number of key issues emerged during the project. They included:

- Misunderstandings about the nature of volunteering, among both young people and those working with them, were common. Not all young people involved in the project defined themselves as volunteers, and some young people interviewed had difficulty in defining their activities as volunteering, even though they recognised that they benefited other people, because they felt that they themselves got much from these activities. While some discussions of volunteering suggest that there is too much focus on what volunteers can gain, rather than what they can give,²⁹ this project suggests that there is still work to be done to promote the fact that volunteering legitimately encompasses enjoyment and skills development as well as community benefit.
- Linked to this, it is important to recognise the range of motivations for involvement. For some, volunteering is a means to fulfil particular career or education ambitions. For others, it may represent progression from service users to ‘helpers’, while for others, it may simply represent a way of doing something enjoyable with their time. Given the problems with the image and perceptions of volunteering discussed above, many workers avoid using the term with young people - in effect supporting volunteering by stealth. In other instances, volunteering may be the culmination of a broader educational programme, for instance when young people become involved in peer education after first taking part in training about specific issues. While, in many cases, training is undertaken with the specific aim of undertaking peer education activity, in others this outcome may not have originally been anticipated, but it is important to be able to capture the full processes of skills development.
- The project highlighted the difficulty of differentiating between skills and learning gained through volunteering, and those resulting from other interventions, such as the youth work which provides the context for volunteering, from particular life changes such as becoming a parent, or from simply growing up. This difficulty is, of course, not unique to volunteering. However, the ability of some young people to make clear distinctions between the skills gained through volunteering and their experience of formal education and employment indicates that more could be done to help young people and those working with them identify the skills developed through different types of settings and activities.

²⁹ See, for instance, Mark Restall’s article on ‘Giving with a Goal’ in the *Guardian*, 2 March 2007.

- The project indicates that many young people have only limited opportunities to reflect on their learning through volunteering. Young people taking part in the research welcomed the opportunity to take time to look at the distance they had travelled through volunteering, and to draw out and be able to articulate the skills they had developed, and their attitudinal changes. The approach taken by the project was important in facilitating this, since it sought to ‘drill down’ beneath the broad categories of skills to find out the precise impact for individual young people.
- During this process of reflection, many young people revealed a sophisticated understanding of the interplay of skills and outcomes, with a particular focus on experiential learning - ‘learning through doing’. Their comments stressed the relationship between developing skills, having the confidence to use them, receiving positive feedback, and further skills development.
- While not a specific focus of this project, the research highlighted the importance of skilled staff (and peer role models) who offer support tailored to the specific needs of young people in promoting the development and articulation of skills.

7.4 The research indicated found that volunteering can affect young people’s lives at a range of levels. Some young people provided powerful evidence about how volunteering has provided an opportunity to turn their lives around. The fieldwork confirmed the findings of the literature review that volunteering can reach young people at all levels, from high achievers to those who are on the margins of society, giving them a more positive focus and the skills with which to achieve their newly identified goals.

7.5 The interviews also revealed young people’s understanding of the impact of volunteering on their lives and aspirations. Some highlighted their increased commitment to college or other studies they were currently engaged in, while others talked about improved relationships with their families or communities. Many spoke eloquently about the skills they had gained, or hoped to gain through volunteering and how these would benefit them in their future careers or further study. For some young people, volunteering had offered a means of testing various career options, or gaining experience relevant to specific career choices. For others, volunteering offered them a chance to experience a working environment. Some young people also highlighted the way volunteering developed their skills for life, for instance being assertive in different situations, adapting to change, living independently or preparing them for parenthood.

7.6 The research highlighted the importance of young people receiving recognition for their volunteering. They interpreted recognition in a range of ways, from being thanked and respected in their communities to gaining specific accreditation or qualifications. While a minority - usually those who were achieving well in formal education - did not see formal recognition as important, most young people wanted the skills they had gained through volunteering to be recorded and/or accredited in some way. They highlighted the importance of receiving certificates, and of being able to include their volunteering experiences on their CV. This was seen as particularly important for those who had not done well in formal education. However, it is also important that young people who are doing well academically understand that the skills they have gained through volunteering are valued by employers and educationalists, and are able to identify and articulate these skills.

