

Young people
speak out: attitudes to,
and perceptions of,
full-time volunteering
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Ipsos MORI research report

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Foreword from **v**

v, the national youth volunteering service, is led by the cares, interests, passions and beliefs of young people. To succeed in inspiring a new generation of young volunteers we need to better understand what motivates young people and galvanises them into action. We commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake research to provide a better picture of young people's attitudes to, and perceptions of, full time volunteering in particular. This is especially pertinent in a time of rising youth unemployment levels.

We urge policy-makers and key stakeholders to pay close attention to the findings, and welcome continued dialogue on the design and implementation of an extended full-time volunteering programme which will deliver the right solutions for young people, organisations and communities across England. **v** already provides a wide range of full-time opportunities to support young people through the recession, from 3 months in duration to our most recent programme, vTalent Year, a full year of service.

The results of this research demonstrate that young people should have the freedom to choose the volunteering experiences from a range of opportunities that suits their needs and interests. The findings are as diverse as the young people surveyed – and represent the start of an important conversation about the future of youth activism in England.

Terry Ryall
v Chief Executive

Executive summary

Introduction

v, the National Young Volunteers Service, commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake qualitative and quantitative research among young people aged 16-25 in England, to explore their views and experiences of volunteering, and specifically full-time volunteering placements. The research aimed to measure current levels of volunteering, understand the appeal of volunteering, and the barriers that act against participation, and to explore how the changing economic climate impacted young people's views of volunteering. The research also sought to gain young people's views on proposals for the introduction of compulsory community service for young Britons that, if realised, would directly impact on them.

The research consisted of three main elements:

- An online survey of 1,997 young people aged 16-25 in England was conducted using Ipsos MORI's online interviewing panel, between 28 April and 10 May 2009.
- Four face-to-face discussion groups were held with young people aged 16-25, including groups consisting of those currently in education, employment or training; those currently not in education, employment, or training; those with learning difficulties; and young people with mobility disabilities. Group participants included a mix of those who had and had not volunteered recently.
- Six in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with young people who had recently completed full-time, or close to full-time, volunteering placements.


Current levels of volunteering

- Nearly seven in ten young people (68%) had volunteered in the past year, either through formal volunteering placements or informally. A larger proportion of young people had volunteered informally (57%) than formally (41%), although those involved in formal placements had tended to volunteer on a more regular basis.
- Relatively small numbers had been involved in full-time volunteering: three percent were working as a full-time volunteer when interviewed, and eight percent had done so in the past.

Levels of interest in full-time volunteering

- When asked how they felt about the prospect of volunteering, unpaid, on a full-time basis, five percent of young people said they were planning to volunteer full time in the future. Around three in ten (31%) said they might consider volunteering full time at some stage in the future, but a similar proportion (30%) said they would never consider it and a third (34%) said they did not know whether or not they would consider it.

Full details of the group profiles can be found in the methodology section of this report.

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- Those who had volunteered in the past year were more receptive than those without recent personal experience of volunteering to the idea of volunteering full time in the future (37% and 20%, respectively, said they might consider volunteering full time).
 - Encouraging more young people into part-time volunteering may be an effective avenue into increasing rates of full-time volunteering. Those who had some personal experience of volunteer work were more likely to say they might consider volunteering full time in the future, and four of the case study volunteers we spoke to had worked as part-time volunteers before taking up their full-time placements. During the discussion groups, those who had some personal experience of volunteering were often more open to the idea of full-time voluntary work, because they were more convinced of the benefits that it could bring to them.
 - Young people are interested in a variety of volunteering placements; as such, **v** needs to continue to offer a range of opportunities across different sectors and organisations, and to publicise the range and variety that exists. There was also a variation between young people in terms of the level of responsibility that they might want if they had or were to volunteer; during the discussion groups, those who were currently unemployed felt they would need more structured placements with lots of support from managers, while some of the case study volunteers had preferred placements that would give them independence and responsibility to act alone. A careful match of volunteers and placements would help to ensure that both parties get the maximum benefit from the experience.

Perceived benefits of volunteering

- Gaining work experience would be the key draw of full-time volunteering for many, and is particularly important for younger groups with little or no work experience. The research highlighted young people's interest in training and being able to show references on CVs from volunteer organisations, particularly among groups with no formal qualifications. Interestingly, some participants in the discussion groups made a distinction between work experience and volunteering: they felt internships or unpaid work experience were likely to be more valuable in forwarding their career, while they associated volunteering with more traditional (and less useful in terms of career) types of volunteer work. Ensuring that the benefits of volunteering with respect to gaining work experience, accreditation and training are effectively conveyed to young people seems to be a key area for **v** to address.
- The research indicates that socialising and networking is also likely to be a key driver in encouraging more young volunteers (35% said this was a potential benefit that they might find appealing about full time volunteering).



Raising awareness of volunteering

- The group discussions highlighted the effectiveness of carefully selected case studies in challenging misconceptions about the nature of volunteer work, and in engaging young people's interest in volunteering. For example, a case study from the [v](#) website involving a community initiative to tackle knife crime was particularly effective in sparking the interest of the discussion group participants who were currently unemployed. Many participants in this group personally knew people who had been affected by knife crime; the fact that the volunteer work related to their specific concerns and local area meant this example was highly effective. Different groups have different priorities and interests, and the use of case study examples tailored for different audience may be effective.
- Targeting young people at the particular life stages may also be important. There was a sense in the discussion groups that, by the time young people have left studying and started to earn a full-time wage, it was generally too late for them to consider full-time volunteering (and certainly the online survey showed that levels of interest in full-time volunteering were much lower among those in full-time work than among students). Participants felt that, while young people were still living at home and enjoying a degree of financial support from their parents, it was a more realistic proposition for them to take up a full-time volunteering placement. Some also felt that there was more to gain from volunteering at this stage, in terms of building up independence and work experience.
- Peer group advocacy appears to be a particularly effective way of engaging young people and conveying the benefits of full-time volunteer work. During the group discussions, many who had been uninterested in volunteering at the start of the discussions became much more enthused when they had discussed volunteering with other participants who had experience of volunteering, and when they had seen the case study examples of young volunteers. The group participants also stressed that they would prefer to hear about volunteering opportunities from their peers rather than older people who they would find it more difficult to relate to.

Addressing the perceived barriers to full-time volunteering

- Financial concerns are a major barrier to involvement in full-time volunteering, and support with finances was seen as more important than other types of support in making volunteering full time a practical possibility. Realistically, many young people cannot volunteer full time due to their financial circumstances, and exploring ways that attractive financial support packages can be made available to young people would also be of obvious help.
- There are specific needs to address among particular groups of young people. For example, the possible loss of benefits was a key concern for unemployed and disabled young people. This highlights the value of continuing to work with Jobcentre Plus staff to ensure that they are fully aware that full-time volunteers do not lose eligibility for benefits, so they can give the correct information to their clients.

- Among those with learning difficulties, parents and carers were usually the key decision makers. Ensuring that parents' concerns about benefits eligibility are addressed will therefore be important. The other key issue for this group was the level of support that would be available; reassurance from specific volunteering organisations would be of value in mitigating these concerns.

Volunteering and the recession

- Over half (57%) of young people who took part in the online survey believed their peers would be more likely to consider volunteering as a result of rising unemployment.
- Fifty-four per cent agreed that their peers would be more likely to volunteer part time and around a third (35%) thought they would be more likely to consider full-time volunteering.

Compulsory community service

- Young people were asked to state the extent to which they supported or opposed recent proposals to compel young people to undertake periods of full-time community work in exchange for a payment to cover 'modest' living costs (respondents were told that 'for example, this might be in line with the minimum wage or up to £100 per week for expenses'). Young people were somewhat more likely to support (40%) than oppose (31%) the idea of introducing a compulsory national citizenship programme.
- However, over half (56%) considered 'reasonable modest payment' to be the national minimum wage payment, and 30% felt that expenses of up to £100 a week would be required.
- The qualitative group discussions – in which participants had had more time to deliberate and consider their views about volunteering than those completing the online survey – generated very different reactions. Most of those who took part in the group discussions did not like the idea of forcing young people to do anything. Some who had volunteering experience felt it would compromise the whole nature of volunteering: the fact that volunteers want to be there was felt to be one of the key benefits of the experience, and this would be lost if young people had been forced into placements unwillingly. Participants also stressed that, if this scheme were introduced, young people would need to have a choice of placement.
- There was more support for proposals to introduce citizenship curriculum in schools: 54% would support this type of scheme. Perhaps significantly, those who were most likely to be affected by this proposal were most opposed to it (just 41% of those at school and 42% of those at sixth form supported the proposal vs. 59% of those at university for example).

Conclusions

Broadly speaking, there appear to be three key areas for v to address in raising levels of interest in full-time volunteering.

1. The main barrier to volunteering – which applies to both full-time and part-time placements – was a **lack of awareness** about what it might actually involve. The group discussions revealed some important misconceptions about volunteering and volunteers that appear to be acting as significant barriers to participation:

In the group discussions, young people’s immediate perceptions of volunteers often involved groups such as hippies, the very affluent, or old people; even among some of those who had volunteered themselves, participants often seemed to view volunteering as something that other groups of society, rather than young people, tended to be involved in.

Many participants in the discussion groups had narrow views about the types of volunteering opportunities that are available and, consequently, assumed that they would not be interested or, often, had not given the idea much consideration.

In line with these findings, when asked why they did not currently volunteer full time, large proportions of respondents to the online survey said they had never considered the idea, or were just not interested

2. As a direct result of a lack of awareness about volunteering – or a skewed picture of what it might entail – many young people appear simply to have **not considered volunteering**. During the group discussions, several participants who initially had no interest in volunteering became very enthused about the specific examples that were highlighted and expressed an interest in being involved in similar projects (albeit on a part-time basis in most cases). What may appear to be a lack of interest among volunteering among large sections of youth may to some degree reflect a lack of knowledge of what it could involve.

3. The foremost concerns of young people when it comes to full-time volunteering relate to the practical **financial implications**. Financial concerns were mentioned more frequently than any other type of issue when young people were prompted as to the reasons why they did not currently volunteer full time (72%, compared with 60% who said they were too busy, and 50% who were not interested or had not considered it). Specifically, young people wanted to be financially independent (26%), and therefore had to work full time (25%), and preferred to be paid in exchange for working (24%). During the group discussions, participants’ common reaction to the idea of volunteering full time were often that it was simply not practical or realistic for them to do unpaid volunteer work on a full-time basis. As far as most were concerned, only the wealthy could afford or want to volunteer full time. Linked to this, there was a feeling that volunteering full time was more likely to be possible or of interest to people at certain life stages, for example when living at home with, and being supported by, parents. Publicising the fact that financial help with expenses is available with some placements may be of value.



Research background

In recent months, the political debate around young people and their civic responsibilities has shifted considerably. In March 2009 Prospect magazine reported on results from a survey of the general public which measured views about the likely impact of the global recession on life in Britain. As part of this work, they explored attitudes towards the prospect of compulsory community and civic work for young people within the context of the weakening economy and worsening job prospects. For many years politicians and policymakers have called for such a scheme, envisaging it as a silver bullet to perceived youth alienation and apathy.

While the future of the economy remains highly uncertain, and employment prospects for all parts of the workforce – and young people particularly – appear to be worsening, many feel that the time is ripe for such radical schemes to be introduced. Labour MP Frank Field, for example, has called upon the party to give serious consideration to how this type of scheme could be implemented. However, many commentators remain uneasy about the prospect of forcing young people to ‘volunteer’ and are sceptical about the value of this type of scheme.

To help inform the ongoing debate, **v** wished to canvass the views of young people themselves about these issues. In addition to measuring rates of volunteering and levels of support for these new proposals, **v** was keen to engage young people in qualitative discussions, to unpick their top of mind views about these issues. As such, **v** commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct a programme of quantitative and qualitative research among young people surrounding their experiences of, and attitudes towards, volunteering, and their views about new proposals for compulsory civic service.

Research Objectives

Specific research objectives were designed to:

- Measure rates of volunteering and attitudes towards it and how these differ between groups of young people;
- Understand the appeal and motivations behind volunteering (both perceived and latent), and the barriers acting against it;
- Explore perceptions of volunteering within the context of the current economic climate and how opinions may be affected by economic circumstances; and,
- Explore reactions to the prospect of compulsory volunteer work, including the perceived advantages and disadvantages of this type of scheme, and how it should operate.

Methodology

▼ commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake both qualitative and quantitative research among young people aged 16-25 in England, to explore their views and experiences relating to volunteering.

The research consisted of three main elements:

- 1,997 online questionnaires were completed by young people aged 16-25 in England using Ipsos MORI's online interviewing panel between 28 April and 10 May 2009.

- Four face-to-face discussion groups were held with 27 young people 29-30 April. Each discussion focussed on a specific group of young people to ensure we captured a range of views:

- young people currently in education, employment or training;
 - young people currently not in education, employment or training;
 - young people with learning difficulties; and
 - young people with mobility disabilities.

- Six in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with young people who had recently completed full-time, or close to full-time, volunteering placements. Interviews lasted around 45 minutes and were conducted by telephone between 20 and 24 April 2009.

Further details about each strand of the research can be found below.

Online survey of young people

To help measure young people's experiences of, and attitudes towards, volunteering, and to gauge their views on new proposals relating to compulsory community service, ▼ wished to conduct a quantitative survey of young people. An online methodology, using a pre-recruited panel of respondents, offered an ideal vehicle for generating a robust and reliable set of results among a large sample of young people.

The Ipsos MORI panel consists of members of the public who have agreed to participate in a number of research projects per year. Using the demographic information we hold about each panel member, we asked a sample of 16-25 year olds in England to participate in a short survey. The survey took around 10 minutes to complete. Young people were told that the survey was about issues relating to young people in England today, including attitudes towards volunteering, working prospects and opportunities.

Quotas were set on age, gender, region, and work status to ensure the sample of respondents interviewed was broadly representative of young people in England aged 16 - 25. In total, 1,997 responses were achieved between 28 April and 10 May 2009. Following the fieldwork period, weights were applied to the data for age, gender, region, work status, ethnicity and socio-economic status to ensure that results were representative of the population of young people in England on these variables. A set of data tables showing the final weighted results can be found on the ▼ website.

Case study interviews with volunteers

v was interested in learning from the experiences and views of young people who had undertaken full-time volunteering placements, and in particular the support they had received to make volunteering practicable and appealing, their motivations for getting involved in volunteering, and the perceived impacts and benefits that their experiences had had.

Working via its supplier organisations, v provided Ipsos MORI with a sample of names and contact details for young people who had recently volunteered full time. A data processor agreement was put in place that allowed Ipsos MORI to contact these individuals for the purposes of this research. Ipsos MORI wrote to all young people to let them know the research was taking place, and to ask them to take part in a 45-60 minute telephone depth interview to discuss their experiences. Depth interviews were conducted by the Ipsos MORI research team. All those participating were offered £25 as a thank you for their time. In total, six young people were interviewed. The discussion guide used as a basis for the telephone interviews can be found in the Appendices.

Face-to-face discussion groups with young people

To gain greater insight into young people's motivations, perceptions and feelings about volunteering, v commissioned four qualitative group discussions. Each discussion group was focussed on a particular group of young people who may have particular needs. However, in other respects, the groups comprised a mix of participants, and brought together young people who did, and those who did not, have prior experience of volunteering. The composition of the groups is shown in the table below.

Milton Keynes 9 young people in education, employment or training (in the report, referred to as EET group)	London 8 young people not in education, employment or training (in the report, referred to as NEET group), aged between 18 and 24
London 4 young people with physical disabilities which affect their mobility, aged between 18 and 22	Milton Keynes 6 young people with mild learning difficulties

Two discussions took place in London (29 April) and two in Milton Keynes (30 April). All participants received £35 as a thank you for their time. The discussions covered a range of issues including young people's thoughts about volunteering generally; their reactions to the idea of volunteering full time and whether this would appeal to them (and how it could be made more appealing); the barriers that might stop them taking up a full-time volunteering placement; and their reactions to proposals for compulsory community service. The discussion guides used as a basis for the group discussions can be found in the Appendices.



Interpreting findings from qualitative research

Two of the key strengths of qualitative research are that it allows issues to be explored in detail and enables researchers to test the strength of people's opinions. However, qualitative research is designed to be illustrative rather than statistically representative and therefore does not allow conclusions to be drawn about the extent to which views are held. In addition, it is important to bear in mind that qualitative research is based on perceptions, rather than facts.

As this particular piece of research is based only on six case study interviews, and four focus group discussions, findings may not be relevant to all young people or volunteers. Nevertheless, findings from the qualitative work provide useful insights into young people's feelings, motivations and attitudes towards volunteering.

Throughout the report verbatim quotations from participants are used to illustrate certain points. However, it should be noted that these may not reflect the views of all participants, or of all young people.

