

Involving young people in volunteering.

What works?



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- Ahead Partnership Limited
- City Year UK
- Envision
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About this paper

This paper provides evidence on the benefits of involving young people in volunteering. The evidence can be used by schools, colleges and providers of careers and enterprise programmes when considering supporting young people with volunteering.

The paper draws evidence from academic and 'grey' literature (such as programme evaluation reports and literature reviews) with the aim of clarifying the impacts that might be anticipated from young people volunteering. The paper highlights lessons that can be drawn from the existing evidence so that young people can be effectively supported with volunteering.



In brief



There is substantial evidence that volunteering is beneficial to young people and society.

The evidence for the benefits of volunteering to support young people with transitions to employment is 'moderate'. Volunteering is 'effective' in supporting transitions (a 3 on the Early Intervention Foundation evidence scale), as the evidence base includes evaluations that typically demonstrate positive outcomes for participants. Most of these evaluations are high quality evaluations of single programmes or from surveys, with limited evidence from studies using control groups.

The evidence suggests that volunteering can have a significant and observable impact on skill development (personal development and employability skills) as well as career readiness. The case is less clear for attainment and progression. Volunteering can be a low-cost intervention in comparison to other skill development interventions. However, effective volunteering requires careful attention to quality.

The evidence offers several important lessons for practice. It suggests that volunteering should be promoted to all young people and that they should be supported to find the right placement. Young people should be encouraged to volunteer for as long a period as possible, whilst maintaining some opportunities that young people can dip in and out of. Support should be given to the young person to make sure that they are trained for the role and that the beginning and end of the role are clearly demarcated. Support should also be given to help the young person recognise the skills and experiences they have gained and understand how these can be utilised to progress in education or employment.

Executive summary

Involving young people in volunteering can support them to develop skills and with support to create and reflect on their experiences it can support a transition into work.

Encouraging volunteering is now an established government policy and more young people are recorded as volunteering than ever before. Nationally organised campaigns such as National Citizen Service (NCS) and Step up to Serve may have contributed to this. The research reviewed here shows that volunteering develops personal effectiveness and employability skills in young volunteers, in addition to supporting organisations, services and individuals.

However, there remain some challenges to increase diversity amongst volunteers to better reflect the population. The evidence points to the importance of programme design in securing the maximum benefit for volunteers. This includes: accurate advice and guidance on implications for welfare benefits; attaching qualifications and certificates to programmes; brokerage support from different sources (schools, host organisations, volunteer centres, other public sector bodies); and signposting to start, and signposting to continue volunteering.



The evidence base identifies key elements that comprise an effective volunteering programme.

1. Attracting young people

Publicising the benefits of volunteering and outcomes from particular volunteering programmes can help potential participants make decisions about which route to choose.

2. Recruitment and brokering the volunteer placement

All young people should be supported to volunteer. Brokerage and support is useful for all young people, but is particularly important for those groups that are less likely to be involved in volunteering.

3. Resourcing and quality

To lessen the demand on resources within host organisations and maximise opportunities for individual benefits, young people should be encouraged to volunteer for as long a period as possible. Although, it is also important to offer a range of volunteering opportunities which require different levels of commitment.

4. Support and supervision

Adequate support should be provided to all parties within the volunteering programme, this could include external support for young people.

5. Closure

The beginning and end of the volunteering placement need to be clearly demarcated. For those that have volunteered, encouragement and support to continue with volunteering will ensure that the additional benefits associated with long term volunteering are gained.

6. Reflection

Young people should be encouraged to reflect on their volunteering placement – to help them identify the development they have received and also be able to communicate these new skills and experiences to employers.

1. Introduction

In the transition from education to employment, careers and enterprise activities support young people to learn about the world of work.

The Careers & Enterprise Company examined the range of activities that schools could use to support young people. At the time, this found insufficient evidence to make a claim for the effectiveness of volunteering activities.¹ The review undertaken here was designed to further scope and summarise the evidence.

Recent figures show that more young people are regularly taking part in volunteering than ever before.

Background to volunteering

Volunteering is an established part of British society and has been encouraged by successive UK Governments: from John Major's Government and the Make a Difference campaign, New Labour seeking to address social exclusion and active citizenship, through to the London Olympics and Paralympics in 2012 and David Cameron's 'Big Society'.² Each of these drives has seen the creation of a coordinating body or scheme.

For example, Millennium Volunteers was launched in 1999³; vInspire was set up in 2006 to coordinate youth volunteering and built on the successes of Millennium Volunteers; the National Citizenship Service (NCS) was created in 2011 as part of the Big Society agenda⁴; the Join in Trust (focussed on all age groups) was established in 2012 as the official Olympic legacy volunteering programme.⁵ In addition, the Asda Active Sports Leaders Programme aimed to build on the legacy of the Olympics in 2012.⁶

Recent figures show that more young people are regularly taking part in volunteering than ever before.⁷ Volunteering is widely understood to have benefits for the volunteers themselves as well as benefits to the organisations, the services delivered and individuals who are being supported through voluntary action.

1. The Careers & Enterprise Company. (2016). *What Works in Careers & Enterprise?* London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.

2. Birdwell, J., Scott, R. and Reynolds, L. (2015). *Service Nation 2020*. London: Demos.

3. Kay, T. and Bradbury, B. (2009). Youth sport volunteering: developing social capital?, *Sport, Education and Society*, 14(1), 121–140.

4. National Citizen Service. (2017). Available from <http://www.ncsyas.co.uk/> [Accessed 12th June 2016].

5. Koutrou, N., Pappous, A. and Johnson, A. (2016). Post-event volunteering legacy: did the London 2012 games induce a sustainable volunteer engagement? *Sustainability*, 8(12), 1221.

6. Stuart, J. (2015). *Breaking Down Barriers to Employment? Young People and Sports Leadership*. London: Institute for Volunteering Research.