Recommendations

1. The research findings need to be disseminated more widely, and appropriate organisations identified to take forward its recommendations.
2. Summary reports should be produced to draw out the implications of this research for specific groups, such as young people themselves; information, advice and guidance professionals; and employers.
3. Clear definitions of volunteering (based on existing definitions), which clarify how activities that young people are likely to be involved in count as volunteering, should be produced.
4. Volunteering projects should be encouraged to develop flexible programmes that are as inclusive as possible and which maximise skills development. They should use explicit mechanisms to record, review and evidence development of skills, knowledge and attitudes.
5. A toolkit should be developed for volunteering projects to help young people reflect on and articulate the skills they develop through volunteering in ways that will support more formal accreditation.
6. This research provides a solid base-line of the skills that could be included in a package of accreditation measures and programmes. It highlights the importance of recognising young people's diverse needs. Any accreditation packages need to be flexible and wide-ranging, from local certificates to awards and whole qualifications, suited to varied volunteering contexts and the distinctive requirements of different volunteers. The accreditation options should mesh in with awards and qualifications that are currently used to accredit volunteering and related activities.
7. Any accreditation measures being developed should be compatible with current awards and qualifications, and integrate with planned future provision and measures, such as the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the Specialised Diplomas. Any framework used to accredit PSD skills in volunteering should be the same as that used to develop PSD provision in the QCF and the Foundation Learning Tier.
8. The recognition and accreditation of volunteering should be built into all appropriate programmes and measures being developed by QCA and LSC.
9. Funding streams should incorporate requirements for organisations to offer young people opportunities to identify skills developed through volunteering.
10. Work should be undertaken with UCAS to encourage greater recognition of volunteering in university selection processes.
11. Volunteering organisations' good practice in fostering skills development and accreditation should be identified and shared at national, regional and local levels.
12. Consideration should be given to continue to bring together steering group members, plus other relevant bodies, to assess progress on the recognition of skills developed through volunteering.
13. Further research should be undertaken to:

- Determine the impact of economic and social contexts on the development of skills through volunteering.
- Gain greater insight into the practical skills gained as a result of volunteering; and
- Explore the role of adult practitioners (and older peer models) in supporting young people's entry into and progression through volunteering.

Appendix 1 - Definitions of volunteering circulated to the researchers

These definitions are taken from the Volunteering Compact (which incorporates the Volunteering England definition but helpfully indicates the breadth of volunteering); the UN definition used by the Russell Commission; and the Home Office Citizenship survey. As far as we can see, there are no conflicts between the different definitions - together they give a helpful picture of what does and what does not count as volunteering

Volunteering Compact Code of Good Practice - available at http://www.thecompact.org.uk/module_images/Final%20Compact%20Volunteering%20Code%2005.pdf

Understanding Volunteering

Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship and fundamental to democracy. It is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, and can take many forms. It is freely undertaken and not for financial gain. The principle of non-payment of volunteers is central to this Code and to the wider sector and society's understanding of volunteering.

We understand the term volunteering to include formal activity undertaken through public, private and voluntary organisations as well as informal community participation and campaigning. For the purpose of this Code, *volunteering is defined as an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives.* (based on Volunteering England definition, but VE consulting on broader definition of volunteering)

Principles of Volunteering

The Compact recognises four principles fundamental to volunteering. These are Choice, Diversity, Mutual Benefit and Recognition. These inform every aspect of this Code.

Choice:

Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Freedom to volunteer implies freedom not to become involved.

Diversity:

Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background, race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.

Mutual Benefit:

Volunteers offer their contribution and skills unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution. Giving time voluntarily must be recognised as establishing a reciprocal relationship in which the volunteer also benefits and feels that his or her contribution is personally fulfilling.

Recognition:

Explicit recognition that valuing the contribution of volunteers is fundamental to a fair relationship between volunteers, voluntary and community organisations and Government. This includes recognising the contribution to the organisation, the community, the social economy and wider social objectives.