Detailed findings

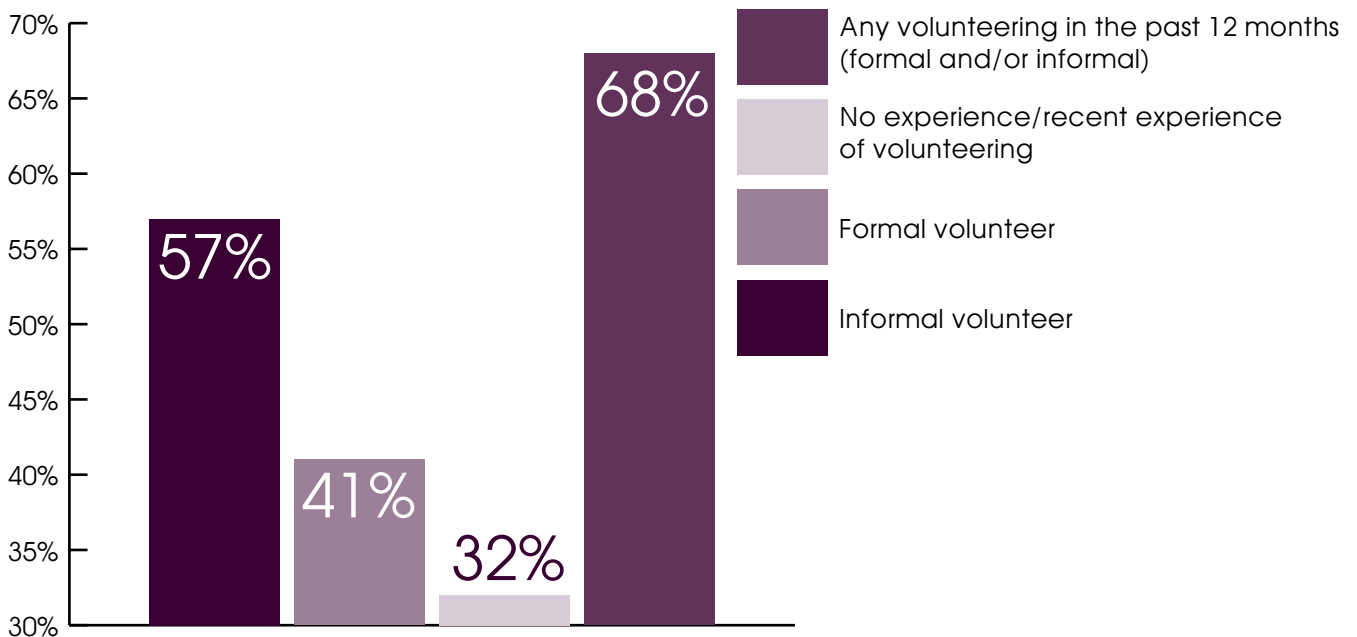
Current levels of volunteering

To ascertain rates of formal and informal volunteering, we asked young people to indicate whether they had given unpaid help to any clubs, groups, organisations, or neighbours in the past 12 months. Separate questions were asked to determine levels of formal volunteering (for example, helping with fundraising through an organisation) and informal volunteering (for example, helping a neighbour with their shopping)².

Two in five (41%) young people had volunteered formally in the past 12 months. Of those, just under half (45%) had done so at least once a week, and around a third (31%) had done so less than weekly but at least once a month.

A greater proportion of respondents had volunteered informally than formally in the past 12 months (57% compared with 41%). However, those who volunteered informally did so less frequently than formal volunteers. Three in ten (29%) informal volunteers volunteered once a week, and a third (33%) volunteered less than once a week but at least once a month.

Rates of volunteering



Base: 1,997 young people aged 16-25 living in England, 28th April to 10th May 2009

Looking at the profile of volunteers more closely, young people based in London were more likely than those in other regions to have volunteered both formally and informally (55% had volunteered formally compared with an average of 41% across all young people, and 68% had volunteered informally compared with an average of 57%). In line with this, young people

² Questions were adapted from those used in the Citizenship survey. For full list of the types of formal and informal volunteering covered, please see questionnaire.

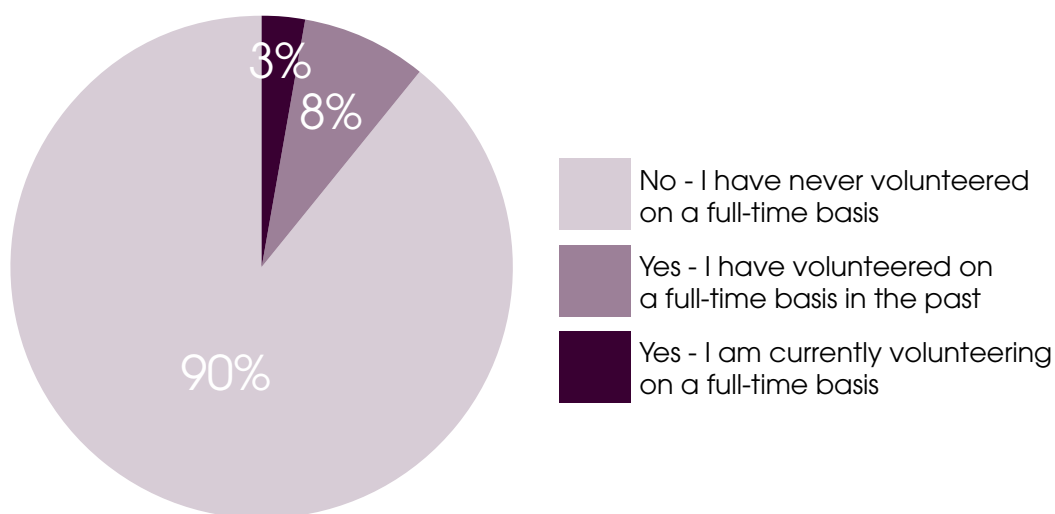
from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely than white young people to have volunteered formally in the past year (57% compared with 38%)³.

Young people at university were significantly more likely than average to have volunteered formally in the past year (60% compared with 41%).

One in ten (10%)⁴ young people had volunteered full time, or were doing so at the point of the interview. Of these respondents, over two in five (43%) volunteered for between one and six months, and one in five (21%) volunteered for over twelve months.

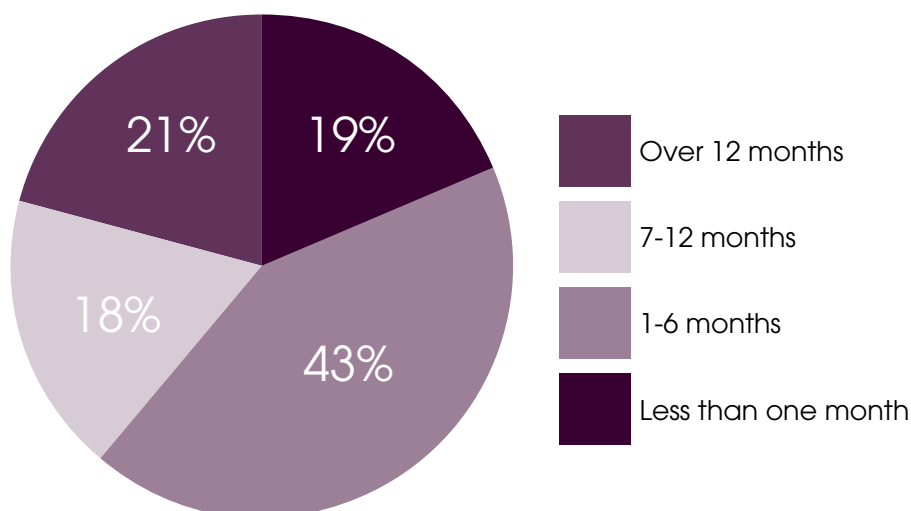
Full-time volunteers

Have you ever volunteered, unpaid, for a club, organisation or group on a full-time basis?



Base: 1,997 young people aged 16-25 living in England, 28th April to 10th May 2009


And for how long have you been/were you volunteering, unpaid, on a full-time basis?



Base: 177 young people aged 16-25 living in England - who have/currently volunteer full-time, 28th April to 10th May 2009

³A quarter (25%) of ethnic minority respondents interviewed were based in the capital.

⁴Figure based on aggregate of three percent currently volunteering and eight percent who had volunteered full-time in the past; aggregate figure is 10% rather than 11% due to rounding.



Although relatively small numbers of young people volunteer full time, the fact that seven in ten (68%) young people have volunteered in the past year demonstrates that volunteering holds a strong appeal for many. The current research focussed in particular on attitudes towards full-time volunteering; the remainder of this report will explore in detail how full-time volunteering is perceived, whether the proposition is attractive or unattractive to young people and why, and the barriers acting against young people taking up full-time placements.

Perceptions of full-time volunteering

The qualitative research revealed participants held mixed images of volunteers and volunteering. The group participants had neither particularly positive nor negative impressions of volunteers. However, among those who did not have any volunteering experience, and even some who did, volunteers were often initially characterised as different to themselves in some way. For example, volunteers often had connotations of 'hippies' and old people, although some did think about young people on gap years. Across all the groups, with the exception of those in the learning difficulties group, participants associated full-time volunteering with affluence.

They must be somebody who has no need for an income from a job, so they're comfortable in whatever other way it might be, and therefore they think, "I don't want to just sit around and be lord or lady muck ... I'm going to give something back to the community and do something that makes good for them people and makes me feel good"

Female, EET group

For some participants in the discussion groups, the top of mind perceptions of what volunteering might entail seemed to be fairly distant from young people's notions of what they would want to be involved in and, importantly, from the realities of volunteering. Broadly, associations of volunteering tended to be based around helping people, working for free and charity. More specifically, working with children and the elderly were often first mentioned as typical voluntary work, as well as community work, the environment, animal work, the Church and charity fundraising. There appeared to be a lack of knowledge regarding the diversity of volunteering opportunities that are actually available, particularly among those who had not volunteered previously. The discussion groups highlighted the importance of using real life case studies of volunteering opportunities to challenge young people's perceptions of volunteers and volunteering opportunities (see below, Motivations for volunteering, for more details).

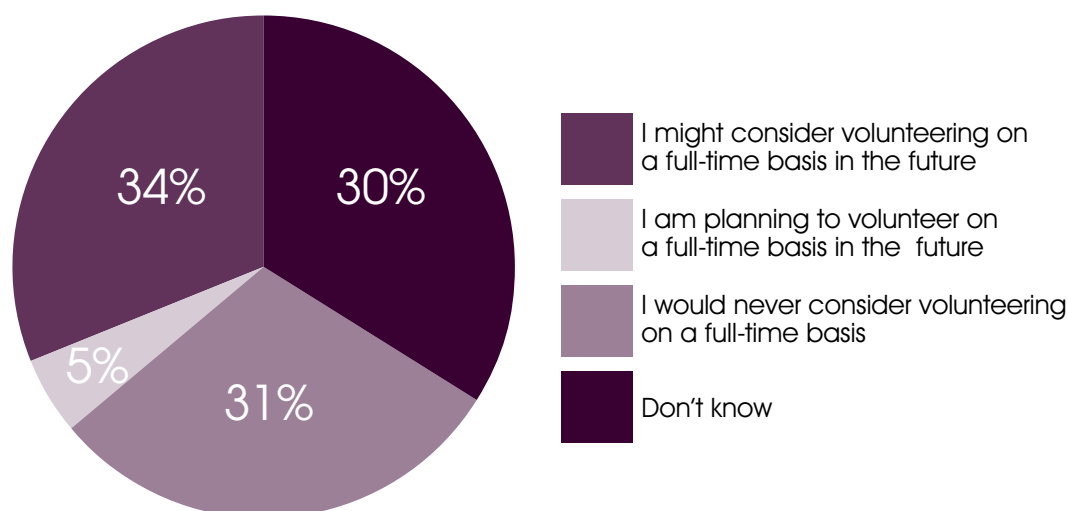
Perceptions of volunteers and volunteering were similar across all groups of young people in the group discussions, with the exception of participants with learning difficulties. This group was much more positive than other respondents, and had much more volunteering experience.

Levels of interest in volunteering full time

Among young people who were not currently volunteering full time, five percent said they were planning to volunteer full time, which is roughly in line with current levels of full-time volunteering. Around a third (31%) said they might consider volunteering full time in the future; a similar proportion (30%) said they would never consider it.

Interestingly, a large proportion of young people (34%) said they did not know whether they would ever consider volunteering full time. This uncertainty may relate to the lack of awareness about what volunteering might involve that emerged during the qualitative discussion groups. As noted above, young people often did not associate volunteering with people like themselves, and those who had no personal experience of volunteering often had a limited view of the types of opportunities available. The misconceptions about the nature of volunteering placements, and those who are involved in them, seems an important area for **v** to address. The fact that many are unaware that young people similar to them are involved in volunteering effectively removes what could be a powerful incentive to get involved.


Which of the following statements comes closest to how you feel about the idea of volunteering, unpaid, on a full-time basis for a club, organisation or group?



Base: 1,950 young people aged 16-25 living in England - excluding full-time volunteers, 28th April to 10th May 2009

Interest in volunteering full time was more widespread among participants who had previous experience of volunteering: those who had volunteered part time (either formally and/or informally) in the past year were significantly more likely than those who had not to say they might consider volunteering full time in the future (37% compared with 20%). This echoed discussions among the group participants; those with volunteering experience were more open to the idea of full-time volunteering because – as well as being more aware of what volunteering might entail – they were able to see how they had enjoyed and benefitted from their placements.

In line with this, young people based in London and those from ethnic minority backgrounds – both groups where rates of part-time volunteering were higher than average – were also relatively likely to say they might consider volunteering full time. Approaching four in ten (38%) from



the London area said they might consider volunteering, compared with 31% on average. Two in five (40%) young people from an ethnic minority background (40%) said they might consider volunteering full time compared with three in ten (30%) white young people.

A significantly larger proportion of women than men said they might consider volunteering full time in the future (35% compared with 27%), and that they were planning to volunteer (six percent compared with four percent).

Age and life-stage also appear to be associated with levels of interest in volunteering. Levels of interest were significantly higher among young people who were studying either at school, college or university (39% said they might consider volunteering in the future, compared with 27% of young people who worked, and 29% who were unemployed). In line with this, those over 22 years old – who were more likely to be in work – were relatively likely to say they would never consider volunteering (34% compared with 23% of those under 19 years old).

Although three in ten (30%) young people said they would never consider volunteering full time, and around a third (34%) said they did not know whether they would, the qualitative research illustrated that views can change when people are given more information about volunteering, and with more considered thought on the subject. Some of those who came to the discussion groups with no interest in volunteering had developed an interest by the end of the discussion (although not necessarily in full-time volunteering). During the discussion, we used two case studies examples from the [v website](#) of people who had volunteered⁵. These illustrated the different types of voluntary opportunities that are available, which participants seemed to be previously unaware of. Upon realising the available opportunities, many participants became much more interested in the idea of volunteering, particularly when they felt the subject was relevant to their personal circumstances (see section, Addressing the barriers and encouraging volunteering, for further discussion on the case studies).

“Especially the youth one (knife crime case study), that’s something I wouldn’t mind getting involved in myself anyway, even if I was working during night times and some evenings.”

Female, NEET group

It seems that, in many cases, volunteering is something that young people have not been properly informed about, and hence have never considered.

Despite this interest, participants’ immediate responses to the idea of volunteering full time centred on practical difficulties, such as time and money. In some cases, particularly with the discussion group with unemployed young people, it was difficult for respondents to see beyond these constraints. Participants in this group and learning disability discussion also raised concerns over how benefits may be affected by receiving any financial aid from volunteering.

⁵To see the full case studies see:

<http://www.vinspired.com/opportunities/case-studies/121-giving-up-my-time-for-kids-helped-me-get-into-oxford>

<http://www.vinspired.com/opportunities/case-studies/192-evans-amankwah-20-has-set-up-an-anti-knife-crime-and-anti-gang-violence-committee->



If all your food and board and everything else is paid for then you can do your 30 hours for free

Female, NEET group

I was thinking it's a bit impractical really, to do 30 hours a week, because ... no one can really afford to (do) 30 hours a week, to give up their time for free.

Male, EET group

Due to financial concerns, full-time employment was generally more attractive than full-time volunteering. However, those who had previously volunteered part time were more open to the idea than those who had not. Some of the case study participants said that at first, they would not necessarily have taken a full-time voluntary position over paid employment. However, upon reflection, some felt that they had gained more from full-time volunteering than they would have from a full-time job.

Yeah, probably I would have taken the paid option (over full-time volunteering) really, but I'm glad I didn't really.

Case study 1

Among participants with learning difficulties, perceptions of volunteering were very positive. As most did not look after their finances (usually a parent or carer was responsible), these participants were less concerned about earning an income. These participants did not usually draw a distinction between a job and volunteering and, as such, were generally happy to do unpaid voluntary work. Although very positive towards volunteering in general, the idea of volunteering full time raised some specific concerns: some worried about their stamina levels and some about how it would fit in around their studies. Full-time volunteering was, however, seen as an attractive option once participants had completed their studies as a way of keeping occupied.

Taken together, the findings underline that a large proportion of young people are not informed about the different types of voluntary opportunities available to them and, possibly as a consequence, have never considered (or say they would never consider) volunteering full time. However, there is a real interest for some in getting involved – at least part-time – once they are made aware of the nature of the opportunities available. In particular, the case study based on knife crime was very effective in challenging preconceived ideas of what volunteering entails, particularly among unemployed participants (see section, Addressing the barriers).