7. Cabinet Office. (2016). *Community Life Survey 2015–16 Statistical Bulletin*. London: Cabinet Office.

2. What is 'volunteering'?



Key definitions

The key characteristic of volunteering is that it encompasses time that is freely given (non-compulsory) as unpaid work to the benefit of others.⁸ Although only recently acknowledged, it is now understood and accepted that volunteering can also be of benefit to the volunteer; developing skills or providing examples that can be included on CVs or as part of applications.⁹ This can provide volunteers with an advantage over other job seekers who have not participated in such opportunities.¹⁰

Voluntary activities, according to *Taking Part* (a national survey of engagement with cultural sectors) include such things as organising or taking part in events; helping to run groups; campaigning; raising money; mentoring or supporting others; conservation; and, practical help.¹¹

There are similar terms such as 'social action' and 'service learning' however these indicate a different aspect of volunteering.

Social action is about taking action to change a current situation (locally or globally) and can include volunteering.

Much of the evidence presented here refers to social action volunteering, as the bulk of recent research is based on this definition.

Service learning or student volunteering, as organised by an education establishment (extra-curricular) or as part of a course (co-curricular), is becoming increasingly commonplace. However, as noted in the literature,¹² the line between volunteering and service learning is becoming increasingly blurred where volunteering becomes co-curricular and therefore a compulsory part of an education module. A further concern about embedding volunteering in this way is that the volunteer loses one of the benefits of volunteering, namely that it no longer gives the individual a relative advantage in the eyes of recruiters, if all students are undertaking this type of activity.¹³ Extra-curricular volunteering is supported by the education institution, which may broker access to the volunteering opportunity, but it remains optional for the student.

8. Hill, M., Russell, J. and Brewis, G. (2009). *Young People, Volunteering And Youth Projects: A Rapid Review Of Recent Evidence*. London: V.

9. Gaskin, K. (2004). *Young People Volunteering and Civic Service. A Review of Literature. A report for the Institute for Volunteering Research*. London: Institute for Volunteering Research.

10. V-Informed. (2008). *Youth Volunteering: Attitudes and Perceptions*. London: V.

11. Department for Culture, Media and Sport. (2016). *Taking Part 2015/16 Quarter 4, Statistical Release, July 2016*. London: DCMS.

12. Brewis, G., Russell, J. and Holdsworth, C. (2010). *Bursting the Bubble: Students Volunteering and the Community*. London: Institute for Volunteering Research.

13. Holdsworth, C. and Brewis, G. (2014). Volunteering, choice and control: a case study of higher education student volunteering. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 17(2), 204–219.

Different types of volunteering

The *youth social action lifecycle*², identifies a range of social action and volunteering activities at different stages in young people's lives and with different degrees of formality that could lead to different employment outcomes. For example: after compulsory education, NCS could lead to sustained part-time volunteering during further or higher education; participation in uniformed groups (Scouts or Fire Cadets for example) could lead to full-time volunteering (such as a gap year) and may be more likely to lead to public sector jobs. Volunteering activity can therefore be categorised as:

- **Formal:** Full-time volunteering, for and with an organisation. Brokerage helps those that have less confidence to approach organisations on their own. This includes civic service, an organised period of substantial engagement recognised by society, for example Prince's Trust Volunteers or gap-year volunteering supported by Voluntary Service Overseas⁹;
- **Semi-formal:** Sustained or episodic part-time volunteering. This can include service learning which may be part of a module/course (co-curricular), with qualifications or credits attached. It can include an organised activity for local community or group such as a sports programme and co-curricular

volunteering often includes an element of reflection by the volunteer on the impact of the activity; and

- **Informal:** One-off volunteering, for example supporting neighbours (not relatives) in the local community. This includes advocacy, digital and campaigning activities. It also includes micro-volunteering – participating for small increments of time, particularly through the use of technology. Digital communications can act as an enabler to increase the number and diversity of volunteers.^{8,9}

Current policy and practice

Policy

Successive UK Governments have promoted volunteering as a way to learn new skills and become more employable. For example, during the recession in 2008-09 the Government encouraged unemployed people to use volunteering as a tool to develop skills and move back into work.¹⁴ The most recent government policy push for youth volunteering has been the Step up to Serve #iwill campaign.¹⁵ Whilst primarily focused on youth social action, this does include the wider definition of volunteering.²

The NCS¹⁶ adds to the range of activities that young people can become involved with and, as a government programme, its evaluations add to the evidence on the benefits of youth volunteering.

14. Dean, J. (2014). How structural factors promote instrumental motivations within youth volunteering: a qualitative analysis of volunteer brokerage. *Voluntary Sector Review*, 5(2), 231-47.

15. #iwill. (2017). Available from <http://www.iwill.org.uk/> [Accessed 12th June 2017].

16. National Citizen Service. (2017). Available from <http://www.ncsyes.co.uk/> [Accessed 12th June 2016].

To increase the number of voluntary placements available for young people in areas of high deprivation, the Supporting Inclusion Programme was launched by the Department of Communities and Local Government in 2013. The programme created almost 12,000 new places for young people and established over 600 volunteering support groups. The Social Action Journey Fund also aimed to create opportunities for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and to promote the NCS.¹⁷

Practice

A number of surveys attempt to capture current volunteering rates and activities as well as frequency and duration of voluntary work together with demographic information about the volunteers themselves.