Though not an exhaustive list, volunteering can include:

- Helping provide a service as a volunteer within a voluntary or community organisation, or the public sector;
- Community activism, campaigning and action to change society or identify and tackle unmet needs;
- Befriending and mentoring;
- Organising sports and physical recreation;
- Taking part in running a voluntary or community organisation as a trustee or member of a board or committee;
- Serving as a non-executive member of a public body or participating in civic governance, for instance serving as a school governor or a community representative;
- Leading a voluntary initiative, usually as part of a voluntary organisation or community group, to improve the quality of life for people in a neighbourhood or community of interest;
- Group activity, within a neighbourhood or community of interest, providing a community service, or campaigning for a public cause;
- Helping develop public policy through involvement in consultation processes and campaigning;
- Volunteering overseas;
- Helping raise funds for an organisation.

UN definition - adopted by Russell Commission

United Nations definition of volunteering

“There are three key defining characteristics of volunteering. First the activity should not be undertaken primarily for financial reward, although the reimbursement of expenses and some token payment may be allowed. Second, the activity should be undertaken voluntarily, according to an individual’s own free-will, although there are grey areas here too, such as school community service schemes which encourage, and sometimes require, students to get involved in voluntary work and Food for Work programmes, where there is an explicit exchange between community involvement and food assistance. Third, the activity should be of benefit to someone other than the volunteer, or to society at large, although it is recognised that volunteering brings significant benefit to the volunteer as well.

“Within this broad conceptual framework it is possible to identify at least four different types of volunteer activity: mutual aid or self-help; philanthropy or service to others; participation or civic engagement; and advocacy or campaigning. Each of these types occurs in all parts of the world.”

United Nations Volunteers Report, prepared for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Social Development, Geneva, June 2004

Home Office Citizenship Survey 2005 - definitions used

Formal Volunteering: Giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations to benefit other people or the environment.

Informal volunteering: Giving unpaid help as an individual to people who are not relatives.

Appendix 2 - Projects visited and their main volunteering activities

Ab Phab, Romford: organisation supports the integration of disabled and non-disabled young people.

African Youth League, Dagenham (Essex): involves young people in practical aspects of running the organisation.

Cedar Project, Wolverhampton: runs a range of community-based projects encouraging young people to develop themselves and widen their participation in communities, including arts and drama, youth led and international projects. Members are involved in an active youth council.

Create, Reading: MV project delivering arts-based activities to children.

Darlington YMCA: supports young people in a range of different volunteering activities, including mentoring, volunteering in hospital, youth centre and young carers group, gardening and helping older people.

DISC, Durham: young volunteers involved in a range of volunteering including peer mentoring, supporting young people with learning disabilities, student volunteering, office work and international volunteering.

e2e Construction, Stratford upon Avon: project offers training in construction and office skills.

Family Educational Development Trust, Exeter: MV project providing peer support to young mothers.

Havering Police Cadets: members have a weekly training session and undertake a range of volunteering activities related to community safety and crime prevention, plus working with severely disabled children.

Hertfordshire MV: supports young people in wide range of volunteering, including artwork, work with children, admin, youth work, gardening and working in a charity shop.

Ivy Project, Exeter: project supports young people aged 12-25 to develop themselves and their communities through volunteering. It offers a range of opportunities through

Kesteven and Grantham Girls School: young women are involved in a range of volunteering including mentoring, a range of school activities, fundraising, a swimming club for disabled children and conservation.

Lambton Street Fellowship Centre, Sunderland: large voluntary organisation delivering sport and health-focused activities. It offers opportunities for volunteers to help teach sport and run the centre.

Lincolnshire MV: young people's volunteering activities included work with children, arts and crafts, school council, mentoring and sports leadership.

Manchester Youth Volunteering Project: supports youth volunteering across the city. Specific activities reported by young people included campaigning, organising events, an online forum, sports coaching, helping run MYVP and care work.

Rathbone, Leicester: MV project offering a range of community based volunteering opportunities, particularly to local students. Volunteers' activities including organising performing arts workshops and activities, fundraising, committee work and supporting other young people into employment and training.

Romford Drum and Trumpet Band: run by local volunteers, the band provides opportunities for young people to learn instrument and marching skills and perform in public at a range of events.

Solent Youth Action, Hampshire: youth action project, volunteers all part of its communications group to raise the organisation's profile. Activities they were involved in included an arts club for young people, one-off 'task force' days, full-time volunteering within SYA, youth work and mentoring.

Somerset Youth Volunteering Project: Youth action agency, supporting a range of volunteering, including peer mentoring, issue-based drama and environmental work.