Motivations for volunteering: what do young people want to get out of volunteering?

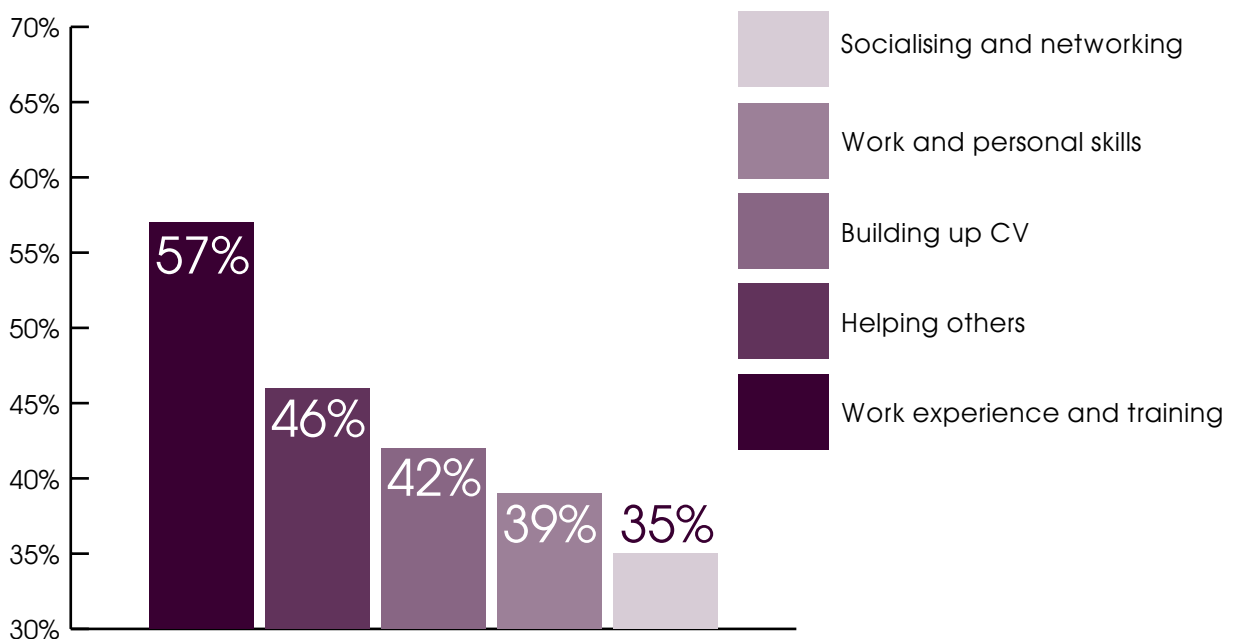
During the qualitative discussion groups it was evident that participants' motivations for volunteering (or considering volunteering) inevitably involved a mix of altruism and self-interest. Although in a few instances young people appeared to have purely altruistic motives the majority saw a combination of altruism and personal gain in volunteering. However, it was evident that, while participants may volunteer (or consider volunteering) part-time through pure altruism, there would need to be a much larger degree of personal benefit if they were to take up a full-time placement.

If we look at someone doing some charity work... I'm building up some skills and ... I'm enjoying it ... but you know it's going to benefit you, and there's a win-win there.

Male, EET group


The quantitative survey findings mirror this finding. While nearly half (46%) said that helping others would be an attractive reason for volunteering full time, young people indicated a great many personal benefits that would make volunteering appealing. Around six in ten (57%) thought gaining work experience and training was an attractive reason for volunteering full time, and over two in five (42%) said building up a CV would be appealing. Improving work and personal skills would appeal to two in five (39%), and a third (35%) would like the socialising and networking opportunities.

There are many potential benefits of volunteering, unpaid, on a full-time basis. Which, if any of these do you, or might you find appealing?



Base: 1,997 young people aged 16-25 living in England, 28th April to 10th May 2009
Respondents could give more than one answer

Note: the categories shown in this chart are combinations of the more detailed response options given in the questionnaire (appended - Q14)



In general, young people with experience of volunteering were more inclined than those with no personal experience to mention a range of benefits that full-time volunteering could bring. For example, six in ten (60%) young people with volunteering experience saw work experience as a draw of full-time volunteering, compared with only half (51%) of those without experience. Volunteers were also more likely than non-volunteers to cite building up their CV as a potentially appealing gain (44% compared with 38%) and socialising and networking (37% compared with 31%).

Helping others was seen as a potential benefit by a significantly larger proportion of young people planning on volunteering than young people on average (73% compared with 46%) and, interestingly, was mentioned more frequently by this group than those who actually did volunteer full time (51%).⁶ Socialising and networking was mentioned more frequently than average by those who said they might consider volunteering (40% compared with 35%); ensuring that marketing campaigns convey the social and altruistic benefits of placements, as well as the work experience they offer, may be of value.

Older groups were more likely to find helping others an attractive reason for volunteering than younger respondents (51% of 22-25 year olds compared with 42% aged 16-18). Conversely, younger groups were more interested than those in the older cohort in using volunteering to gain work experience and training (69% of those aged 16-18 compared with 52% of 19-25 year olds). This finding illustrates the importance of age-specific opportunities and marketing to ensure opportunities appeal to young people's key interests.

In the qualitative strand of the research, volunteering in order to gain work experience was mentioned particularly in relation to competitive fields such as clinical psychology and event management. A few also mentioned how volunteering could be useful for experience which may help them make decisions about their choice of career.

The career with counselling, you can't be employed under that when you first came out of university, you have to have some type of experience, so you have to end up going voluntary...for your experience to be accredited.

Male, EET group

Rather than volunteering in order to gain relevant work experience, some of the young people who showed an interest in volunteering in the discussion groups liked the idea of using their spare time constructively, particularly at times when they may not be in employment.

Instead of me sitting on my backside on a Tuesday night and watching Eastenders, why not actually go out and do something?

Female, EET group

If you've got nothing better to do you might as well go and help someone else

Female, NEET group

In general, the motivations for participants with learning difficulties were very different from those of participants in the other groups, although they did also mention the importance of keeping busy. Socialising and confidence building were also seen as key benefits of volunteering and were also some of the primary motivations for those who did volunteer.

⁶ Indicative finding due to small base sizes. Findings based on 75 young people who were planning to volunteer full-time and 47 young people who currently volunteer full-time.

The one in the voluntary shop. (I do) the voluntary work to keep myself occupied

Male, learning difficulties group

I was doing it because I was seeing my new friends

Male, learning difficulties group

In the discussion groups, there was a mixed response to the idea of travelling abroad to volunteer. Among a few participants who were still at school, the idea of travel was more important than anything else: this was the key selling point rather than any financial reward, as it gave an opportunity for travel and independence from their parents. The actual nature of the volunteering was less important than the location in question. However, other young people, including those who were studying, were more sceptical due to the fees that have to be paid to volunteer abroad and, as such, thought these opportunities were more like holidays.

I really want to go abroad and do voluntary work but there seems to be a big thing that you pay to do voluntary work abroad.

Female, Physical disability group

I looked into working in an orphanage in Vietnam ... to actually go and volunteer in an orphanage for, I think it was three weeks, was going to cost me about two and a half grand. It's not quite what I was expecting when I was going to volunteer.

Female, EET group

Among the NEET group, being able to contribute to a local issue, such as knife crime, was more appealing than volunteering abroad, and was also more practical, due to financial constraints and other responsibilities.

I'd rather help my local community really than go abroad... To be realistic I've got kids so I can't really go abroad and do all that so it would be easier for me to stay in my area and do it

Female, NEET group

What do young people get out of volunteering?

As part of the research, six interviews were conducted with full-time volunteers to form case studies of their experiences and perceptions of the placements. The participants covered a broad range of experiences and types of placement, including volunteer coordination, rugby coaching, administrative work and running play schemes. The interviews focussed on what they perceived to be the main benefits of their experiences.

Overall, the volunteers' views about their experiences were very positive. The placements were described as challenging, interesting, varied, and most would recommend volunteering to other people.

Volunteering had not necessarily directly assisted the case study volunteers in gaining employment; however, even where a direct employment opportunity had not come about through the volunteer work, respondents were confident that the placement had improved their CVs and chances of finding a job in the long term. The volunteers described a range of skills they had learned or refined during their placements, including office based skills, decision making skills, as well as formal qualifications in some cases. More generally, aside from providing work experience and developing work-related skills, their placements had also given young volunteers direction towards future careers.



I didn't know what I wanted to do when I left university...it's given me absolute direction.

Case study 3

I went to university first so I wouldn't say I was particularly a shy person but it's obviously helped me with my organisational skills in the very real world office environment. It's given me a great deal of experience; I've met so many people. It's also sharpened my awareness of what I actually want to do with myself and with my life.

Case study 5

Some of the volunteers also discussed the social benefits of volunteering, such as improved confidence, self esteem and meeting different types of people. The 'feel-good factor' also played a role in improving people's self image.

There's some self esteem to be had in going out and doing something, and that's another motivation for most who do volunteering.

Female, Disability group

It's made me realise that ... people have got all different problems and there's all different sorts of behaviour and personalities and cultures

Case study 2

Those who had volunteered were very positive about the experience, and had got a lot more from their roles than just 'something to do.' In one case study, the respondent who volunteered full time felt they had even gained more than they would had they entered employment after university.

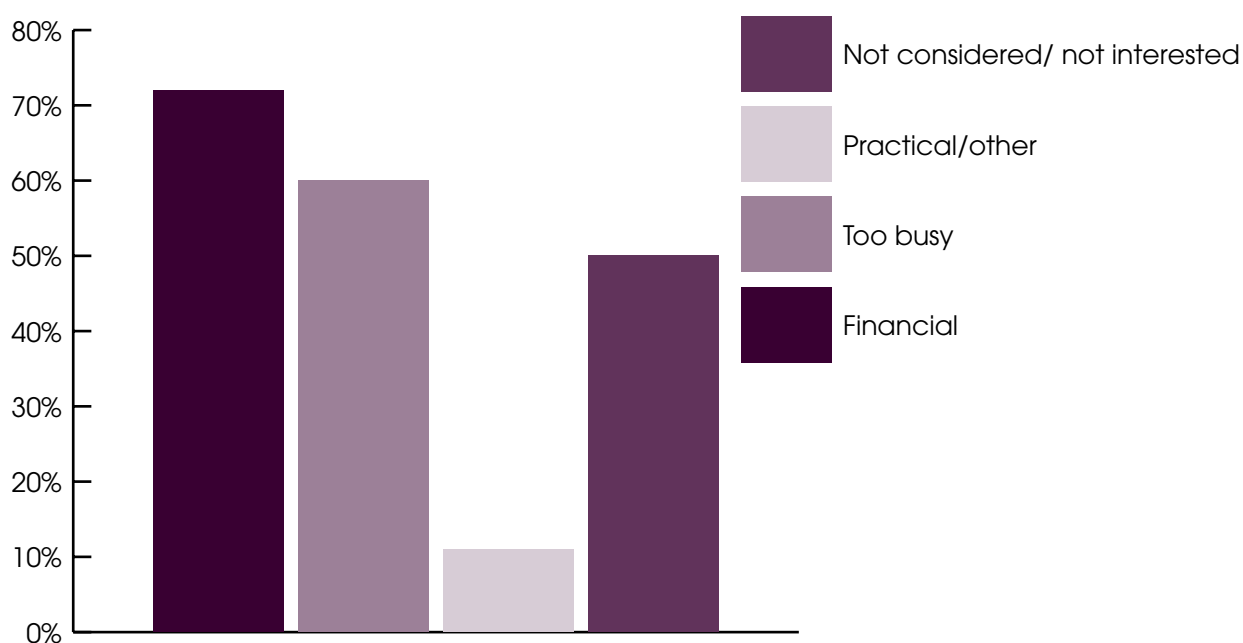
It's the people who've got proper jobs after uni and moved on that have missed out on the opportunities, not me

Case study 3

Perceived barriers to volunteering full time

As noted in above (see section, Levels of interest in volunteering full time) the immediate reaction of most participants in the group discussions to the idea of volunteering full time was to highlight the financial difficulties that would prevent them from being able to take up such placements. Responses to the quantitative survey echoed these findings, and underline the significance of finances as a barrier for many: seven in ten (72%) young people who did not volunteer full time cited finances as a key reason. Specific financial concerns included the wish to be financially independent (26%), the need to work full time (25%), and a preference for being paid in exchange for their work and skills (24%). However, while financial practicalities are a primary concern, and were often at the forefront of people's minds when considering the issue of volunteering, most young people cited several reasons for not volunteering, suggesting that there are other important barriers to getting involved. Half (50%) of young people said they were not interested or had just never considered volunteering: in terms of specific reasons, a fifth (21%) said they had never thought about it and 16% said they had not heard about opportunities to volunteer full time.

Which of the reasons why people do not volunteer unpaid on a full-time basis currently apply to you?




Base: 1,950 young people aged 16-25 living in England - excluding full-time volunteers, 28th April to 10th May 2009. Responses were multi-coded, and have been grouped into categories

Note: the categories shown in this chart are combinations of the more detailed response options given in the questionnaire (appended - Q15)

Young people living in the North West of England were more likely than average to cite financial concerns as a barrier to volunteering (78% compared with 72%). Young people in the South West of England were more likely than average to say they had not heard about opportunities to volunteer (23% compared with 16%).

The barriers to involvement in full-time volunteering differ by age. Financial concerns were more prevalent among those aged 19 or older than those aged 16-18 (74% compared with 68%). Conversely, those aged 16-18 were more likely than other young people to worry that they did not have



the skills needed to volunteer (12% compared with an average of 9%). However, this younger age group were also more likely than average to say they had never thought about volunteering (29% compared with 21%) and – possibly related to this – that they were unaware of the volunteering opportunities open to them (19% compared with 16%).

Life stage and work status also impacts on the barriers that act against involvement in full-time volunteer work. Those in full-time work were more likely than average to cite financial concerns as a reason not to volunteer (78% compared with 72%). Six in ten (62%) full-time workers said they could not afford to give up work, a third (32%) that they did not want to give up paid work and around four in ten (37%) that they liked their job too much to give it up. Similarly, 56% of those currently at university said they will need to get a full-time job when they finish studying. Those in full- or part-time employment were relatively likely to say that they had not considered or were just not interested in volunteering (57% compared with an average 50%).

These findings were mirrored in the group discussion with young people in employment or study, where several participants felt that it was only during gap years – ideally between school and university – that people would be prepared, or able, to volunteer full time. During this period, young people are likely still to be living at home and, to some degree, still financially dependent on parents. A few felt that volunteering was an ideal opportunity for young people at this stage of life to prepare for the independence that being a school leaver gives them. Beyond this limited window of opportunity, many young people felt that volunteering was not a practical proposition, particularly once people have entered into employment and financial independence.

Group discussion participants who were about to leave university felt it was very unlikely that young people would take up a full-time volunteering placement if they were able to go into full-time work (or had already started work). This was for two reasons: the need to earn a regular income for the first time, and the increasing difficulty during a recession to be able to pursue their ideal career.

An internship can lead you into sort of like a career path that you do the internship in, doesn't it? Whereas volunteer work by its very nature it's not going to lead to a job, is it?


Male, EET group

This group felt that a much more competitive jobs market means that graduates are more likely to choose work experience over volunteering. In some participants' minds these were two distinct things: though both unpaid, work experience was perceived as something that would help them with a future (paid) career, whereas this was not necessarily the case with volunteering, which they perceived as being much more altruistic.

If you were out of work and you were considering either going for an internship or volunteering full time, I think the majority of people would actually go for the internships that would lead to something in the end, rather than just self satisfaction, the knowledge you're helping someone.

Male, EET group

As noted above (see section, Motivations for volunteering), the chance to gain work experience and work skills is the most commonly mentioned motivating factor for young people to consider volunteering full time. The case study research demonstrates that young volunteers



acquired a range of invaluable work skills through their placements. Furthermore, several volunteers highlighted that they had gained opportunities and skills through volunteering that they could not have gained through paid employment, while others talked about how volunteering opened up new career options and paths.

Among unemployed young people, the barriers acting against volunteering are similar to those cited by other young people. The most frequently cited reasons for not volunteering full time among this group are that they would rather be paid in exchange for their work (40%) or that they want financial independence (28%); significant proportions also mention a lack of awareness of the opportunities available (30%) and that they have never considered volunteering (27%). A quarter (26%) would also be concerned about the impact on their benefits if they were to volunteer full time.

This certainly reflects the views of the NEET group participants, who believed that if they were to take up full-time voluntary work they would no longer be entitled not only to Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) (as they would not be able to say they were actively seeking work), but would also be ineligible for other benefits such as housing benefit and council tax exemption. They believed that the modest financial support offered to cover living expenses would not compensate for this, and they would be left out of pocket.⁷

They'll turn around and say, "Well if you can work 30 hours at such and such a place then why can't you go and get yourself a proper job?"