Figures show that participation rates for young people vary depending on the definition used. The 2016 wave of the National Youth Social Action Survey showed that 42 per cent of 10-20 year olds in the UK took part in meaningful¹⁸ social action in 2015-2016.¹⁹ The Community Life Survey (CLS) conducted in 2015/16 reports higher participation rates, but used a measure that focused on volunteered (informal and formal) activity at least once in the last 12 months. This reports that 70 per cent of adults (16+) had participated in some form of volunteering and, by age, young people aged 16-24 had the highest participation rate (81 per cent).⁷

The *Taking Part* survey (2015/16) of engagement and non-engagement in culture, leisure and sport showed that 24.4 per cent of all adults reported that they had taken part in voluntary activities²⁰ in these areas in the last 12 months. Within this figure, 28.9 per cent of young people aged 16-24 volunteered, second only to adults aged 65-74 (29.3 per cent).¹¹ Sport has long been the most popular single area for volunteer activity.^{3,9,11}

Participation rates in volunteering programmes and social action vary by key demographic characteristics and depend on the type of activity undertaken. The most recent National Youth Social Action Survey (2016)¹⁹ found that participants in meaningful social action over the previous 12 months were:

- More likely to be girls than boys;
- More likely to be white than from a BME background;
- More likely to be from affluent social backgrounds.

However, the rate of young people participating from less affluent backgrounds has increased recently from 31 per cent the survey in 2014, to 40 per cent, and there is now only a 9 percentage point difference between participation rates. The survey also found that there has been an increase since 2014 in the rates of young people participating from rural areas.

17. Youth United. (2017). The journey fund. Available from <http://www.youthunited.org.uk/programmes/the-journey-fund> [Accessed 12th June 2017].

18. The definition of 'meaningful' is given as social action that both the young person and others have derived some benefit from and have participated in social action at least every few months over the past 12 months, or taken part in a one-off activity lasting more than a day.

19. Pye, J. and Michelmore, O. (2016). *National Youth Social Action Survey 2016*. London: Ipsos Mori.

20. Defined as offering time for free, to organise or help to run an event, campaign, raise money, provide transport, take part in a sponsored event, conservation activity, coaching, tuition or mentoring for no expense.

Despite this, Sport England's *Active Lives 2015* survey also identified lower participation rates for young people from less affluent backgrounds and also amongst young people with a limiting illness or disability.

The National Youth Social Action Survey found that 69 per cent of 10–20 year olds got involved with volunteering through their school, college or university.¹⁹

In contrast to these surveys, an evaluation of the NCS (2017) shows that participants come from diverse backgrounds and that this service has a higher proportion of people from disadvantaged backgrounds than the general population.⁴ Nonetheless, this evaluation also finds that females are overrepresented.

Brokerage

Brokerage organisations and systems help set up volunteering opportunities for young people. The research shows that to date, schools and colleges have been key to taking part. The National Youth Social Action Survey found that 69 per cent of 10–20 year olds got involved with volunteering through their school, college or university.¹⁹

Whether the school acts as a broker depends on school-type, with grammar schools more likely to support young people with volunteering activities than comprehensives.²¹

School is not so much a recruitment route for the less affluent. For young people from less affluent backgrounds engagement into volunteering tends to be more gradual and progressive through their immediate environment, such as community sports programmes.²² Trust, between young people and adults, is very important to successful recruitment into voluntary activities.²² Many of these young people may be disaffected from school having found it stressful and alienating³.

Other routes to volunteering include word-of-mouth, family and friends or other informal support. A volunteering opportunity may develop from existing engagement with an organisation – for example a sport programme. Again, the brokerage is characterised as supportive where it is built on trusting relationships.²²

The internet is a growing route into volunteering.⁹ There are specific brokerage sites for young people such as vInspired that allow young people to search and apply for opportunities and others available to all including young people (do-it.org and team London for example). The National Youth Social Action Survey found that 41 per cent of young people who had participated in social action in the past year had used the internet to assist with their social action in some way. This included sharing their experiences, searching for activities, tracking progress or even participating in the social action.¹⁹

21. Dean, J. (2016). Recruiting young volunteers in an area of selective education: a qualitative case study, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37(4), 643–661.

22. Bradford, S., Hills, L. and Johnston, C. (2016). Unintended volunteers: the volunteering pathways of working class young people in community sport. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 8(2), 231–244.

Case studies

vtalent year

The vtalent year programme provided long-term, structured full-time volunteering placements (up to a year, 30 hours per week) to young people who also study for a qualification such as an NVQ Level 2 or 3. The programme targeted young people, aged 16 to 24, who have not been in education, employment or training for four months or more, and who do not possess Level 2 qualifications. The participants were entitled to claim a means-tested allowance equivalent to the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and expenses associated with volunteering in order to support their participation.

National Citizen Service

National Citizen Service (NCS) is open to all 16 and 17-year-olds in England. It is run three times a year (spring, summer and autumn). There are three broad aims for the programme: to make society more cohesive; more responsible; and more engaged. It is delivered locally by charities, social enterprises, and other organisations. Volunteering is one aspect of the programme, others include bound activities and skills development and community awareness activities.

Asda Active Sports Leaders Programme

A three-year initiative aimed at school-aged children. This programme of practical courses and volunteering hours helps participants to support and lead others in physical/sports activities. The initiative promotes sports leadership as a stepping stone to employment.

Active Citizens in School

Active Citizens in Schools was a three-year pilot launched by the Department for Education that sought to engage 11–15 year olds in sustained volunteering activities through their schools. The programme was based on the successes of Millennium Volunteers and the principles of: personal commitment; community benefit; voluntary commitment; inclusiveness; ownership by young people; variety of opportunities; partnership; quality of opportunities; recognition; and progression.

HeadStart

History

HeadStart is a volunteering programme delivered by The Challenge, a charity that also runs the National Citizen Service. It is currently offered in London, Birmingham, and Manchester but started in London and was launched as a partnership with Team London – The London authority's volunteering arm. Team London was created to provide volunteers for the London 2012 Olympics and continues to organise the volunteering efforts of the capital. The HeadStart programme was launched in 2013.