Square Wheel Project, Romford: began as a youth forum and has developed into a lobbying group. Projects include photography, substance misuse and successful lobbying for new premises.

Voluntary Organisations Development Agency (VODA), Tyneside: MV project includes targeted work with a range of disabilities. Volunteering activities include volunteering at charity shops, working with refugees and asylum-seekers, running a community radio and various one-off events.

Volunteering Bradford: promotes a range of volunteering activities. Young people had been involved in playschemes, community environmental projects, Connexions management board, grant-making through YouthBank, hospice volunteering and research with Bradford council.

VOXinc, Oxford: MV project providing opportunities for young people with learning disabilities to volunteer. Project members are involved in its management committee, work with the elderly, work with animals, producing newsletters and fundraising.

WAC Performing Arts and Media College - Cross-workers, London: arts centre with strong history of volunteering, especially supporting younger students and students with special needs. Volunteers' experience also includes sports coaching, and volunteering at a local playcentre.

WAC Performing Arts and Media College – T Time Club, London: young volunteers offering support to younger children 'with problems' attending other WAC provision.

Weston Spirit: personal development programme (operating in various locations around the country) including a peer mentoring in schools initiative.

Young Movers: training programme set up by the national community resources centre at Trafford Hall, Chester, which offers residential training to young people from deprived areas across the UK. Following the training, young people set up community projects in their own areas.

Young Suffolk: works with CSV and student community action to deliver a range of volunteering opportunities including peer education and mentoring, creative arts, police training, college council, Youth Opportunity Fund, work with young skaters, circus and music projects.

Youth Action Blackburn: youth action project undertaking a broad range of activities. Volunteers' experiences including group project with young people in Northern Ireland, South Asian war veterans project, drug awareness, cleaning the Mosque and environmental projects.

Youth A.I.D. - Lewisham, London: provides a range of social and personal development opportunities, with a strong emphasis on accredited courses. Volunteering experiences include sports coaching, summer playschemes, coaching on motor project, First Aid and preparation for Camp America.

Appendix 3 - Volunteering and Skills Project Steering Group Members

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Stuart Gardner | Learning and Skills Council |
| Chris Hutchings | DfES (Chair) |
| Tracey Herald | v |
| Emma Sparrow | v |
| Dylan White | QCA |
| Joanne Williams | v20 |

NYA Staff in Attendance:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Merlyne Francique | Development Officer (Youth Action) |
| Pete Loewenstein | Senior Development Officer, Achievement & Justice |
| Maureen O'Callaghan | Consultant |
| Carolyn Oldfield | Deputy Head of Information and Research |
| Dave Phillips | Senior Development Officer (Youth Action) |
| Emma Shuttlewood | Administrator, Development Programmes |