Female, NEET group

Eligibility for benefits was also a concern for some young people with disabilities or learning difficulties: 13% of the young people with a disability or learning difficulty who took part in the online survey were worried about the impact on their benefits. This also emerged during the group discussions as a concern for young people with disabilities, and for the parents and carers of young people with learning difficulties.


Although some of the participants in the group discussion with unemployed young people were interested in volunteering, there was agreement among all participants that they would not do so if it meant being worse off financially, and, because of financial considerations, they would have to choose paid employment over a voluntary placement. This would still be the case even if they were offered a volunteering placement where expenses were paid, and even if they were offered an attractive volunteering opportunity.

Amongst this group, there was little conviction that voluntary work would improve their job prospects, as some felt they would simply go back to square one (i.e. seeking paid employment) once the placement ended. Participants in this group were often less convinced than participants who were in education or employment of the less obvious benefits of volunteering:

I've got more life skills walking the streets of Shepherd's Bush (than I could get from volunteering). I don't need (any) more life skills. I need accreditation.

Male, NEET group

⁷ vs Full-time volunteering Guidance notes suggest that Jobcentre advisors may not fully understand the guidance on this matter and that misinformation may therefore be passed on to claimants.



However, a significant barrier to involvement in full-time volunteering among unemployed young people seems to be a lack of awareness. This was the second most frequently cited barrier among this group (30%, significantly higher than the average 16%). In addition to reassurances about the impact of volunteering on their eligibility for benefits, more specific and explicit direction about how to get involved in volunteering may be of value to unemployed young people.

Although financial concerns were foremost in respondents' minds when it came to volunteering full time, most young people cited other practical barriers, most notably a lack of time. The second most frequently cited reason for not volunteering full time was being too busy (60%). Those most likely to say they were too busy included those at university (79%) as well as those at school (72%) and the full-time employed (70%). From the qualitative groups, there appeared to be more positivity towards part-time than full-time volunteering, particularly among older age groups. Indeed, for many, it was the very fact that part-time volunteering opportunities exist that put them off full-time volunteering because part-time placements were more realistic in terms of the time they had available.

Life gets in the way; you just kind of forget and stuff. But then when we're talking about it now and I'm getting all excited about it again, and remembering how much I enjoyed it.

Female, EET group

A lack of interest in volunteering emerged as a barrier for a significant minority of young people (17%); perhaps related to this a minority of young people (16%) also claimed never to have heard about opportunities to volunteer. However, a few participants in the group discussions who had no interest in volunteering initially were, after hearing about the experiences of their peers and seeing the case study examples, much more open to the idea. (See section below, Addressing the barriers to volunteering, for more details.)

Young people with disabilities were more likely than average to highlight practical difficulties that acted against them being able to volunteer. A quarter of disabled young people (25%) stated that they had an illness or disability that would prevent them from volunteering. The group discussions revealed that, even when disabled young people felt able to volunteer, the pre-conceptions of their prospective employers could act against them. Two of the young people with physical disabilities in the discussion groups felt that some prospective employers assumed that they would not be able to manage, without ever actually asking them directly what they could do or what they might not be able to do (and how any potential difficulties could be overcome).

When I've been to work interviews I've only ever had one employer say, "I don't want your arthritis to be a reason why you can't work here". Everyone else has been like, "I don't think you can work here because you've got arthritis".

Female, disability group

During the discussion groups those with learning disabilities expressed more positivity towards full-time volunteering than any of the other groups of young people; many of these participants had experience of volunteering and talked about their positive experiences. These participants did not see their disability as a barrier as they did not self-identify as 'disabled'. They enjoyed volunteering and were quite happy to do it without payment, provided the nature of the tasks was something they enjoyed. The route into volunteering placements was often via support and information provided by trusted carers or parents. Ensuring

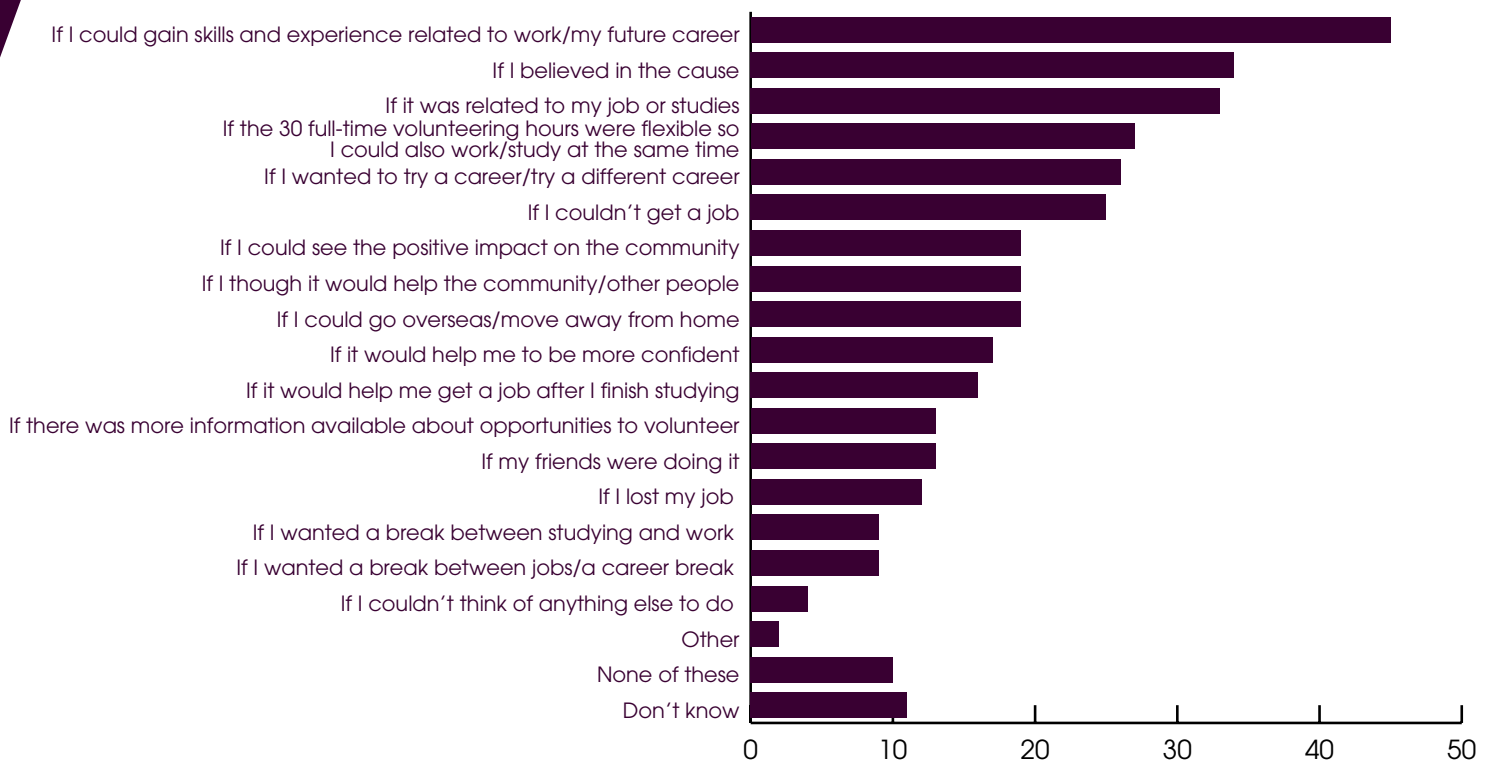
that carers and parents are provided with information – for example, to show that young people with learning difficulties are able to undertake the work, and will be given adequate support whilst doing it – will continue to act against the barriers to participation among this group.

Addressing the barriers and encouraging volunteering

Young people who did not currently volunteer full time, and were not planning to do so, were asked to indicate what factors might encourage them to consider taking up a full-time volunteering placement. Nearly half (45%) said that gaining skills and experience related to their work or career would encourage them to consider volunteering full time. Similarly, a third (33%) said they might consider volunteering full time if the placement was related to their job or studies. However, belief in the cause itself is also important: around a third (34%) said this would be an important driver for them.

As the following chart shows, other factors which also likely to act as an encouragement to young people include: flexible hours to allow full-time volunteering while working or studying (27%), an opportunity to try a different career (26%) and if they were unable to find paid employment (25%).

If you were to volunteer, unpaid, on a full-time basis, in which, if any, of the following areas would you most be interested in working?



Base: 1,366 young people aged 16-25 living in England - excluding full-time volunteers and those who would never consider it, 28th April to 10th May 2009

Gaining skills and experience

These results reflect the findings from the qualitative research described elsewhere in this report: gaining relevant work experience to further a career and/or increase employability was seen as a key attraction of full-time volunteering for all groups (with the exception of those with learning difficulties who had different priorities). Other factors such as general enjoyment/socialising and a belief in the cause were also important, but would not be the primary motivator where full-time voluntary work was to be considered. It was felt that if anyone was to devote such a large portion of their time for free there would need to be something in it for them as well as the cause itself.

I was (working unpaid for a Mental Health organisation) for a gain for myself. I knew it would stand me in fair stead to get a job.

Male, NEET group

Targeting young people at the right time

In the discussion group among those young people currently in employment, education or training, there was a particularly strong feeling that full-time volunteering would probably only be an option for young people between periods of study, for example as a gap year and/or when young people are still living with their parents and that most will want to concentrate on their career and/or getting paid work upon completing their studies. However, a couple of participants, including one of the case studies, had taken part in or were looking for full-time voluntary opportunities after finishing university. For one person this was because he was not sure what he wanted to do and he saw this as an opportunity to take some time out to help people, and for another it was because she was struggling to find paid opportunities in the career she wanted.

The young people in the discussion groups who were in full-time employment made it clear that they would not be prepared, or able, to give up their full-time paid work, but that they might be interested in volunteering part time, especially if it was in a completely different field to their day job. Similarly, participants in the group discussions with unemployed young people said their first priority was looking for paid work, but again they might be interested in volunteering part time, while they were also looking for work (concerns about the impact of full-time volunteering on benefits were also raised by this group – see section, Perceived barriers to volunteering full time, above).

I'd prefer it to be entirely separate, to be honest, if you spend, say, 40 hours a week doing your job, in your leisure time if you are volunteering, yeah, you want to do something entirely different, say go out planting trees or something like that, I'd quite enjoy.

Male, EET group

Financial support

There was a feeling among participants that financial support, usually from family members, was needed if people were to volunteer full time and that this was simply not available to many people (beyond perhaps free accommodation and food if they were still living with their family). It was clear that publicising any financial support that is currently available for full-time volunteers would be important in encouraging full-time volunteering, but also that unless the levels of support in this area are substantial this will remain a real barrier to many young people.

Peer advocacy

Although some of those who had volunteered had discovered these opportunities through their college/university, there was a feeling that school age would be an ideal age to try to introduce young people to the idea of volunteering and the wide variety of opportunities available. Most felt that the best way to enthuse and encourage young people was through other young people, from a similar background, telling them about their experiences, rather than through older people who they may not relate to. Certainly during the discussion groups, peer group advocacy seemed to be highly effective: several participants who had initially had little interest in volunteering were enthused by the experiences of other participants who had volunteered, and by the case study examples from the **v** website that were presented.

One of the case studies referred to a 20 year old who had set up an anti-knife crime and anti-gang violence committee following the stabbing of a close friend⁸. His experience caught the interest of all of the groups who discussed this (the learning difficulty group did not look at these specific case studies), but seemed to resonate with the unemployed discussion group in particular as they felt it was relevant to their area and lives as they were concerned about their own friends and siblings. Several participants in this group said they would like to get involved with something similar in their local area, including two who had said they were initially not keen on the idea of volunteering and would not have associated it with that type of project. One of these two also expressed an interest in the other case study, as described below.

A few of my friends have actually been stabbed and... I would do (something like this) because it's helping to stop that happening again.

Female, NEET group


The knife crime one, I didn't associate that with volunteering - I don't know why.

Female, NEET group

I think the knife crime one (appeals most) because it's one of the only ways to sort it out, because (of) the violence on the streets today, you can't go anywhere without being a tiny bit worried ... That one appeals to me a lot as a 18 year old ... If I had the time on my hands I would want to get involved in that.

Male, disability group

⁸<http://www.vinspired.com/opportunities/case-studies/192-evans-amankwah-20-has-set-up-an-anti-knife-crime-and-anti-gang-violence-committee->



The second case study from the **v** website described the experience of a 22 year old who ran a woodland activity project for children from deprived socio-economic backgrounds or in danger of being excluded from school⁹. She mentioned that this had enhanced her CV and that she had since been offered a fully funded place on a Masters Degree at Oxford University. Different aspects of this example appealed to different people: some were impressed by the outcome of the funded university place, others they liked the honesty about the element of self-interest; some picked up on the £60 per week in expenses, while others were keen on the idea of helping children from deprived socio-economic backgrounds.

I think the (woodland activities project) is quite good as well and like you say it's got youngsters being excluded from school. It's ... strict ... it gets them back into what they know they've got to think about and sort their lives out. So I think both of them are really good, I wouldn't mind looking at both of them myself. And this one's still got £60 a week allowance and that still helps her.

Female, NEET group

She's got a fully funded place in Oxford, that's pretty good.

Female, EET group

I was quite surprised by the support that Francine got. Yeah, giving her £60 a week and a fully funded Masters ... it seems to me like the motives are really (different), what the two people got out of it is very different

Female, disability group

This illustrates the importance and potential impact of both peer advocacy and of raising awareness of a variety of types of voluntary opportunities for inspiring young people to at least think about getting involved in voluntary work.

I read that and I want to do it. I didn't ever think of wanting to do volunteering whatsoever

Female, NEET group

⁹<http://www.vinspired.com/opportunities/case-studies/121-giving-up-my-time-for-kids-helped-me-get-into-oxford>

Progression from part time to full-time volunteering

Among the full-time case study respondents, their route into full-time volunteering had begun with doing at least some volunteering part time¹⁰, so it would seem that encouraging people to get involved in part-time volunteering as a first step (and as early as possible), so they can experience the benefits of volunteering first hand without a huge amount of commitment, might eventually lead to some progressing to full-time volunteering (if circumstances and levels of support allowed this).

Responses to the online survey indicated there are significant differences in the key influencers of volunteering for different groups of young people. Even among the young people who said they would never consider volunteering, when asked what might motivate them to consider taking up a volunteering position, around seven in ten (68%) pointed to at least one option which might prompt them to consider volunteering full time. Gaining skills relevant to work, a placement related to work or studies and being unable to get a job were the three most popular factors for this group (31%, 25% and 23% respectively).

Volunteering with friends

The youngest age group were particularly likely to be influenced by their friends taking part in volunteering (20% aged 16-18 said this compared with 11% of 19-21 year olds and 9% of 22-25 year olds), which again highlights the value of peer group advocacy in encouraging volunteering. Reflecting findings seen elsewhere, this younger group was more likely than older people to be interested in volunteering full time if they could gain skills relevant to their work or future career (52% compared with 39% of 22-25 year olds), or if it would help them to get a job when they finish studying (34% compared with four percent)¹¹. Reflecting these differing life stages, the older age groups had a greater tendency to say that losing their job might lead them to consider full-time volunteering (16% of 22-25 year olds compared with five percent of 16-18 year olds), as did the young people in full-time employment, self employment or apprenticeships (29%).

¹⁰However, in the case of one case study volunteer this did not come across as a key factor in why he applied for the full-time position: he had seen a CSV advert and made his application this way.

¹¹ Note that these age differences are linked to older age groups being more likely than young people to be in employment (53% of 22-25 year olds were working full-time, compared with 34% of 19-21 year olds, and seven percent of 16-18 year olds).

Specific benefits attractive to different groups of young people

As detailed below, some groups – often those groups where current rates of volunteering were higher such as females, those from an ethnic minority background and university students – had a tendency to select a greater number of possible factors which could encourage them towards volunteering full time, suggesting not only specific benefits of particular interest to these groups, but also perhaps a greater openness towards the idea generally or a greater awareness of the opportunities and benefits.

- Young men were more likely than women to say that their friends volunteering full time would encourage them to consider this themselves (15% compared with 11%), as would losing their job (15% compared with 9%). Young women, however, were more likely than young men to say a number of other possible factors we asked about would encourage them, including gaining skills or experience related to their work (47% compared with 42%), helping the community or other people (22% compared with 17%) and helping them to be more confident (19% compared with 15%).
- A greater proportion of young people from ethnic minority groups than white young people suggested that a number of the factors listed would encourage them to consider full-time volunteer work, such as the placement being related to their job or studies (47% compared with 31%) and the full-time voluntary hours being flexible so they could work or study at the same time (39% compared with 25%).
- University students too had a higher than average tendency to say many of the suggested potential benefits would act as an encouragement to them (see full data tables for more detailed information).


Increasing confidence was a particularly important potential driver for young people not yet in employment, including those who are at school (30%), university (24%) or unemployed/inactive (25% compared with an average of 17%) as well as people with disabilities or learning difficulties (28% compared with 15% of others). This was also mentioned during the qualitative research and was certainly a key benefit of volunteering for those with learning difficulties. This also reflects the idea that it is important to target the relevant potential benefits to relevant groups or people at particular life stages (e.g. when looking for work, taking a gap year, etc).