Since its launch HeadStart has worked with 5,300 young people delivering over 100,000 hours of volunteering. The programme has won multiple awards.

Programme set up

HeadStart allows young people, particularly graduates of the National Citizen Service (which finishes at age 17) to continue volunteering in their local community. Young people can continue to volunteer where they are already doing so, find a new opportunity, or source opportunities through the HeadStart programme. The programme targets underrepresented groups. 59% of participants were from Black and Ethnic Minority groups in 2015/16 and 23% were in receipt of free school meals. The HeadStart programme is supported by 8 business partners: Bloomberg, Deloitte, Lendlease,

Mitchells & Butlers, Nandos, New Look, Starbucks and Zendesk. Young people who volunteer for 16 or more hours are then guaranteed a job interview with one of the supporting employers. In addition to volunteering young people are also supported through workshops, designed to enhance

Since its launch HeadStart has worked with 5300 young people delivering over 100,000 hours of volunteering.

their interpersonal and employability skills. The partnering businesses give their support to all aspects of the programme to make it a success, from co-creating and delivering workshops and interview days to providing funding and offering successful candidates paid employment.

Impacts

Over 200 local charities and community groups have benefitted from the time and energy of young volunteers. There are three main impacts for young people involved in the programme which have been evidenced by impact assessments. These include:

- Young people have greater trust, understanding and appreciation of each other's differences, resulting in a more integrated society.

- Young people have the character and skills to succeed in life and work.
- Young people have stronger networks and a better understanding of the world of work.

In London, the programme focuses on employability and bridging the worlds of education and work. Many of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) by which success is judged are employability related including:

- Number of young people who are assessed as job ready by employers
- Number of young people who secure part-time or seasonal employment
- Percentage of young people in education, training or employment 12 months after the programme.

The employability focus in London meets many of the Mayor's strategic priorities including:

- Increasing levels of social mobility, social cohesion and community engagement
- Investing in young Londoners
- Improving Londoner's quality of life
- Improving social integration in London.

Positive impacts are also reported by business partners for example; HeadStart London graduates are proving to be four times more successful at Starbucks interviews than other candidates, and New Look is reporting a higher retention rate of HeadStart London graduates than other candidates.

3. What impact does volunteering have?



The evidence base for volunteering is moderate. There are lots of studies that have looked at volunteering and shown a positive impact, but only a few where some kind of control group has been used. Few volunteer programmes will be designed to have employment outcomes, nevertheless the skill development that is a central part of most volunteer programmes can support this outcome. There is limited evidence of causation between volunteering and employability outcomes. In addition, much of the evidence of impact is self-reported.

Career relevant impacts and outcomes

An important aspect of research in this field is measuring the impact of volunteering on volunteers themselves. Volunteering has the potential to enhance skills and attributes: personal development, key skills, work experience and employability. There is a good evidence base supporting the role of volunteering as an activity which develops skills in volunteers, with those who volunteer the most hours or volunteer in diverse contexts gaining the most.³ One survey found that almost 95 per cent of young people (aged 10–20) who had participated in social action reported that it had benefitted them in some way.¹⁹

Personal effectiveness

The weight of evidence suggests that volunteering benefits personal effectiveness through increasing self-esteem, confidence, motivation, self-efficacy and resilience.^{2 3}

^{6 23 24 25 26} This includes evidence from high quality evaluations with robust methodologies. These capabilities are among those identified by UK employers as essential capabilities that young people are expected to demonstrate to get and keep a job.²⁷

The evaluation of a sport leadership programme found that the young volunteers reported that they had increased in: confidence; in their self-esteem; and in their preference to try new things.^{6 23}

An evaluation of one of the Millennium Volunteers programmes, the Youth Sport Trust, found an increase in confidence and in a sense of personal achievement.⁹

Research with young people who had taken part in the vtalent volunteering programme showed that young people believed they had gained in confidence as a result of their participation.²⁸

23. Stuart, J. (2016). *Volunteering and Social Action Among Teenagers*. London: Institute for Volunteering Research.

24. Woodier, D. (2011). Building resilience in looked after young people: a moral values approach, *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 39(3), 259–282.

25. Donahue, K. and Russell, J. (2009). *PROVIDE Volunteer Impact Assessment. Final Report*. London: Institute for Volunteering Research.

26. Kirkam, E., Sanders, M., Emanuel, N. and Larkin, C. (2015). *Evaluating Youth Social Action. Does Participating in Social Action Boost the Skills Young People Need to Succeed in Adult Life?* London: The Behavioural Insights Team, Cabinet Office.

27. Impetus. (2014). *Ready for Work. The Capabilities Young People Need To Find And Keep Work – And The Programmes Proven To Help Develop These*. London: Impetus.

28. Newton, B., Oakley, J., Pollard, E. (2011). *Volunteering: Supporting Transitions*. London: V.

Career readiness

Evidence was also found in the research for increased career readiness resulting from volunteering. The evidence here was less strong than for personal effectiveness, but it did show a positive impact for participants in the evaluations.

Career readiness encompasses skills centring on career decision making, understanding of the labour market and navigating the different routes into work. The evaluation of the Active Citizens in School pilot in 2005 found that over half of the survey participants felt that their involvement in the programme had helped them decide what career they might like to follow in the future and understand how they might work towards that career.²⁹

Research looking at the vtalent year programme concluded that young people who had taken part, even where they felt that they already possessed confidence and skills such as communication, learned how to be explicit about these skills and demonstrate them effectively on job application forms.²⁸ vtalent participation clarified expectations about work environments by offering a first step into the world of work through the voluntary placement.³⁰ This volunteering programme was also reported to be more useful than a comparator employment programme (Future Jobs Fund) as the young volunteers were able to exert control over their activities and therefore tailor the experience to what they felt they needed in order to progress.