Appendix 4 - Personal and Social Development Skills framework

| Skills | Times mentioned | Comments |
|---|-----------------|----------|
| Intrapersonal/personal skills | | |
| Planning Looking longer-term | | |
| Taking responsibility <input type="checkbox"/> Using own initiative <input type="checkbox"/> Commitment <input type="checkbox"/> Acting responsibly <input type="checkbox"/> Completing tasks | | |
| Improving own learning and performance - e.g. <input type="checkbox"/> Identifying and setting targets <input type="checkbox"/> Review progress and achievement | | |
| Communication skills - e.g. <input type="checkbox"/> Taking part in a group discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Making phone calls <input type="checkbox"/> Writing different kinds of documents (reports, minutes, press releases etc) <input type="checkbox"/> Making presentations | | |
| Problem solving - e.g. <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding the problem <input type="checkbox"/> Finding out relevant info <input type="checkbox"/> Exploring different ways of tackling problems <input type="checkbox"/> Analytical skills | | |
| Self-awareness - e.g. <input type="checkbox"/> Identifying feelings <input type="checkbox"/> Knowing own strengths and weaknesses | | |
| Self-management - e.g. <input type="checkbox"/> Time management <input type="checkbox"/> Managing risk behaviour <input type="checkbox"/> Self-discipline <input type="checkbox"/> Stress management <input type="checkbox"/> Resourcefulness <input type="checkbox"/> Anger management <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptability <input type="checkbox"/> Patience | | |
| Self-confidence/self-esteem e.g. <input type="checkbox"/> Belief in abilities <input type="checkbox"/> Assertiveness <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling good about self <input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiasm <input type="checkbox"/> Motivation | | |
| Making decisions - e.g. <input type="checkbox"/> Being fair <input type="checkbox"/> Acting on decisions | | |
| Interpersonal/social skills | | |
| Active listening skills - e.g. <input type="checkbox"/> listening to other viewpoints <input type="checkbox"/> reflecting back to others | | |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Working with others/teamwork - e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> identifying what you want to achieve together <input type="checkbox"/> Planning tasks with others <input type="checkbox"/> Setting ground rules and sticking to them <input type="checkbox"/> Identifying individual roles within group <input type="checkbox"/> Reviewing how you all worked together <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting peers | | |
| <p>Leadership - e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Organising projects <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and running activities <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling comfortable about leading <input type="checkbox"/> Knowing when to delegate/share <input type="checkbox"/> Motivating others | | |
| <p>Managing relationships - e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Working with different kinds of people <input type="checkbox"/> Relationships with teachers <input type="checkbox"/> Dealing with people in authority <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy <input type="checkbox"/> Networking | | |
| <p>Negotiation - e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Handling conflict <input type="checkbox"/> Willing to compromise to reach solutions <input type="checkbox"/> Giving/receiving constructive criticism <input type="checkbox"/> Dealing with peer pressure | | |
| <p>Contemporary issues (inc world of work)</p> | | |
| <p>Budgeting/financial management - e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Drawing up budgets <input type="checkbox"/> Sticking to budgets <input type="checkbox"/> Doing accounts <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising | | |
| <p>Understanding diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of different cultures <input type="checkbox"/> Awareness of discrimination <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding power relationships | | |
| <p>Understanding society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Values and beliefs <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship with wider community <input type="checkbox"/> Community action <input type="checkbox"/> Global issues <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding local services/decision-making structures <input type="checkbox"/> Altruism | | |
| <p>Rights and responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Legal, moral, social, employment etc <input type="checkbox"/> 'Respect' agenda | | |
| <p>Preparation for work - e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> CV building <input type="checkbox"/> Interview skills <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding workplace demands | | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Activity specific skills - e.g. | | |
| Creative skills (e.g. face-painting, reading music, taking photos) | | |
| Working with children | | |
| Hygiene | | |
| First Aid | | |
| Environmental | | |
| ICT | | |
| Researching local needs | | |

Appendix 5 - Interview recording forms and skills assessment questionnaire

NYA / DfES Volunteering & Skills Project

Recording Form - Group Interview

| | | | | |
|---|--------------|----------------|-----------|------------------------|
| Name of Project: | | | | |
| Location of Project: | | | | |
| Details / description of project activity: | | | | |
| Date Visited: | | | | |
| Researchers: | | | | |
| Number of young people in group: | Ages: | Gender: | | Ethnic Origins: |
| | | M: | F: | |
| Research techniques used: | | | | |
| Key Issues: | | | | |

Additional Info / Notes / Observations:

Interview Number / Code

Experiences of volunteering -/ what you do / past experiences / how you got involved



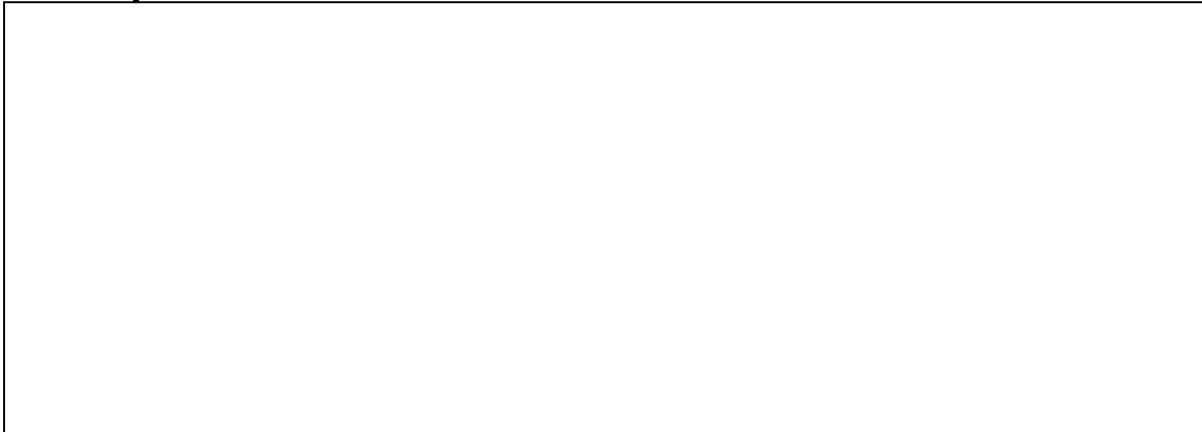
Skills - learning / what you can do now you couldn't do before