Well, I was 18, and I was trying to find work, and I kept failing at interviews and things, so I would have gone into volunteering to gain confidence.

Case Study 1

Well, I've learnt to do things properly, so I don't make mistakes
Male, learning difficulties group

Some groups were more likely than average to say they did not know what would encourage them to volunteer full time, including young people who were unemployed/inactive (15% compared with 11%), those with no formal qualifications (20%) and those with vocational qualifications (17%). This may indicate that to encourage full-time volunteering or indeed any volunteering among these groups there would need to be a drive to increase awareness of the possible benefits. The discussion group with unemployed young people suggests that any opportunities presented would have to be relevant to them and their situation as well as promote the possibility that volunteering could actually improve their job prospects



in the long run and, finally, counter the perception that volunteering is realistically only a possibility for wealthy people (e.g. by addressing concerns about benefits and publicising sources of financial support).

Once you've finished volunteering you're going to come back and be that broke person again.

Female, NEET group

Young people who had not volunteered recently either formally or informally, were more likely than those who had done so to indicate either that none of the potential benefits mentioned would encourage them to consider volunteering full time (17% compared with seven percent) or to say they didn't know which, or if any, of the factors listed would encourage them to volunteer (19% compared with seven percent).

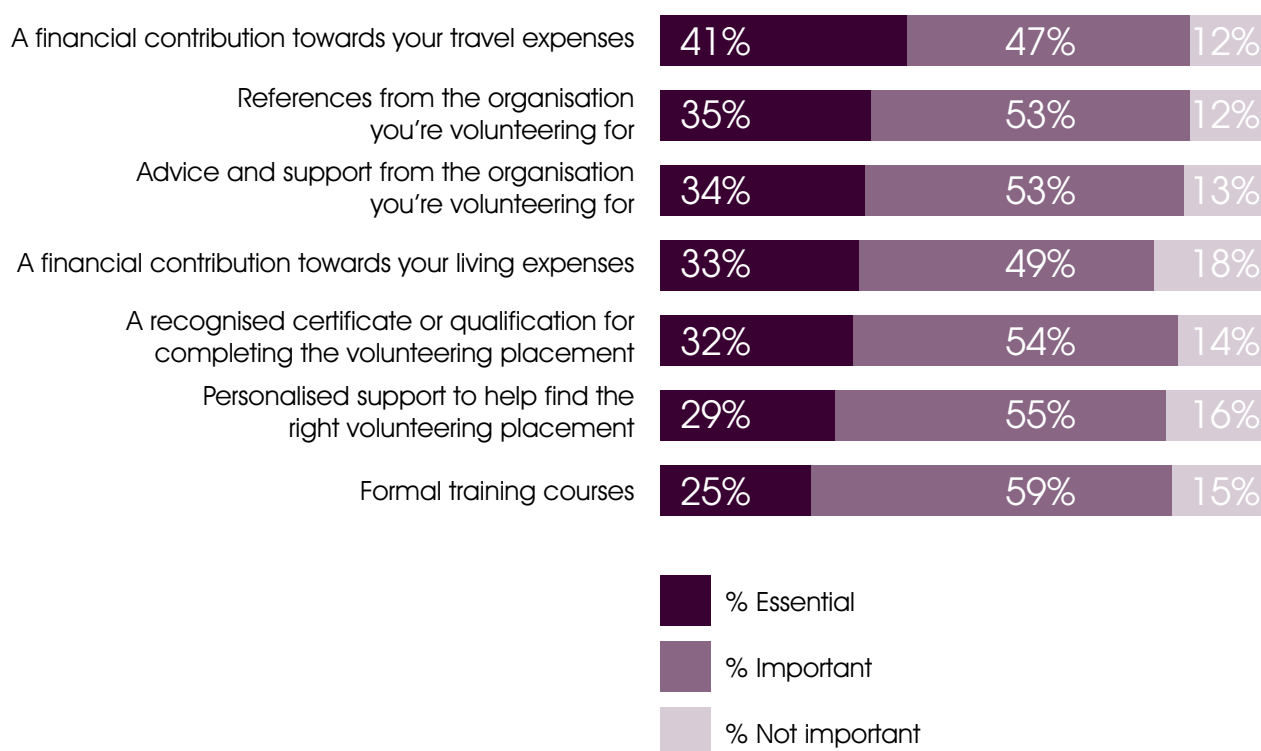
A key point to make at this stage is that the online questions asked about what might encourage young people to at least consider full-time volunteering as an option; this would not necessarily lead to all of those who said they might be encouraged to consider the option actually to take action, especially when the practical concerns raised about full-time volunteering are taken into account.

Most of those who took part in the discussion groups, who had had time to discuss the practical implications, said that although the idea of volunteering full time was appealing, the practical reality for many people was that they would need to get a full-time job, for financial reasons, which would mean that volunteering part time would, for all but the wealthy, be their only option (as discussed earlier). Therefore the challenge will be translating the interest in volunteering into action, which is likely to involve publicising the range of opportunities and benefits, but also the practical (especially financial) support available to full-time volunteers.

What types of support would young volunteers need?

Given that financial concerns emerged as the key concern for young people in both the qualitative and quantitative research, it is unsurprising that for the young people who took part in the online survey (again excluding those who were currently volunteering full time and those who said they would never consider doing this), the type of support most likely to be judged as essential in encouraging them to volunteer full time was a financial contribution towards travel expenses (41%), a perceived barrier to full-time volunteering. This was followed by a number of other types of support including: a financial contribution towards living expenses (33%), references from the organisation they would be volunteering for (35%), advice and support from the organisation (34%), and a recognised certificate or qualification (32%). As the following chart shows, relatively few people felt that any of these types of support were unimportant.

How important, if at all, would each of the following types of help be in encouraging you to consider taking up a full-time, unpaid, volunteering placement?



Base: 1, 366 young people aged 16-25 living in England - excluding full-time volunteers and those who would never consider it, 28th April to 10th May 2009

Financial support to cover expenses

The qualitative findings suggest that it will be very difficult to persuade young people who are in employment to give up a full-time job to volunteer, or to volunteer if it would mean them being financially worse off, but others could perhaps be persuaded if they were able to claim expenses that would allow them to survive – for those living with parents this might only entail minimal expenses for food and travel, while for those living independently this is likely to also include housing costs and perhaps also utility bills.

Of the six case studies, two were living with parents (and so felt the relatively modest/travel and food expenses provided by the organisations they were volunteering for were sufficient for them), one was volunteering while at university (doing a course requiring only two days per week) and living on the support usually available to students (e.g. from loans and/or parents), and two were living independently after completing a degree and receiving expenses to cover their rent, living expenses and travel. The two volunteers who lived independently said that living on the expenses provided by their volunteer organisation was very difficult, but just about feasible with careful budgeting. One mentioned that he had the safety net of his parents' support if needed, although he appreciated others may not have this. He also made the point that he had become used to living on a tight budget as a student. This indicates that there might be some potential to target young people at this stage in their life before they have become used to earning a full-time wage. However, as this case study volunteer noted, many young people are keen to get into a paid career immediately after completing their studies (see appendices for full case studies)

I'm still living with my parents, so it's ok. I don't need the money to survive or anything

Case study 1 (received around £20 a week for 5-10 hours per week)

If you spend it correctly and wisely it's fine. But (you can't) go out and buy a pair of trainers ... After being a student for a long time you get to live within your means quite well

Case study 3 (received housing, living costs and travel expenses)

There's this rush to get into a career, certainly a lot of my friends rushed off to become either bankers or tax inspectors, or lawyers ... Whilst (they) will get a lot of money, (they're) not getting any experience... I may be earning £60 a week, but I'm earning so much more than that in life points!

Case study 3 (received housing, living costs and travel expenses)

The online survey findings reflect the views of the case study participants. Those young people still in school were less likely than average to say that a financial contribution towards travel expenses or living expenses would be essential or important in encouraging them to consider full-time volunteer work. Nevertheless, even among school pupils, a majority felt that financial help was essential or important; for example, 71% said a contribution towards living expenses would be essential or important, compared with 82% on average.

For those not in employment or training, a contribution towards travel expenses was particularly likely to be viewed as essential (50% compared with 41% average). Conversely, young people in full-time employment and those aged 22-25 were particularly likely to rate a contribution towards living expenses as essential (38% and 37% compared with 33% average)¹².

¹² Note that there is a significant degree of overlap between these two groups: 53% of those aged 22-25 are working full-time compared with 34% on average.

Young people who had experience of volunteering formally or informally were more likely than those who had not to say that travel expenses were essential or important (90% compared with 84%) and also that living expenses were important (52% compared with 45%).

Both types of expenses were particularly likely to be rated as essential in encouraging a consideration of full-time volunteering among the young people who said they 'didn't know' how they felt about the idea of volunteering full time (39% compared with 33% average for living expenses).

Many of those who took part in the discussion groups who were claiming various benefits, including JSA and housing benefit, believed that they would not be able to volunteer full time without their benefits being stopped, as effectively they would no longer be actively seeking employment and/or they wouldn't have time to do all the activities and keep the records required to prove this. Some said that if they would be no worse off financially they would be interested in volunteering full time for a project they were interested in. However, other participants said they would still rather concentrate on getting paid work, but would perhaps consider volunteering part time.

If there were expenses paid then, yeah, by all means you're going to do something to pass time, like you say your expenses are being paid... (but if the opportunity came along) then I'd have to take the paid job

Female, NEET group

If you're not actively seeking work you can't get Job Seeker's Allowance.

Male, NEET group

You'd rather go out and look for work and get yourself a job.

Female, NEET group

Recognition and qualifications

A recognised certificate or qualification was particularly likely to be seen as essential by the young people who were not in employment, education or training (42% compared with 32% average). This also came out of the qualitative discussion groups to some degree: for example, one person who took part in the discussion group among unemployed young people commented that:

If you get a qualification out of it then that helps, that goes a long way with some people that didn't finish school and go to college, like myself, because I didn't finish school so that would help a lot.

Female, NEET

In line with this, references from the organisation they would be volunteering for would be essential for a relatively large proportion of young people who were parents or carers (43% compared with 33% of non-carers/parents).

Those who had some recent experience of formal or informal volunteering were also more likely than average to see a recognised certificate or qualification as essential or important than those who had not (88% compared with 83%) and for these groups the same pattern also applies to formal training courses (86% compared with 81%). Likewise, people with some recent experience of voluntary work were particularly likely to say references would be essential or important to them (90% compared with 85% of those with no recent experience). A similar picture emerged from the case study work with

young volunteers: these volunteers were generally very positive about anything that would add to their CV or improve their job prospects.

Some groups had a greater tendency than others to feel that advice and support from the organisation they would be volunteering for would be essential or important in encouraging them to consider full-time volunteering, including university students (95% compared with 87% average) and those with recent experience of volunteering (89% compared with 83% of those who had not).

There were few significant differences between the various sub-groups in terms of the importance of personalised support to help them find the right placement.

Placement support

From the group discussions and case studies it was apparent that the level of support on offer would need to be tailored both to the nature of the work, for example in terms of job-specific training, but also the preference and needs of each individual. For example, some participants in the discussion group with unemployed young people were happy to admit that they would need quite strong encouragement and structured support from a manager, whereas others, who contributed to the case studies for example, said they wanted independence rather than micro-management - they saw taking on responsibility and being autonomous as an enjoyable and important part of the challenge.

If you're working for a charity then you have a goal so you need to have someone on your back saying.

Female, NEET group

Someone has to come and tell me (to) hurry up.

Female, NEET group

The people with mobility disabilities who took part in the qualitative research explained that they may require extra support with certain tasks, but also that they did not want assumptions made about what they could or could not do in either voluntary or paid employment.

I've had people ring up and say, "you've got the job but can you check that you really want it because you do realise you're going to have to be working full time and you're going to have to do this, this and this?". And I've said, "I applied the job, I can do it", and they're like, "are you sure, you have arthritis?" And I'll say, "Are you offering it to me or not, do you want me to take the job or say no?" You can see their alarm bells ringing

Female, disability group

I think they need to be active about enabling you to do the job, don't say, "You can't do this because you have X or Y, we're going to find a way for you to do this".

Female, disability group

If I wanted to volunteer with people who exhibited (some) kind of (unpredictable) behaviour it would be helpful to have somebody there who could restrain them, so you can still do the work without having risk to your own health

Female, disability group

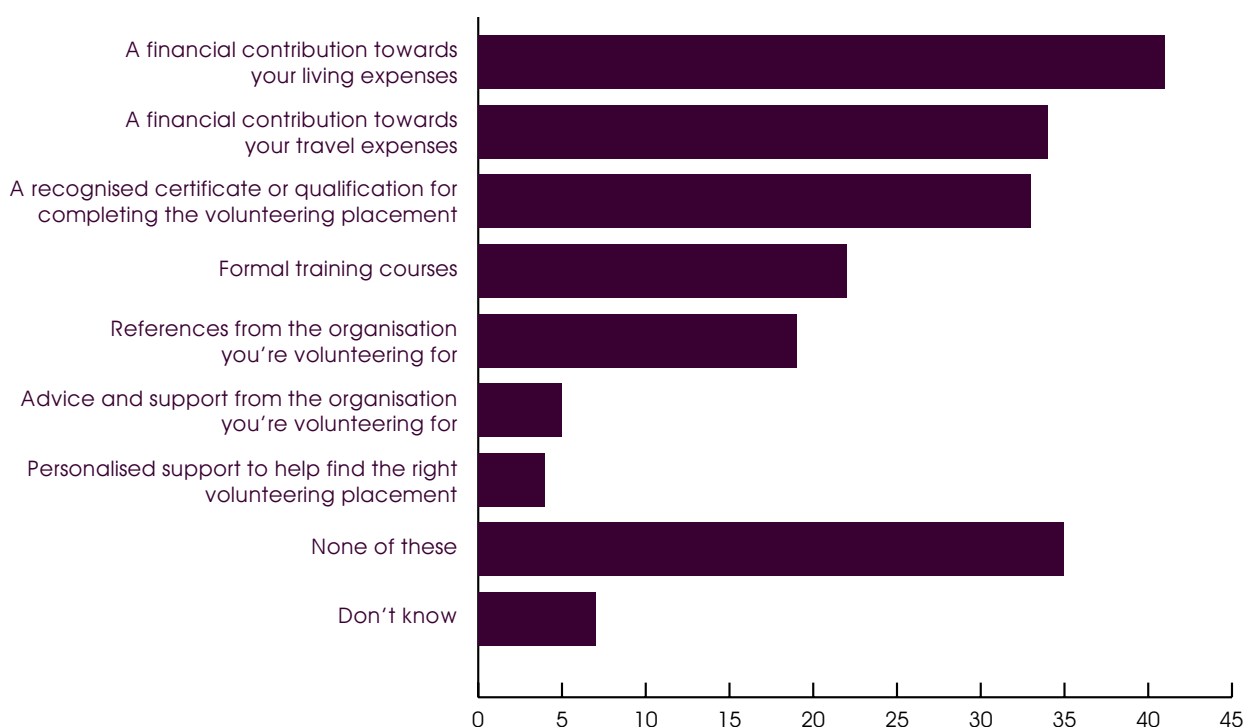
The young people who took part in the learning difficulties group tended to need the encouragement of their support work to get involved in volunteering initially, as they knew them and they could help them to find suitable volunteering opportunities.

Support which might encourage those who said they would never consider volunteering full time

For those who stated that they would never consider volunteering full time a similar picture emerged in terms of the relative importance of different types of support, with financial contributions being the most likely to persuade them at least to consider full-time volunteering: 41% mentioned a contribution towards living expenses and 34% mentioned a contribution towards travel expenses might make them consider volunteering. Again, a recognised certificate or qualification might also lead one third (33%) to consider full-time volunteering.

However, around one third (35%) remained resolute that none of the types of support listed would make them consider full-time volunteering as an option. For these young people the best option may be to try to encourage an interest in volunteering part time, at least as a first step which could inspire greater levels of involvement. It was interesting to see in the EET and NEET group discussions in particular, the young people who came into the group expressing minimal or no interest in voluntary work became more interested as the discussion went on (though not necessarily in full-time volunteering due to financial and practical limitations). As discussed earlier, this was as a result of hearing others in the group talk with enthusiasm about their experiences and the types of opportunities available as well as seeing two case studies from the vInspired website, which were used as a discussion point.

Which of these, if any, might make you consider taking up a full-time, unpaid, volunteering placement?