The voluntary setting offered a supported environment whereas in employment there would be greater expectations of performance and less capacity to take account of, or respond, to young people's needs (p.42).²⁸

Additionally, youth social action programmes can motivate young people to consider careers in industries that they may not have otherwise investigated. This effect was strongest for young people who take part in full-time 'service year' programmes (such as City Year UK) that last for longer periods of time than short-term voluntary placements.²

Employability skills

Volunteering can increase employability skills.^{2 9 12 31} Employability skills include leadership teamwork and time management skills. Research from the government Behavioural Insights Team²⁶ found that participants in social action programmes gained social and employability skills as a result of their involvement. The evidence for the increase in employability skills is comparable to career readiness impacts: several different programme evaluations show clear evidence for an increase in employability skills.

One of the explicit aims of the NCS programme is to develop 'teamwork, leadership and communication skills'.⁴ The evaluation of 2015 NCS programmes, found *all NCS 2015 programmes showed positive impacts on the proportion of participants agreeing that they have the skills and experience to get a job in the future (p.28).*³²

29. Ellis, A. (2005). *Active Citizens in School: Evaluation of the DfES Pilot Programme*. London: Institute for Volunteering Research.

30. Grist, M. and Cheetham, P. (2011). *Experience Required. A Demos And V Report On Capability Building And Work-Readiness*. London: Demos.

31. Souto-Otero, M. and Shields, R. (2016). The investment model of volunteering in the eu-27 countries: volunteering, skills development and employability. A multi-level analysis. *European Societies*, 18(5) 487–513.

32. Cameron, D., Stannard, J., Leckey, C., Hale, C. and Di Antonio, E. (2017). *National Citizen Service 2015 Evaluation*. London: Ipsos Mori.

Leadership skills are the most prominent skill developed across the sports programmes included in this review. An evaluation of the Step into Sport volunteering programme found that improvements in leadership skills were the most widely reported impact (by 88 per cent of research participants).³ An evaluation of young volunteers with London Olympics legacy sports programmes found that volunteering provided opportunities for developing skills and confidence associated with leadership.²² Other research into sports volunteering found that almost all young volunteers reported that they had gained skills in leading others (99 per cent) and communicating with others (99 per cent). Additionally, other employability skills such as motivating others, team working, self-management and problem solving were reported by more than 90 per cent of participants.^{6 33}

Team working skills are commonly developed in volunteering programmes and found in the research. Team working was the primary benefit reported by Active Citizens in Schools participants (73 per cent).²⁹ Team working was a benefit also reported by vtalent year participants.³⁰ Looking toward older students, an evaluation of a volunteering programme at a university and found that volunteering directly developed employability skills such as communication skills, teamwork and social skills.²⁵

Social capital

Social capital concepts include the development of networks and shared social norms. This intersects with the discussion around the active citizenship agenda and as such the youth social action and volunteering discourse.^{3 34} The evidence for the development of social capital is less well developed, there are some high quality single programme studies that show an impact.

Participants in youth social action scored higher in measures of social capital, than young people who had not participated.¹⁹ Participation in social action was associated with higher levels of life satisfaction, although causal relationships between these associations were not established.

Although many young volunteers at university thought that their voluntary work could enhance their employability (83 per cent), fewer thought that it was useful for making contacts although this was still reported by just over half of the volunteers (51 per cent).¹²

Youth social action programmes can help young people to expand their networks.² Young people taking part in vtalent year developed their networks and indeed, this was an expectation of what they would get out of the programme for around half the volunteers before they started.²⁸ Another programme delivered by vInspired, team v, also demonstrated the development of social capital by the volunteers. This contributed to the delivery of their project and also supported their own personal development.³⁵

33. Stuart, J. and Grotz, J. (2015). *The Impact of Sports Leaders UK Awards and Qualifications*. London: Institute for Volunteering Research.

34. Jochum, V., Pratten, B., and Wilding, K. (2005). *Civil Renewal And Active Citizenship: A Guide To The Debate*. London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

35. Diamond, A., Neat, S., Lee, R., Boeck, T. (2012). *Evaluation of the Team v Programme*. Leicester: CFE.

Even those who decided not to pursue a career related to their volunteering had been able to use their new network of contacts to seek advice or routes into alternative careers. The volunteering also enabled them to work with more diverse peer groups and increase their ability to work within and across authority structures.

Educational outcomes

The evidence shows that volunteering is potentially effective at impacting on educational outcomes. Some research has found a positive correlation between volunteering or social action and educational attainment, in the main due to better motivation and attitudes towards school and learning:

Better emotional, behavioural and social wellbeing was associated with higher levels of educational engagement and academic achievement (p.36).²

Staff involved in a sports volunteering programme reported improvements in behaviour and discipline and that this often lead to a general improvement in interaction and communication amongst pupils, and between pupils and teachers. In addition, a noticeable sense of citizenship produced a 'more positive contribution to school-life and extra-curricular activities' (p.133).³

Ofsted's study into volunteering projects in schools and colleges found that where programmes are well-managed they have the potential to enhance young people's learning experience.³⁶

Career outcomes

In addition to helping develop skills employers want, there was some evidence in the research that volunteering can also lead to beneficial job outcomes such as employment or higher wages.² As with the evidence for educational outcomes, the evidence here is that volunteering is potentially effective in creating or enhancing career outcomes, but there is limited evidence of a causal relationship.