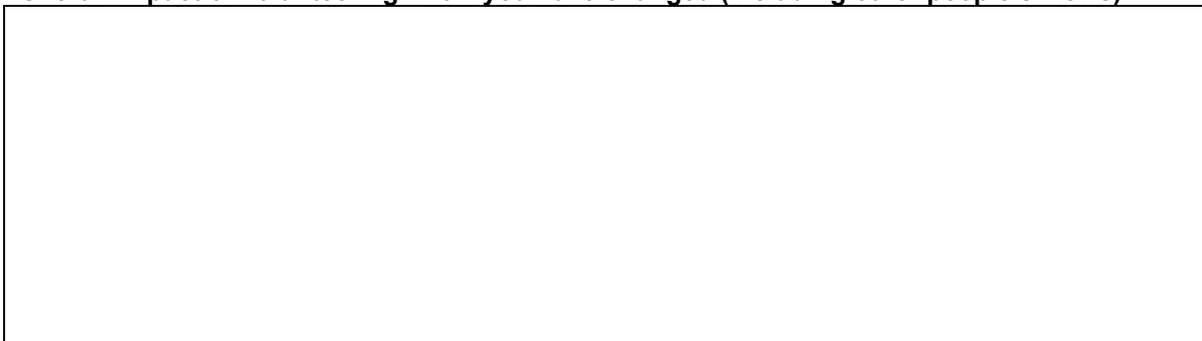
Attitudes, beliefs & values - changed you as a person / do you think differently about things



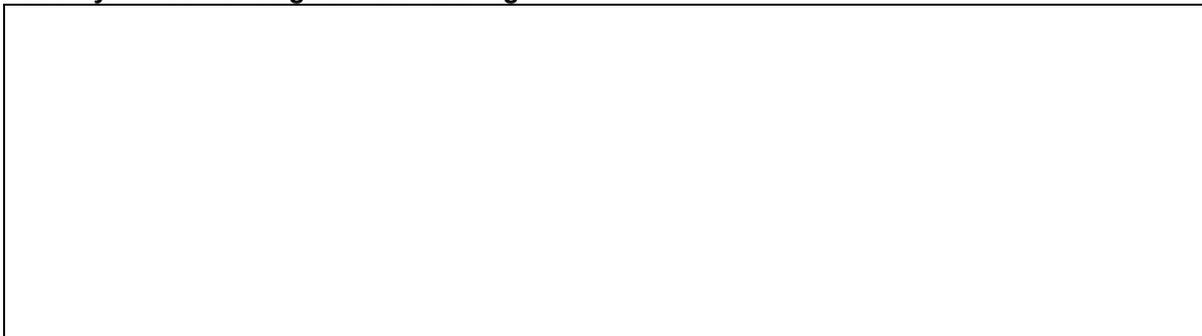
Knowledge - what you know now that you didn't before / things you think about more or differently