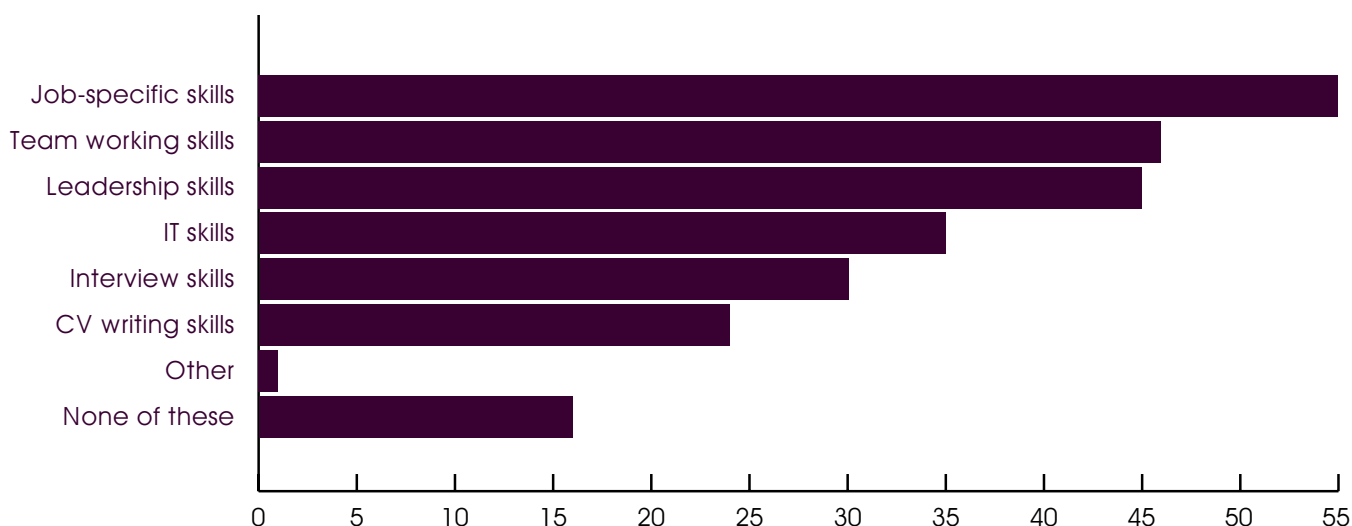
Base: 584 young people aged 16-25 living in England - who would never consider volunteering full-time, 28th April to 10th May 2009

The relatively small numbers in many of the sub-group categories for this question mean that it is not possible to analyse the findings for specific groups in detail. However, it is interesting that, in line with the qualitative findings, the young people who were in full-time employment were particularly likely to say that none of the types of support suggested would encourage them to consider volunteering full time (43% compared with 35% average). The same applies to those with no recent experience of volunteering (47% said none of the support would make them consider volunteering compared with 28% of those who have volunteered formally/informally in the past year).

Training


As shown in the following chart, among those who said training might be important in encouraging them to consider volunteering on a full-time basis, job-specific skills were most popular (55%), followed by team-working skills (46%) and leadership skills (45%).

And which, if any, of the following types of training would encourage you to consider taking up a full-time volunteering placement? Training to help you acquire



Base: 1,288 young people aged 16-25 living in England - all who said training was important in considering full-time volunteering, 28th April to 10th May 2009

Many of those who took part in the group discussions said that training relevant to any specific voluntary job would be important, both to do that job and for future job prospects. Some suggested that, realistically, organisations would only pay for relevant training in any case. Two of the young people who shared their experience for the case studies for this research said that, although they gained invaluable experience and skills through their voluntary work, such as communication skills, project management, time management, leadership skills and organisational skills, their experience could have been even better with the provision of more formal job-specific training when they first started their placements. In particular, they felt that management skills, running young people's groups and health and safety training would have been valuable.



I think it depends on where you're working, like if you had to report back on all your (work) on a computer then (they should) give you IT training but if they just want to chat to you then you don't need it to do that job. So they're not going to waste their time training you to do it.

Female, NEET group

I think I would have appreciated more formal training, that would have been nice. It's not been that I've not been able to manage without it but I think it would have been helpful and for some people that join the project I think it would have been more helpful for them than not. I think generally that I've loved running the project because I've got the freedom to do what you would like, your take on community involvement, but I don't think I've got that many complaints. I think the support and the training are my two issues.

Case study 5

Among young people who said that training would be important to them in considering full-time volunteering there were some differences in terms of the types of training of most interest. Job-specific skills were particularly popular among those who were unemployed/inactive (64% compared with 55% average), alongside interview skills (42% compared with 30% average) and IT skills (47% compared with 35% average).

Job-specific skills would also be a driver for considering full-time volunteering for those still at university (66% compared with 55% average), along with leadership skills (54% compared with 45% average).

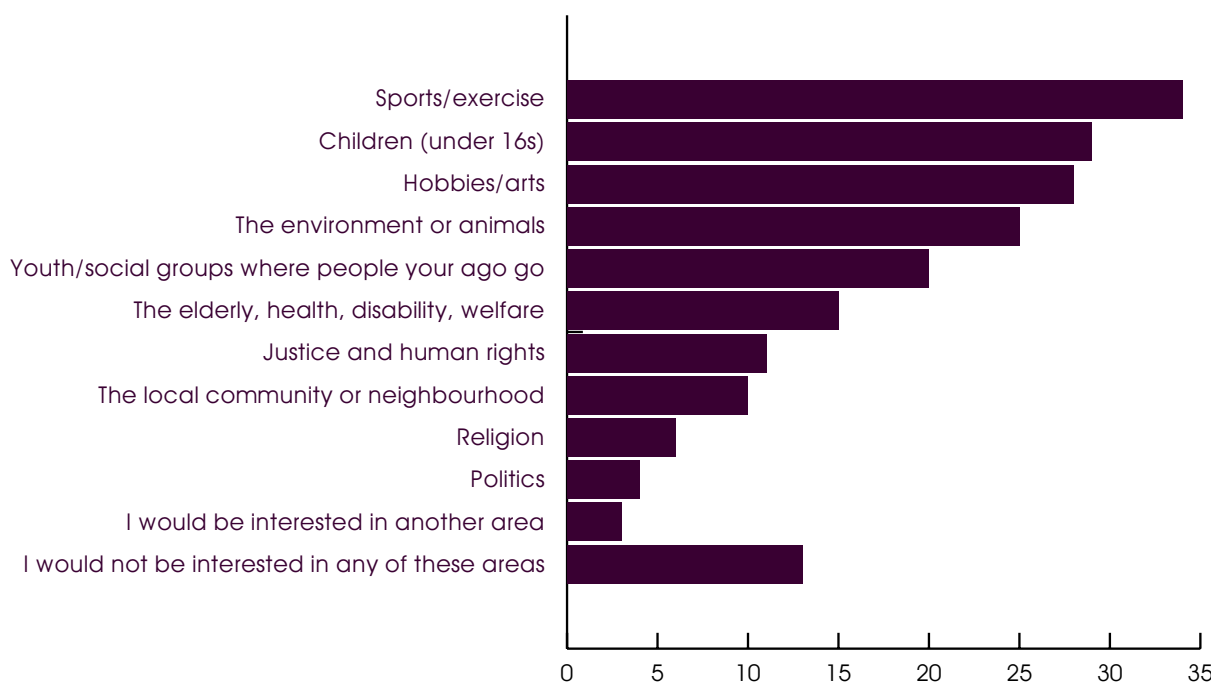
Interestingly, the young people with no formal qualifications said training in team working skills might encourage them to consider volunteering full time.

Those in the youngest age group were less likely to be interested in gaining leadership skills (38% compared with 47% of 19-25 year olds) and more interested in interview skills (35% compared with 26% of 22-25 year olds), perhaps again reflecting the variation in priorities for young people at different life stages – e.g. their immediate concerns in getting a first job, or a place in further education, rather than aiming to progress in their chosen career.

What do attractive full-time volunteering opportunities look like?

Young people who were not currently volunteering full time but who did not rule out the idea of volunteering full time at some point in the future were asked to indicate the types of volunteer work they might be interested in¹³. The responses revealed a wide variety of interests and preferences, as indicated in the chart below. However, the areas of interest to the largest numbers were placements involving sports or exercise (34%), children (29%), hobbies and the arts (28%), the environment or animals (25%) and youth groups (20%).

If you were to volunteer, unpaid, on a full-time basis, in which, if any, of the following areas would you most be interested in working?



1,366 young people aged 16-25 living in England - excluding full-time volunteers and those who would never consider it, 28th April to 10th May 2009

There were some obvious gender differences in terms of preferences for different types of volunteering placements. Volunteering opportunities in the field of sports and exercise were particularly likely to be of interest to males (47% compared with 20% females). Females were more likely than males to be drawn to voluntary work with children (43% compared with 15%), the environment or animals (30% compared with 21%), or in the area of the elderly, health, disability and welfare (23% compared with 7%).

Interest in volunteering placements also varied by age. Sports and exercise placements were of particular interest to those in the youngest age groups (38% of 16-21 year olds compared with 28% of 22-25 year olds). Younger people were also most likely to express an interest in volunteering in youth or social groups for people of their own age (23% of 16-21 year olds compared with 17% of 22-25 year olds). The older 22-25 year old group was more likely than younger groups to

¹³ I.e. those who indicated they might consider volunteering full-time in the future, did not know whether they might volunteer full-time in the future, or who were planning to volunteer full-time in the future were asked these questions.

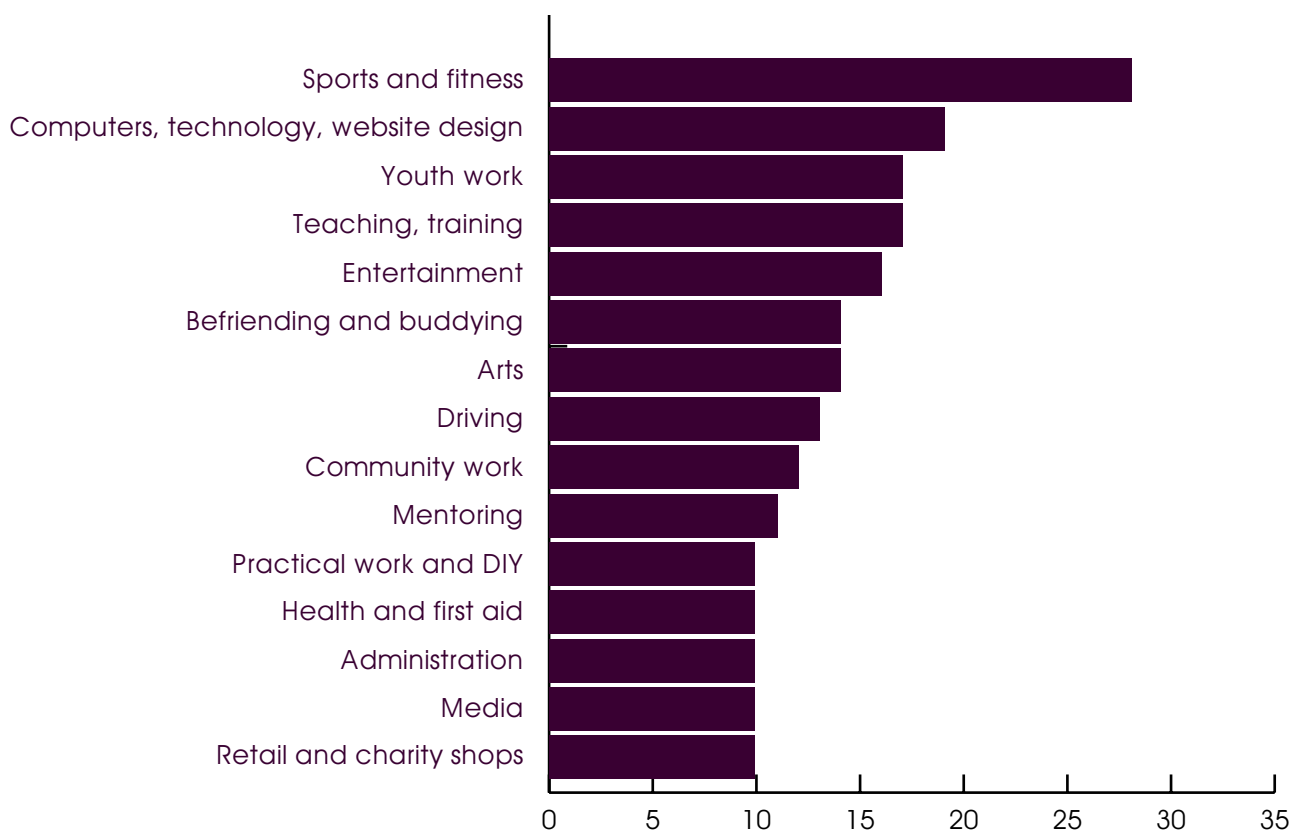
mention volunteer work in the fields of the elderly, health, disability and welfare (18% compared with 11% of 16-18 year olds) and their local community (12% compared with seven percent of 16-18 year olds).

Young people from ethnic minority groups had a greater tendency than those from a white background to say they would be interested in volunteering in a number of areas, most notably religion (20% compared with three percent), but also justice and human rights (18% compared with 10%) and hobbies/arts (36% compared with 27%).

These differences indicate the importance to **v** of continuing to offer and publicise a wide range of voluntary opportunities to ensure there are placements available to appeal to everyone.


When asked to think about the specific types of activities which would be of most interest if they were to volunteer on a full-time basis, sports and fitness were again most popular among young people¹⁴; around three in ten (28%) mentioned this. One in five (19%) also expressed an interest in volunteer work which involved computers, technology or website design. Other popular activities are detailed in the following chart.

If you were to volunteer, unpaid, on a full-time basis, in which, if any, of the following areas would you most be interested in working?



1,366 young people aged 16-25 living in England - excluding full-time volunteers and those who would never consider it, 28th April to 10th May 2009

¹⁴ Again, question asked of those who indicated they might consider volunteering full-time in the future, did not know whether they might volunteer full-time in the future, or who were planning to volunteer full-time in the future. Those who would never consider volunteering full-time, or who already did, were not asked this question.



The online research indicated that sports and fitness were again of particular interest to the youngest 16-18 year old group (32% compared with 24% of 22-25 year olds). However, some of the most noticeable differences were by gender, for example, males were much more likely than females to mention sports and fitness (40% compared with 15%) and computers, technology or website design (28% compared with 11%), while females were more likely to express an interest in volunteering in the arts (19% compared with 8%) and befriending or buddying (19% compared with 9%). Other options, though, such as entertainment, were gender neutral (16% and 17% respectively)¹⁵.

There were again also some differences by ethnicity; young people from an ethnic minority background were considerably more likely than white young people to say they would be interested in community work (18% compared with 10%), business, management and research (14% compared with four percent), languages (10% compared with four percent) and legal work (10% compared with three percent).

This diversity of preferences in terms of the types of opportunities young people are interested in links with findings from the qualitative research. A key finding from the qualitative discussion groups was the importance of offering young people volunteering opportunities which resonated with their specific interests, lifestyle and social background. One of the case study volunteers who had worked as a volunteer coordinator, and as part of this role had been responsible for encouraging other young people to volunteer, similarly highlighted that there needs to be a careful match between volunteers and the placement to ensure that both parties get maximum benefit from the experience:

Not every person ... who wants to do voluntary work is going to fit in any placement. Some people might be lucky enough to but I think (with) other people it depends on what their interests are, what kind of person they are, what kind of character they have as to what would suit them best ... I don't think that's a bad thing because there's such a wide variety of roles available to them.

Case study 5

During the qualitative discussions, some participants stressed that the area of work would need to be directly related to improving their prospects for a future career, while for others the key to inspiring interest might be finding a cause that relates directly to their community or experiences. For example, the case study relating to a volunteer's work to reduce knife crime in his local area sparked the interest of participants in the group discussions with unemployed young people in particular, several of whom said they were worried about knife crime in their area and the danger this posed to their friends and family (discussed in more detail later).

A few of my friends have actually been stabbed ... I would do (something like volunteering to help fight knife crime) because it's helping to stop that happening again

Female, NEET group

Young people who might consider volunteering full time in the future were asked about the sectors they would most like to work in if they did volunteer full time¹⁶. Around three in ten (28%) said they would be most interested in working within the voluntary sector, while around one in five (22%) said they would like to work within the public sector. Fewer mentioned international organisations (10%) or the private

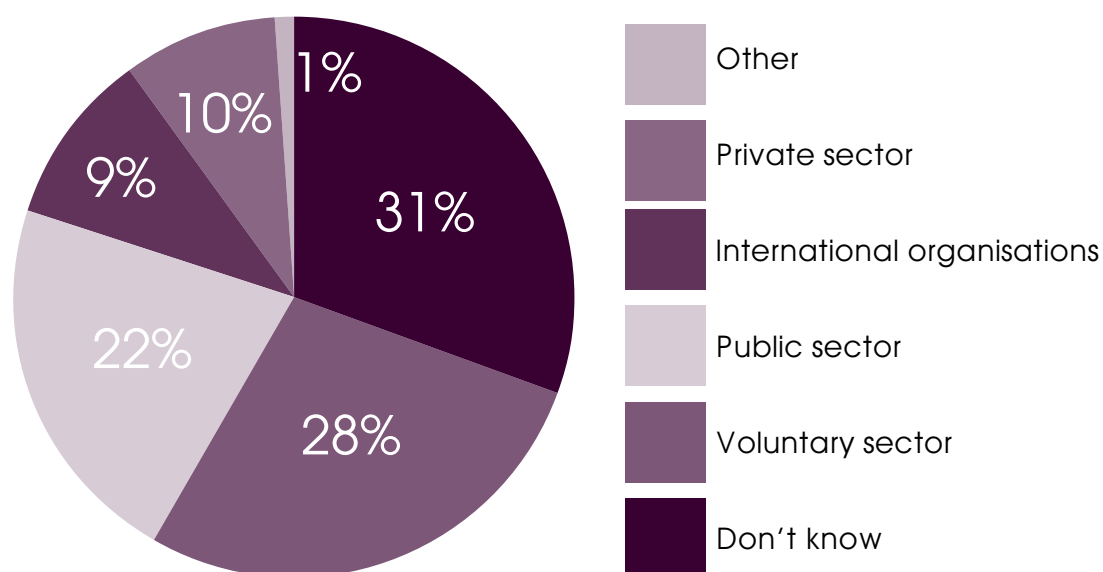
¹⁵ Please see full data tables for more detailed information.

sector (nine percent). A significant proportion (31%) said they did not know which type of organisation they would be interested in. This level of uncertainty corroborates findings reported elsewhere in this work; a significant minority of young people are not fully informed about volunteering and/or have never considered it as an option.