Research into (higher education) student volunteering found that just over half of recent graduates under 30 years old and in paid work, said that volunteering had helped them to secure employment.¹² A small-scale piece of research found that a sport leadership volunteering programme led to paid work for some participants:

It made me more confident about leading a group, so I was later able to sign up to the Duke of Edinburgh's award and volunteering. I worked at my local play centre. It was brilliant so I kept volunteering afterwards and it actually led me to a paid play-worker job for the summer (p.3).²³

Some of the research points to employers favouring volunteers due to the skills that employers believe volunteers have developed from their volunteering activities.³¹ Research from v¹⁰, found that employers prefer volunteers over non-volunteers, and more so if the voluntary activity relates directly to the position being applied for. Other research found that job applicants with low academic qualifications but high degrees of participation in work experience and extracurricular activities such as volunteering, were regarded by employers as being highly employable.³⁷

36. Ofsted. (2011). *Choosing To Volunteer*. London: Ofsted.

37. Cole MS, Rubin, RS, Field, HS and Giles, WF (2007) in Souto-Otero, M. and Shields, R. (2016). The investment model of volunteering in the EU-27 countries: volunteering, skills development and employability. *A multi-level analysis. European Societies*, 18(5) 487-513.

For some occupations such as medicine and sectors such as conservation and the environment, some work experience prior to entry into paid jobs is necessary. In these cases, voluntary work has been reported to be almost essential to transition into work.⁹

The case for volunteering to contribute to higher earnings for the participant is in the main, inferred within the research, on the basis of the increased likelihood of having acquired the skills that employers are looking for. However, some international research has found evidence of a wage premium for university students who volunteer.³⁸ More specifically, research on the AmeriCorps 'service year' programme shows that social action can lead to higher wages and increased job satisfaction for participants compared to non-participants.²

Impacts for others

In addition to the career relevant impacts for individuals, the research also highlights impacts for the stakeholders involved in volunteering programmes. The evidence here is at a formative stage and is not well-developed with no large-scale comparative studies focussing on these specific topics. Reviewing the evidence on impacts for others was not the main aim of this paper and so just some of the evidence is presented here.

Education settings

Case-study research demonstrated that young volunteers had improved behaviour at school which in turn led to them, and other students, being more able to learn.²⁴ This was also a benefit identified by the Active Citizens in Schools evaluation.²⁹

Furthermore, the Active Citizens in Schools research reported that volunteering helped to develop links between schools and the community. This finding was echoed in research looking at higher education student volunteering.¹²

Host Organisation

A study of the impact of the Millennium Volunteers programme found that the host organisation benefits from the presence of the volunteers as they increase the capacity of the services. This in turn, improves the quality of life for service users and enables greater peer support and social contact.⁹ In a healthcare volunteering programme, young volunteers were praised for providing 'an additional element of humanity'.²

These findings are also applicable to the volunteering undertaken by higher education students. Benefits for the host organisation include: broadening the pool and diversity of their team, enthusiasm, creativity and dynamism, ability to bring fresh ideas and new perspectives, increasing capacity.^{3 12 28}

38. Hackl, Halla, and Pruckner (2007) and (Day & Devlin, 1998) in Handy, F., Cnaan, R.A., Hustinx, L., Kang, C., Brudney, J.L., Haski-Leventhal, D., Holmes, K., Meijs, L.C., Pessi, A.B., Ranade, B. and Yamauchi, N., (2010). A cross-cultural examination of student volunteering: Is it all about résumé building? *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 39(3), 498–523.

Community/Society

In addition to the benefits to the host organisation and to schools/colleges/universities, there is impact on the immediate beneficiaries (local level) and wider society. Volunteering in general (not just targeting young people) has been presented as a way of improving community cohesion.²⁸

Beneficiaries who spoke to young participants were more likely than those who did not to report the social action was very worthwhile.⁴⁰

Beneficiaries are described as individuals that the activities aimed to benefit, such as residents at an old age home visited by volunteers, members of the community who witnessed volunteers collecting litter and staff working at a homeless shelter. An evaluation of the Uniformed Youth Social Action Fund³⁹ found that the volunteering activities that were undertaken helped the beneficiaries to meet new people, it improved beneficiaries' views of young people and helped the beneficiaries to feel more engaged with their communities.⁴⁰ Beneficiaries who spoke to young participants were more likely than those who did not to report the social action was very worthwhile. Moreover,

the more participants beneficiaries spoke to, the greater impact the activity had. Beneficiaries who were relatively engaged with their communities were more likely than others to report that youth social action had affected their opinions and increased their own likelihood to volunteer.

Youth Social Action can produce clear, quantifiable benefits for the communities in which it is delivered beyond those experienced by the young people themselves (p.6).³⁷

Estimating net (fiscal) benefits of volunteering

Calculating a return on investment, or cost-benefit analysis, is something that more recent research studies have presented and shows positive results, although with varying rates of return.

39. In 2014, the Government provided £10 million to create new units for uniformed youth groups. The Uniformed Youth Social Action Fund was created to support the Step Up To Serve #iwill campaign.

40. Tyler-Rubinstein, I., Vallance, F., Michelmore, O., Pye, J. (2016a). *Evaluation of the Uniformed Youth Social Action Fund 1*. London: Ipsos Mori.

Case studies

Volunteers in the National Health Service (NHS)

A case study provided in the literature highlighted an example of how volunteers had been used within the NHS. The volunteers (including young people) would undertake everyday activities that did not require professional training, like performing small errands or talking to patients who are isolated. Using survey data from staff, the researchers calculated that the average healthcare trust spent about £58,000 per year on the management and training of volunteers, and that over a year the average contribution of volunteers is 79,128 hours. The activities the volunteers contributed were equivalent to those undertaken by paid staff at £8 per hour. Therefore, for every £1 that is invested in the training and management of a volunteer, The Trust receives value of at least £11.²

National Citizen Service (NCS)