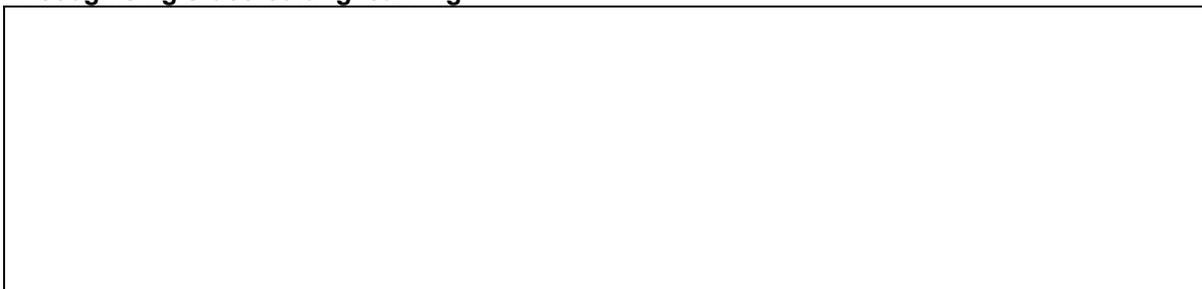
Overall impact of volunteering - how you have changed (including other people's views)



Quality - what makes good volunteering?



Recognising & accrediting learning



Applying experiences to the future - overall / skills / attitudes / knowledge

Additional Notes / Comments

**Volunteering and Skills Project
Questionnaire for Volunteers**

Name of Project:

Name of volunteer:

How long have you been volunteering?:

For each of the skills listed, please put an **S** in the box that shows the level of your skills at the start of your volunteering, and an **N** in the box that shows your skill level now. The S and N may be in the same box (where the volunteering has not made a difference) or in different boxes (where the volunteering has made a difference).

You may have specific skills to add related to the kinds of activities you have been doing, but otherwise please try to use the existing headings as far as possible. If you're not sure where a particular skill would fit, the researchers will be able to help.

Examples

| Skills | Very Low | Low | Medium | High | Very High | Comments |
|------------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Planning skills | | | S | N | | Skill level gone up |
| Taking responsibility | | SN | | | | Skill level stayed the same |
| Improving own learning | N | | S | | | Skill level gone down |

Your skills

| Personal Skills | Very Low | Low | Medium | High | Very High | Comments |
|--|-----------------|------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Planning | | | | | | |
| Taking responsibility | | | | | | |
| Improving own learning and performance | | | | | | |
| Communication | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Problem solving | | | | | | |
| Self-awareness | | | | | | |
| Self-management | | | | | | |
| Self-confidence/esteem | | | | | | |
| Making decisions | | | | | | |
| Social skills | Very Low | Low | Medium | High | Very High | Comments |
| Active listening skills | | | | | | |
| Working with others/teamwork | | | | | | |
| Leadership | | | | | | |
| Managing relationships | | | | | | |
| Negotiation | | | | | | |
| Contemporary issues/world of work | Very Low | Low | Medium | High | Very High | Comments |
| Budgeting/financial management | | | | | | |
| Understanding prejudice and discrimination | | | | | | |
| Understanding values and beliefs | | | | | | |
| Rights and responsibilities | | | | | | |
| Preparation for work | | | | | | |

| Activity specific skills | Very Low | Low | Medium | High | Very High | Comments |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Creativity | | | | | | |
| Working with children | | | | | | |
| Hygiene | | | | | | |
| First Aid | | | | | | |
| Environmental | | | | | | |
| Information technology | | | | | | |
| Research | | | | | | |

Appendix 6 -Toolkit of research methods

In addition to group discussion and individual interviews, the research used a range of different approaches to encourage young people to reflect on their learning and development, taking account of young people's varying levels of ability, confidence, and experience of volunteering. They included:

Charades: to introduce themselves by name and illustrate their volunteering activity.

Posters: depicting development of volunteering experience

Board Blast: words associated with volunteering

Agree/Disagree game: to explore definitions of volunteering.

Draw round hand exercise: on each digit write a skills they have developed through volunteering, then write on a post it note how they learnt the skills and how they have applied them.

How How How activity: focusing on how skills are developed

Flower exercise: to identify skills, knowledge and attitudes and explore forward planning.

Dot voting - to gauge young people's views on the importance of accreditation (bulls-eye on flipchart).

Traffic light exercise: to identify level of skills at the start of volunteering.

River of life: to apply volunteering experience to future plans.

Peer interviews: to find out about volunteer activity and the skills, knowledge and attitudes developed. **Time line:** to explore how these will be used.

Heart, head, bag and bin exercise: sharing (in terms of volunteering) how they feel (heart), knowledge gained (head), what skills they can take into other areas of their lives (bag) and what they want to leave behind (bin).

Diamond ranking: to prioritise personal development outcomes from volunteering.

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