The qualitative findings suggest that the voluntary sector and public sector are more readily associated with volunteering (i.e. with helping other people), while the private sector may be associated more with work experience. This might be one explanation for the lower numbers mentioning the private sector – young people may not be aware that some work within the private sector (i.e. helping the community in some way) could be classified as volunteering.

Organisations of most interest

If you were to volunteer, unpaid, on a full-time basis, which, if any, of these types of organisation would you be most interested in working in?



1,366 young people aged 16-25 living in England - excluding full-time volunteers and those who would never consider it, 28th April to 10th May 2009

University students were considerably more likely than average to express an interest in volunteering full time for international organisations (18% compared with 10% overall).

As noted above, there were mixed views about volunteering for international organisations in the qualitative discussions. Some participants in the discussion with young people in education, employment or training were keen on volunteering abroad, although a few had been put off by the expense involved. While a few participants in the discussion with young people not in employment, education or training were interested in overseas volunteering, many of these participants seemed to be more open to the idea of volunteering in their own communities for causes that they could readily relate to and care about.

¹⁶ Question asked of those who indicated they might consider volunteering full-time in the future, did not know whether they might volunteer full-time in the future, or who were planning to volunteer full-time in the future.

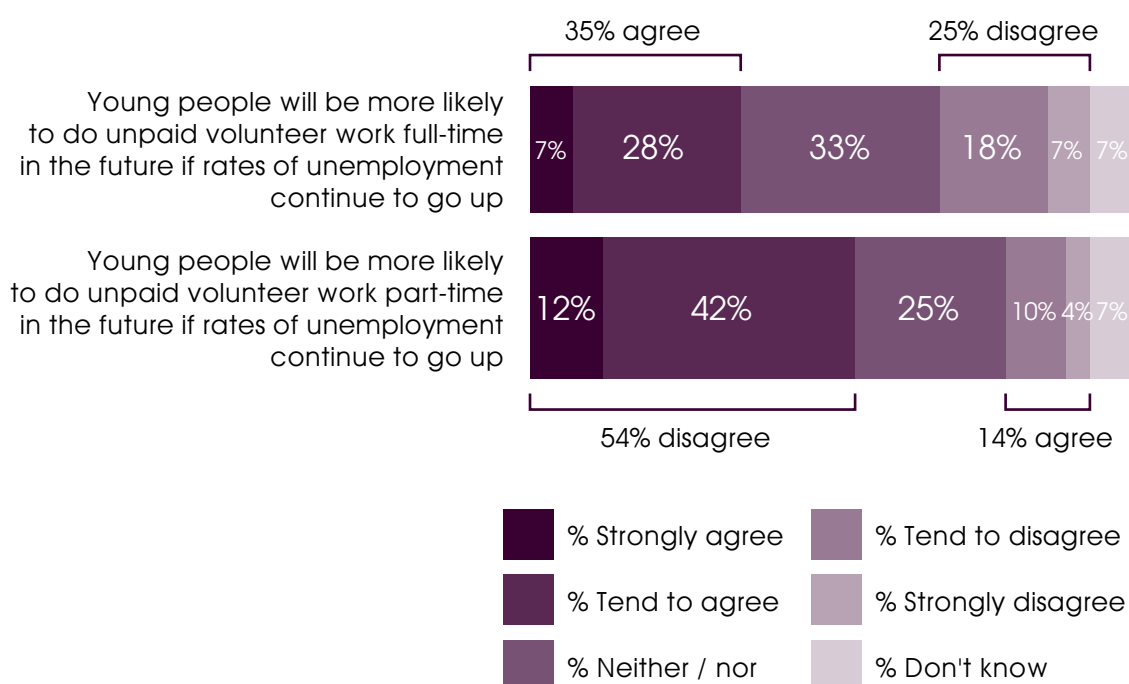
Perceived impact of rising unemployment on levels of volunteering

On balance, young people agreed that their peers would be more likely to volunteer (either full time or part time) if rates of unemployment continue to rise (57% agree). Just over half (54%) agreed in terms of part time volunteering, compared with 14% who disagreed. Views were much more split when it comes to the likely impact of the recession on young people's propensity to volunteer full time; one third (35%) agreed young people will be more likely to volunteer full time if rates of unemployment continue to go up and a quarter (25%) disagreed.


Young people currently in full-time employment were more likely than average to agree that rising unemployment may lead to a rise in their peers volunteering full time (39% compared with 35%). Those with a degree were also more likely than average to feel that full-time volunteering (45% compared with 35%) and part-time volunteering (61% compared with 54%) would be more popular if unemployment rates rise.

Elsewhere in the online survey we asked young people who did not currently volunteer, and who were not planning to do so, what might encourage them to consider volunteering full time. A quarter (25%) said 'if I couldn't find a job' they might consider volunteering and 12% if they lost their job. Taken together, the findings suggest that volunteering may become increasingly appealing to some young people who cannot find work. However, the findings suggest that the barriers to full-time volunteering would not necessarily be overcome just because someone was out of work (or, indeed there may be different barriers), which perhaps explains why young people are more likely to agree that rates of part-time than full-time volunteering would be likely to increase.

Impact of increasing unemployment on volunteering To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Base: 1,997 young people aged 16-25 living in England, 28th April to 10th May 2009



Several participants in the discussion group of those in employment or studying noted that, in a more competitive jobs market, the need to generate as much relevant experience as possible is more crucial than ever, particularly if they are seeking work in a specific industry or sector. Thus, while general volunteering experience demonstrates a desire to 'muck in' to potential employers, internships demonstrate that candidates are serious about their chosen profession where full-time job opportunities are scarce.

That said, some believed that the volunteering work could be tailored to fit their chosen career, and that even a vague connection between the work and their ideal career could prove beneficial, especially where there is no alternative of a more tailored work experience role.

I did some volunteer work when I was at uni, working in a school with kids that have got emotional difficulties, and the main reason I did it then was because I was thinking about becoming a teacher, and to become a teacher a lot of the time to get yourself on to the course, you need to have some experience of working with kids.

Female, EET group

If anything, the EET group participants felt that the recession, and a subsequently more challenging jobs market, may lead to graduates feeling they need to start looking for paid work as soon as they leave university, rather than taking time out for other things like travelling or volunteering. They may be more likely to do unpaid work at a time of high unemployment but that work should be undertaken with a view to assisting their ascent onto the career ladder: as such they would seek out opportunities on the basis of being able to provide useful work experience.

Views on compulsory citizenship programme proposals


In addition to seeking young people's views about full-time volunteering, the research also captured their views about proposed schemes to introduce compulsory periods of community service (similar to voluntary work) among 16-25 year olds. Young people were then asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the proposals, which were described as follows:

It is proposed that 16 to 25 year olds would be required to spend one year taking part in full-time (i.e. at least 30 hours per week) compulsory service to benefit other people, the community or environment, in return for a payment to cover 'modest' living costs (for example, this might be in line with the minimum wage or up to £100 per week for expenses).

Young people were somewhat more likely to support (40%) than oppose (31%) a compulsory national citizenship programme for young people in Britain¹⁷.

However, the qualitative findings painted a slightly different picture, perhaps because the participants had spent time discussing in some detail the practical implications of full-time voluntary work and some of the barriers to it (as well as the benefits). Most of the participants in the qualitative research were against the idea of forcing people to take part in such a

¹⁷ Note: A recent YouGov poll indicated 51% support for such a programme among 18-34 year olds, but this is not directly comparable as this survey did not include a 'neither' response option and the question wording was slightly different



programme for a number of reasons, including the general belief that people shouldn't really be forced to do anything, especially once they had left school. There was also a concern that the presence of people lacking in enthusiasm would negatively impact on the volunteering experience, and that such a lack of enthusiasm would not be good for the projects they would be working on or the people they were helping. Some also suggested that young people would simply refuse to take part in such a scheme.

I don't think you would get people to do it... It made me think of National Service. In this day and age... I just can't imagine everyone doing it willingly, and ... what would happen if you didn't want to do it?

I think if it's compulsory volunteering it's not volunteering in my mind. They can call it something else and they can label it something else but ... it isn't volunteering. As I say, the experience of having someone there who wants to do it, who wants to help, be it transform some bit of garden, conservation work, or whether it's helping out at some community centre, the people who really want to do it are the people who make it an enjoyable experience... The fact that it's ... something I have to do, then I automatically don't want to do it

Case study 5

I don't think we should be forced into doing it

Female, EET group

I think it would be taking the wrong tack, I think if you have people volunteering in jobs that they don't want, they don't want to be there, they don't want to be doing that job, they don't care whether they do it well or not. It's not going to make people enjoy the whole voluntary experience, you can definitely tell when there are volunteers who are just doing it for their CV and don't really care

Female, disability group

It was certainly felt that if such a scheme was to be introduced the type of work offered would need to be interesting and the individual should also have a choice in what they did. There was some concern that this type of programme might primarily involve tasks such as litter picking, which would not be popular with most people.

You know they're going to do that: you're going to be delivering food to old people and picking up litter

Female, NEET group

You want to do something different, if they give me different jobs every day of the week I think I'd take it

Female, NEET group

As long as you could choose what it is you have to (do), what you volunteer for (it would be OK)

Female, NEET group

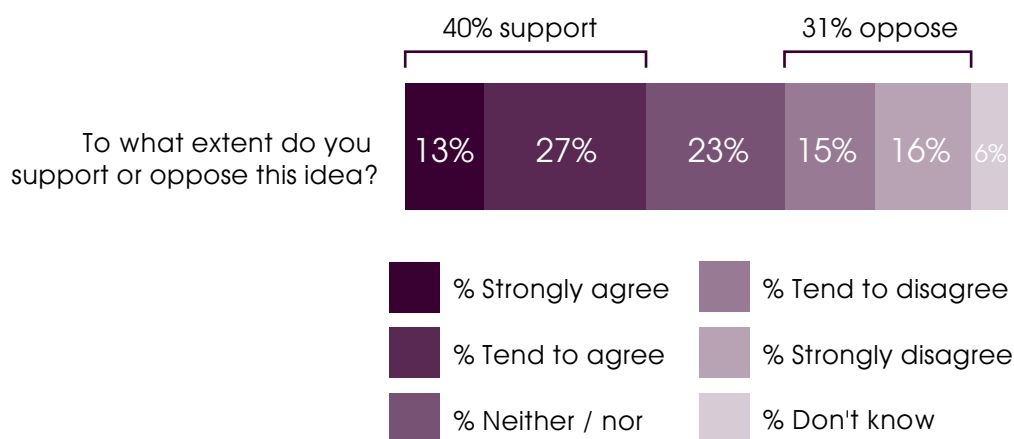
It seemed there would be a little more support from some if this type of programme was for a shorter period of time, such as one or two months.

One month...three months even, but a year that's a bit... (long)

Female, NEET group

Levels of support for a compulsory national citizenship programme for young people

It has been suggested that a compulsory national citizenship programme for young people should be introduced in Britain. Under this scheme it is proposed that 16 to 25 year olds would be required to spend one year taking part in full-time (i.e. at least 30 hrs per week) compulsory service to benefit other people, the community or environment, in return for a payment to cover 'modest' living costs (for example, this might be in line with the minimum wage or up to £100 per week for expenses).



Base: 1,997 young people aged 16-25 living in England, 28th April to 10th May 2009

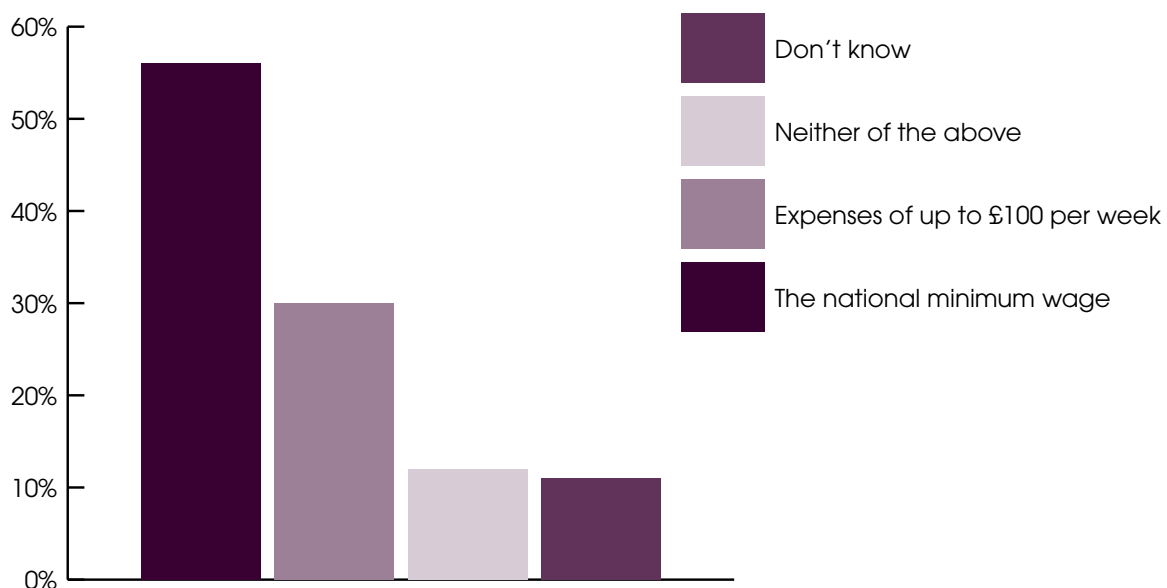
Levels of support for a compulsory national citizenship programme were particularly high among parents (49% compared with 40% average), young people with learning difficulties or disabilities (52% compared with 40% average), the 22-25 year old age group (46% compared with 40% average) and young people with a degree or higher qualification (48% compared with 40% average). Those whose highest level of qualification so far was at A level were more likely than average to actively oppose such as scheme (39% compared with 31%).

Young people who had volunteered either formally or informally in the past year had a greater tendency to support the idea than those who had not experienced either (44% compared with 34% respectively). There were few notable differences by employment status or gender.

As might be expected, young people who had stated they would never consider volunteering full time were more likely than average to oppose this type of scheme (43% oppose compared with 31%).

Although two in five (40%) young people said they would support a national citizenship programme, the findings from the follow-up question should be considered alongside other contextual evidence. The proposals for a compulsory community service programme refer to a 'modest payment' in exchange for young people's work. When prompted about what would constitute a reasonable modest payment, for most (56%) it would mean the national minimum wage, as opposed to expenses of up to £100 per week (which a minority of 30% felt would be reasonable). Twelve percent said that neither or these potential payment options would be acceptable.

If this compulsory national citizenship programme for young people was to be introduced, which, if any, of the following would you consider to be reasonable 'modest' payment?



Base: 1,997 young people aged 16-25 living in England, 28th April to 10th May 2009

Young people in full-time employment (which includes apprentices and the self employed), were more likely than average to suggest that the national minimum wage would be reasonable 'modest' payment (60% compared with 56%) and less likely to say that expenses of up to £100 per week would be sufficient (24% compared with 30%). Meanwhile, university students had a greater than average tendency to believe that expenses would constitute a reasonable level of payment (37% compared with 30%). This may link to a comment from one of the case study participants who said that because he started volunteering soon after university he was used to living on a tight budget.

Parents and carers were also more likely than those with no caring responsibilities to suggest that up to £100 per week in expenses would be reasonable payment (36% and 40% compared with 28%).

The young people who had recently volunteered either formally or informally also had a greater tendency to see expenses as sufficient reimbursement (35% and 32% compared with 26% of those who had not), perhaps because they had already experienced the non-financial rewards of volunteering, although this group were still much more likely to say that the national minimum wage would be reasonable (58%) than expenses.

Citizenship programme in schools

The online survey indicated greater support for a citizenship programme within schools than a national community service scheme. Respondents were told that, under the in-school citizenship programme, 14 to 19 year olds would be required to complete a total of 50 hours (between these ages and before they leave school) of community service to benefit other people, the community, or the environment. Around half (54%) said they would support this type of scheme, compared with around one in five (18%) who would oppose it.

There was also a slightly more positive response to this idea among the qualitative participants, as it was felt that many people in school would be interested in getting involved in something different that was outside of the classroom, although some still felt that this would be better as an optional programme for those who are interested, rather than a compulsory programme for all, for essentially the same reasons as outlined above.