The evaluation of the 2015 NCS programme included a value for money analysis to set a monetary value on the costs and benefits of the programme. Each different programme (spring, summer and autumn) was looked at and the value of outcomes (volunteering behaviour and leadership skills) was estimated. The cost for delivery of the standard summer model for 48,254 participants was estimated at £85.4m. The calculation to estimate the value for money used the increase in volunteering hours plus an estimation of future volunteering, multiplied by minimum wage, plus estimated improved earnings from new leadership skills. The assessment found that for the summer programme, there were between £0.78 and £1.59 of benefits per £1 spent.³² Currently the programme is being run at a higher cost per participant than anticipated and auditors want to see the programme deliver better value to the taxpayer.⁴

Join in

The Olympic legacy volunteering programme Join In, found that for every £36 invested to recruit a sports volunteer, the potential return on investment per volunteer was £16,032.29.⁴¹ This study uses a much broader definition of value from volunteering than other similar studies, by taking into account benefits to the wellbeing of individual volunteers their mental and physical health improvements. The main figure was estimated by calculating the value of their time, the wellbeing and mental health benefits to the volunteer, and the participation of others in sport that each volunteer enables. A figure of £2,974 was calculated as the total value arising directly from volunteering and an additional £12,574 was calculated as value arising from sports participation enabled by volunteering.

41. Join in. (2014). *Hidden Diamonds: Uncovering The True Value Of Sport Volunteers*. London: Join in.

4. What are the lessons for practice?



The key lessons for practice should be considered by schools, colleges, host organisations and other stakeholders involved with supporting young people. The lessons have been organised as though part of the volunteering journey.

Before

Attracting young people

Publicising the benefits of volunteering and outcomes from particular volunteering programmes can help potential participants, and those who are supporting them, make decisions about which route to choose.

Moreover, research shows that whilst almost half of 10–20 year olds are interested in taking part in social action (49 per cent), a third of this group (33 per cent) do not know if they will participate in social action in the next year.¹⁹ This suggests that further signposting of activities and support from wider networks may be necessary to encourage this age group to participate more regularly.

Indeed, support from wider networks (parents, teachers and friends) may encourage more participation from those who are reluctant to volunteer.¹⁴

Providers of voluntary programmes for young people should consider that the volunteers may have different motivations for taking part (instrumental or altruistic) in voluntary activities. Research looking at the vtalent year programme showed that some types of volunteer were more likely than others to seek 'hard' outcomes from

volunteering. For example, those involved in conservation or environmental projects were often undertaking a volunteering placement to build and demonstrate employability skills and gain social capital, while those involved in media campaigns or working with children were doing so to 'give something back' to the community or raise awareness.²⁸ Few volunteer programmes are designed with employment outcomes as a goal, this is a motivation for some participants and so could be made more explicit in future programme designs by including mock interviews or CV workshops.

Other research backs up the point that there are several reasons why young people join, and stay, in voluntary work. In an evaluation of Uniformed Youth Groups the following reasons were identified:

- **Join:** time taken to build trusted relationships and engage the hardest to reach groups;
- **Join and Stay:** the chance to receive an award or certificate for their activities; and
- **Stay:** being able to have an input into the design of activities.⁴²

The evidence that young people are often attracted to volunteering programmes due to training elements and a 'tangible reward' in the form of accreditation or qualification is particularly pertinent where there is a need to attract young participants that might not otherwise engage.³

An Ofsted evaluation of school, college and community based volunteering programmes found that volunteering can be used to engage with vulnerable or disadvantaged young people through offering awards or certificates.³⁶

Young people should be given equal opportunities to volunteer, regardless of background, as equality is a fundamental principle in most volunteering programmes.²⁸

Given the above, when designing programmes, attaching certificates and qualifications to voluntary activities should help attract young people. Consideration should be given to the type of activity that is being undertaken and how that will appeal to different groups. For example, findings from Positive Futures, a sport-based social inclusion programme, show that:

Sports and ICT have been found to be particularly effective in engaging young men and more disaffected young people (p.7).⁷

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that it is critical that the young person does not feel forced into the voluntary activity.¹⁴

Recruitment and brokering the volunteer placement

Young people should be given equal opportunities to volunteer, regardless of background, as equality is a fundamental principle in most volunteering programmes. Therefore advice and guidance should be offered to potential participants and include accurate advice on state benefit entitlements (where relevant) and volunteering, and access to financial support.²⁸

Brokering the volunteer placement leads to beneficial effects for the volunteer and hence the programme. This was demonstrated by vtalent year. With support from the host organisations, participants became involved in planning their volunteer placement and received advanced benefits compared to employment programme participants.²⁸

Schools may find that supporting volunteering is a way to help young people to transition to work. It offers a safe, structured way to learn about the workplace and the expectations of employers.¹⁴

Ideally, therefore, young people should be able to work with all relevant stakeholders to design and source a volunteer placement that will meet their needs. This suggests that there should be greater coordination between public sector bodies, charities and volunteer centres to facilitate and administer youth volunteering.²

During

Resourcing and quality

Host organisations need to acknowledge that there are drawbacks as well as benefits in being engaged in volunteer programmes. A frequent challenge is the short length of time that volunteers are available to participate. This is most evident with (higher education) students. As a consequence some host organisations reported that they had to keep recruiting and training new volunteers.^{12 14}

The lesson for host organisations is that they need to be prepared to deploy additional resources (time, people and money) where a high turnover of volunteers is likely. In parallel, young people should be encouraged to volunteer for as long a period as possible to avoid 'churn' within the host organisations. However, this should not be at the expense of shorter voluntary periods that may fit better with the young person's wider life or needs of the voluntary organisation. Further, consideration should be given to how the costs of training could be shared, for example between government-supported volunteering programmes and the host organisations.

There is no formal qualification associated with social action or volunteering and no standardised measures of quality of volunteering programmes. One source reviewed for this study suggests that the social action component could be included in the English Baccalaureate and quality could be measured by Ofsted.² Although as noted earlier, this would then challenge one of the core aspects of volunteering in that it is voluntarily undertaken. The same study also recommends that volunteer and social action programme providers should help schools, colleges and other brokers to be able to identify high quality programmes, potentially through a new quality mark.

Support and supervision

Adequate support should be provided to all parties within the volunteering programme, taking into account any external sources of support that may be appropriate.

Support for young people undertaking voluntary roles is especially critical²⁸. Support should include problem-solving advice, reviews of progress and identifying next steps. Support can come from schools and college staff, mentors, peers (other volunteers) and other staff at the volunteering organisation. This study found that the voluntary setting provided more chance of benefiting the volunteer than a work setting because the former environment was more supportive and more able to take young people's needs into account.

Some of the young volunteers will have additional needs which can be supported via external agencies. The evaluation of the Social Action Journey Fund found that young people from marginalised backgrounds often needed more assistance and required more intensive intervention from youth work professionals compensating for the lack of support young people may have received from families, friends or school.¹⁹

Support could also mean financial support. For example, the vtalent year programme offered financial support that meant that young people living independently, had an equal opportunity to participate in the programme.

It is not just the volunteers themselves who might need assistance. The Active Citizens in Schools evaluation highlighted lessons relevant for volunteering programmes taking place in a school setting. These were to provide dedicated staff time and ensure senior management and other staff support.²⁹

After

Closure

For those that have volunteered, encouragement and support to continue with volunteering will ensure that the additional benefits associated with long term volunteering are gained.

One study made a number of recommendations in their evaluation of youth social action, including for Government to ensure there are opportunities for young people to take part in programmes following their participation in NCS.² Signposting and providing advice and guidance to be able to continue immediately to other volunteering programmes was also identified in sports volunteering research.²³

Reflection

Young people should be encouraged to reflect on the benefits they have experienced.^{6 12 19 43} This will help them to identify the development received and also be able to communicate these new skills and experiences to employers.

vInspired's Task Squad programme showed that young people require specific support to use their volunteering experience to access employment opportunities. This programme supported young volunteers to think about and clarify their volunteer experiences as an asset on a CV, and interview preparation and advice.⁴⁴

Not only has it been identified that volunteers should reflect on their experiences to understand what they have gained, recent research also shows that the organisations themselves should also reflect on how the programme has performed. More dissemination about the positive impacts on communities from volunteering activities could support further activities.³⁷ The evidence on the return on investment in volunteers shows that the benefits can vary from a few pence more in benefits, to returns worth many thousands of pounds. Understanding why this is the case could help to deliver better value for money interventions.

43. Campbell, J., Bell, V., Armstrong, SC., Horton, J., Mansukhani, N., Matthews, H., Pilkington, A. (2009). *The Impact of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award on Young People*. Centre for Children and Youth. Northampton: University of Northampton.

44. Renaisi. (2016). *vInspired Task Squad: an Evaluation*. London: V.

5. How should the evidence base be developed?



The Careers & Enterprise Company examined the range of activities that schools could use to support young people. This found insufficient evidence to make a claim, at the time, for the effectiveness of volunteering activities.¹ The review undertaken here was designed to further scope and summarise the evidence.

The UK evidence base for volunteering is growing. Logic models and theories of changes are reported to be understood by the sector.² According to the Early Intervention Foundation scale that is used to judge the quality of evidence that supports interventions, the use of logic models is the first positive step towards robust evidence of impact.⁴⁵ Logic models represent the relationships between the activities, outputs and outcomes of a programme, whilst theories of change identify the casual pathways between interim and final outcomes. Independent evaluations and impact assessments are being commissioned and some research is using control groups to assess benefits

robustly. Randomised control trials and use of control groups can be costly to administer and so the desire for robustness should be balanced against practicalities of cost. Consideration could be given to pooling resources across programmes to make such methods more viable. Recently, the Behavioural Insights Team has reported on randomised control trials of volunteering. The evidence from this found 'strong correlations' between social action and personal effectiveness attributes.²⁶ However, there is an absence of standardised outcome measures. The Youth Social Action survey has been run since 2014 and could help develop standardised measures.

45. Early Intervention Foundation. (2017). Available from <http://www.eif.org.uk> [Accessed 13th June 2017].

Skill development

There is a good evidence base supporting the role of volunteering as an activity that develops skills in volunteers. However, in much of the research these increases in personal effectiveness were self-reported by the volunteers themselves^{6 12 22 25 29 30} or were reliant on small sample sizes or anecdotal evidence.³¹

Longer-term tracking of impact and outcomes has not been demonstrated. Commissioners could ensure that independent evaluations of volunteering programmes include longitudinal elements and validated measures. As proposed for randomised control trials, different organisations could come together to support the collection of longitudinal data.⁴⁶

Employment outcomes

More research is required to understand how employers view applicants who have volunteered and to provide quantitative evidence of increased job outcomes. Currently, the evidence around increased wage premiums is not clear-cut⁴⁷ or UK specific.

The organisational benefit of using volunteers is an under-researched area. There remains a need for more research that tests and explores the belief that volunteering can lead to increased employability.⁸

Delivering volunteering programmes

Despite growing levels of youth volunteering, the majority (59 per cent) of school-aged children (aged 11–15) have not participated in *meaningful* social action.¹⁹ Systematic exploration of why some schools and colleges are not offering or promoting volunteering and others are, could identify conditions that could encourage initiatives and increase participation rates.

46. Hill, M., Stevens, D. (2010). Measuring the impossible? *Scoping Study for Longitudinal Research on the Impact of Youth Volunteering*. London: Institute for Volunteering Research.

47. Handy, F., Cnaan, R.A., Hustinx, L., Kang, C., Brudney, J.L., Haski-Leventhal, D., Holmes, K., Meijs, L.C., Pessi, A.B., Ranade, B. and Yamauchi, N., (2010). A cross-cultural examination of student volunteering: Is it all about résumé building? *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 39(3), 498–523.

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