I don't think school kids would mind that either, get out of the classroom for a couple of hours

Male, NEET group

It would also give them more of a plan on what they might want to do when they're older, so they're not hanging around going, I don't know, I don't know whether I want to go to college, do I want to do this? Because you don't get very much, well I didn't get any careers advice

Female, NEET group

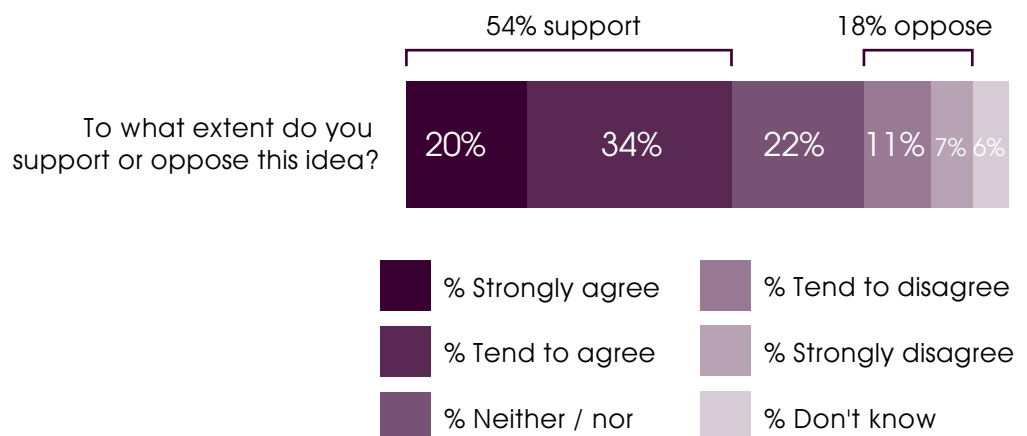
Give them the choice, and let them make these choices, but then it should be voluntary

Male, EET


And I think that's the thing, you've got to do something you enjoy... you can't just say, oh you're going over there, because if it's not something somebody enjoys then they're not going to get the best out of it and they could, say, be disruptive to try and get out of it.

Male, disability group

Another proposal is that, as part of the citizenship curriculum in schools, 14 to 19 year olds would be required to complete a total of 50 hours (between these ages and before they leave school) of community service to benefit other people, the community, or the environment. To what extent do you support or oppose this idea?



Base: 1,997 young people aged 16-25 living in England, 28th April to 10th May 2009



Perhaps tellingly, support for this type of scheme in schools was higher among young people who would not be directly affected by it – i.e. those in full-time employment (60%) or at university (59%) – and lower among those who would be directly affected, including those still at school (41%) or college/sixth form (42%). Nevertheless, those in school and college/sixth form were still more likely to support than oppose such a scheme (41% support compared with 26% oppose among school students and 42% support compared with 26% oppose among college/sixth form students).

Yeah, not us lot: let the youngsters do it!

Female, NEET group

Well at that time (when I was at school) I would have said the older lot should do it!

Female, NEET group

v Response

v is pleased to present the first-ever comprehensive research into young peoples' views on full-time volunteering; the first report to be launched as part of v's new research strategy. In keeping with our youth-led ethos, v is committed to seeking out and presenting the voices of young people in its research, to ensure that their views inform and shape policy and programme development. All too often young people become the 'objects' of the debate – a problem to be solved - rather than being engaged on their own terms to find solutions to the challenges and opportunities shaping their generation.

Below, v sets out how it plans to take forward the findings and recommendations of this research.

We urge policy-makers and other key stakeholders to pay close attention to the findings, and welcome continued dialogue on the design and implementation of a full-time volunteering scheme which will deliver the right solutions for young people, organisations and communities across England.

If you would like to add your views and suggestions to this response, please email us at research@vinspired.com

Freedom to Choose

- The research shows that young people are volunteering - 68% of 16-25 year olds have shared their time and talents with their communities in the past year. And while there is a broad range of motivations for doing so, young people appear to pursue voluntary activity with a dynamic mix of self-interest and idealism.
- The research highlights that depending on a young person's circumstances and particular life stage; they will place a different emphasis on a number of important motivating factors, amongst others; the cause, socializing and networking, skills development, addressing local concerns, recreation and gaining work experience. This corresponds to v's own experience: we know that one size does not fit all and in their particular circumstances and busy lives, young people should have freedom to choose from a range of volunteering opportunities that suit their needs, talents and interests.
- Although 40% of young people support compulsory national civic service, most want it backed up by the national minimum wage. This is an important finding, illustrating that any full-time volunteering programme must deliver a degree of financial security for young volunteers, in order to be accessible to all.
- The concept of national civic service continues to be problematic - young people involved in the research, and particularly the focus group discussions, identify a number of reasons against its introduction, including that such a compulsory programme would compromise the nature of volunteering itself and that the motivation and energy of working alongside other volunteers who have chosen to give their time freely is one of the key benefits of the experience.

- These research findings strengthen v's commitment to provide a range of volunteering opportunities across different sectors and organisations – from structured placements to those opportunities that give young people the means to galvanise their peers or the independence and responsibility to act alone. To date, 900,000 youth volunteering opportunities have been commissioned across this range, with 411,492 so far completed.

Full Time Volunteering

- In the same regard, full time volunteering is not for all young people but should remain as one option of a flexible and diverse range of opportunities. v currently provides 20,000 full time volunteering opportunities across a range of settings.
- In March 2009, v launched a new flagship full-time volunteering programme called vtalent year. This innovative programme engages young volunteers in 44 week volunteering placements in the public sector – enabling them to develop new skills and experiences to support their progression to education, employment or training. All young volunteers are encouraged to undertake a minimum Level 2 qualification, and can apply for a Personal Development Grant of up to £1500 on completion of the programme to support their onward progression. The scheme is being piloted in 32 local authorities in a range of Children's and Young People's Services, offering placements to 1000 young volunteers, of which 40% of all participants will be NEET – those not in education, employment or training.
- v is responding to increasing demand for this scheme by extending the vtalent year programme into the education sector. The pilot will now work with selected Further Education colleges, enabling them to engage full-time volunteers to assist in the delivery and enhancement of Learner Support Services. This additional investment will provide 900 new opportunities across 30 institutions.
- To prepare for a further increase in demand for full-time volunteering during the current economic climate, v intends to bring together full-time volunteering providers to discuss the findings of this research, practicalities of scale-up, funding and the nature of the opportunities, to ensure that attractive community service scheme options are developed.

Community Service In Schools

Young people recognise the important role that educational institutions can play in encouraging people to volunteer. Support shown from young people in this research for the new model of community service in schools demonstrates young people's desire to create a culture where volunteering is valued as a tool for personal and community development.



Changing Perceptions & Raising Awareness Of Volunteering

- **v** will develop tailored marketing campaigns to promote the range and variety of volunteering opportunities that exist, tapping into the growing interest and enthusiasm for full-time volunteering. Specifically, **v** will consider the important role that existing full-time volunteers can play in sharing their experiences with their peers, helping to dispel myths and misconceptions of full-time community service, and provide a current picture of the array of placements available across the country.
- Using the most powerful tool amongst 16-25 year olds - Word of Mouth - **v** will be supporting the work of its 107 youth action teams across England with a new video profiling tool on www.vinspired.com that will bring to life a range of case studies of young volunteers. This peer-to-peer advocacy is also supported by **v**'s social networks, website and blogs which enable young volunteers to share stories, experiences and pass on opportunities.
- The launch of the bigvbus this summer will also enable **v** to publicise the depth and diversity of volunteering opportunities that exist, how easy it is to get involved, how much fun it can be, the range of people who become volunteers, and the rewards and recognition that 16-25 year olds can achieve. Embarking upon a 75 date national tour of England (and indeed for the next 3 years); the bigvbus will visit local youth action teams and large outdoor festivals and events.
- **v** will reinforce its focus on word of mouth advocacy with a national advertising campaign featuring case studies of volunteers and the benefits they have achieved for themselves and their communities and by running a six month regional and national PR campaign to announce the vinspired awards and encourage nominations for the national awards ceremony taking place in November 2009.

Policy Change

- **v** has been working with other third sector organisations to lobby Job Centre Plus to ensure that local advisers give correct benefits advice to their customers that wish to volunteer. We will work with JobCentre Plus and the Department for Work and Pensions to position full-time volunteering as an option available to the increasing numbers of young people unemployed without it affecting their benefits.
- We will also scope longitudinal research to measure the personal, social and economic impact of volunteering. The research will help to plug the gap in evidence of links between volunteering and employability.

Recognition

- **v** has recently launched the vInspired awards (v50 and vImpact) to recognise the achievements of young people. This innovative online recognition scheme enables young people to record the hours spent volunteering, as well as reflecting on the skills they've gained, and the positive impact of their volunteering on the community. **v** is working to build the status and currency of the vInspired awards by getting them recognised and endorsed by bodies such as the CBI, CIPD and the Institute of Directors. We are also working closely with colleagues across the UK to consider how the vInspired awards can be linked to UCAS points system. **v** will work to build the profile of these awards even further by seeking endorsements from FTSE 100 companies and the public and third sectors.
- Through our funded network and our marketing and communications activity **v** will ensure the benefits of volunteering in terms of gaining work experience, recognition, training and skills development are effectively conveyed to young people.
- **v** will launch the National Awards for Youth Volunteering which will create a national platform for the recognition and celebration of the very best of young people's contribution to society through volunteering. The Awards will also celebrate the personal development of young volunteers, and the skills gained during their volunteering experiences.

Stakeholders

- The round table discussions on June 2 will help **v** to engage key stakeholders in the findings from this research and discuss the future of youth volunteering in England. Following this event we would like to engage full time providers in dialogue to consider how we can scale up/increase full time volunteering provision to meet increased demand as young people find it harder to gain employment.
- **v** believes it is in a strong position to support young people through the current recession, while continuing to strengthen the youth volunteering infrastructure for the future. The effective partnerships **v** has forged between government, business and the community and voluntary sectors are more important now than ever.

For example, the **v** Match Fund brings together private sector partners and charities to create innovative volunteering opportunities. With the fund **v** can match up to 100% of any new investment in youth volunteering from businesses, charitable trusts and foundations and individuals. To date, **v** has secured £37m from the private sector. With **v**'s Match Fund, that makes a total of £74m invested so far in over 170 diverse and high impact youth volunteering projects across England. More information is available at www.vinspired.com/matchfund.

- **v** will encourage the political parties to engage young people over the coming months in the development of their party manifestos. We will do this by highlighting young people's views gained through our youth insight research and by finding and creating platforms for young volunteers to engage with policy makers.

Appendices I: Case Studies

Case study 1

Male – office based work (5 -10 hours per week)

Motivations for full-time volunteering

The idea of volunteering first presented itself via a leaflet for 'volunteer challenge', picked up at the Connexions centre. Volunteering seemed like it would be a good way to gain confidence and to get a foot into the job market after leaving sixth form college.

I was 18 and I was trying to find work, and I kept failing at interviews and things, so I would have gone into volunteering to gain confidence.

He was open to ideas about where to volunteer, rather than having a definite placement in mind, and after a couple of interviews the first offer of working for five to ten hours per week in the volunteer centre at the local university was accepted.

The placement mainly involved office-based administration work, which was lacking in variety at times, but this was seen as an acceptable and expected part of working life.

Perceived barriers to full-time volunteering

He believes that some people his age may be put off volunteering as it is seen as something that rich/'posh' people do, but this was not the case for him.

He received around £20 per week while volunteering, plus a bonus of around £500 when the year was completed. Money was not really an issue for him as he was living with his parents while volunteering.

Encouraging full-time volunteering

He thinks he would have taken paid employment over volunteering if the opportunity had arisen, but he is pleased he ended up volunteering as the placement has led to increased confidence. There was also on-the-job training in office-based skills such as IT and he felt he was well supported in the role.

Probably I would have taken the paid option, but I'm glad I didn't, really.

They'd tell me how to do everything, the office things, and there's always someone there to help.

His manager suggested the idea of working towards a degree, which is run by the office, and he is now doing this at the same time as working as a paid employee in what was originally his voluntary role.

He would certainly recommend full-time volunteering to others, but felt that as people are not getting paid for it, it needs to be something they will enjoy doing.

I'd recommend it to them. It's probably going to be a life changing thing for them, they'll grow in confidence.

I think you have to be more dedicated to do it, if you're volunteering, because you're not really getting paid for it. It'd have to be something that you're enjoying.

Views on compulsory citizenship programme proposals

The idea of compulsory community service for young people who had finished school was not thought to be a good idea, although a similar programme within schools was seen as more acceptable.

I don't think it should be compulsory, because they'll think it's like a prison sentence, or something... It should be like Connexions does – giving (the option/information) to someone in Jobcentres and places.

If it was part of the school term, it's probably more acceptable.

Case study 2

Female - volunteered on play schemes

Motivations for full-time volunteering

Her first placement was arranged by a family member, and from that she has undertaken a number of voluntary youth work and play scheme placements, both full and part time. Volunteering was seen as a way to gain valuable experience in the field the respondent wanted to work in: youth work.

You can't just go into youth work if you've got a qualification because if you haven't got the experience then it's going to be much harder for you. So the way I've gone about it, I've built up my experience first and I'm still building on it now. And then I'm going to go into, to go and study for it.

Her motivations for volunteering were a combination of the desire to gain relevant work experience, and an altruistic motive to help others. As such, the respondent was open to suggestions of other voluntary placements, such as old people's homes.

It's just anything that I can do to help other people then I'm willing to do it.

Perceived barriers to full-time volunteering

She thought that the main barrier to volunteering is a lack of information available to young people. In particular, people not understanding the possible range of placements available within an organisation.

The last place I did it, it was a football club, and it was, oh it's just for football and stuff like that. And it's not: you can do anything you want to do there but their main category is football.

The respondent received £5 lunch money and had her travel expenses paid, however, she would have volunteered regardless of any financial aid.

Difficulties while volunteering

She was set to work in this placement without much information or direction about what she should be doing.

The difficulty was in just turning up and it was just an empty field and knowing where to put things.

A lack of resources for the activities and made the work difficult. Although she said she felt supported in her placement, she also felt she and the other volunteers often had to do it all.

It was just us (volunteers) coming up with activities all the time and no input from the other workers.

Encouraging full-time volunteering

She was very positive about volunteering and her experiences. She had gained experience that she believed would help in her get a job in her chosen career, but had also improved other skills, such as organisation and decision making, as a consequence of volunteering. She also felt her confidence had improved and she really valued the social experience.

It's made me realise that ... people have got all different problems and there's all different sorts of behaviour and personalities and cultures.

She would definitely recommend volunteering to others, both to give people without a job something constructive to do, and to help young people make decisions about their future.

It's something good to do rather than being sat at home or walking about on the streets.

For those people who haven't got a career, or don't know what they want to do when they go to college or university ... it can help them choose. Whether they want to go into youth work, social work or work in sports, something like that.

Case study 3

Male - Agents 4 Change

Motivations for full-time volunteering

Before taking up a full-time volunteering placement as a volunteer co-ordinator, which entailed encouraging young people to get involved in volunteering, he had taken part in only a small amount of volunteering himself.

He was not sure what direction to take after completing a degree and came across a newspaper advertisement from Community Service volunteers (CSV) and decided to give it a go, as he was not very driven by money and wanted to do something to help society. He was open to doing any type of voluntary work, and was pleasantly surprised by the opportunity to work as a co-ordinator.

Perceived barriers to full-time volunteering

He felt that volunteering has a negative image, and is often seen as 'boring' or 'fuddy-duddy', which he strongly

feels is not the case and needs to be countered. He received expenses for housing, living costs and travel costs, which was just enough to survive on, but even so he felt that finance would be an issue for many people and explained that it was easier for him as he knew had the security of parents who could support him if the need ever arose.

I haven't, financially I haven't taken any support from my family but there's always, I say, that safety net. Certainly whereas if you're going into volunteering without any safety net at all then it could be quite difficult.

Support

He loved the autonomy the position offered him, but appreciated having a line manager who he could go to for advice if he needed it.

(I liked) coming into work on Monday and not knowing what I'll be doing on Friday, and just constantly being challenged. And also having to challenge yourself, because I know to an extent I am my own boss and I do have to get on with the work myself.

However, he did feel that more formal training at the start of his placement would have been beneficial.

Next week I'm going on a training scheme about how to do criminal records checks and learn basic first aid, and youth leadership skills, and these are things that I've picked up along the way. But maybe a weekend of things like that might have been quite good at the beginning.

Benefits and encouraging full-time volunteering

Volunteering had given him a direction he life – he now wants to work within the voluntary charity sector as a career, and while he found the experience he had gained through volunteering had not resulted in him getting paid full-time work in the sector, he had been offered a scholarship for a PhD in Philanthropy and Youth Philanthropy.

It's given me absolute direction...it's probably one of those life changing things.

I've been looking for jobs in the voluntary charity sector as a other volunteer co-ordinator or a project worker, or these things. I've got turned down left, right, and centre for loads of things... (but) I've been offered a scholarship to go and study for three years, so volunteering from this little project will probably become my life.

Not only that, but he found the whole experience entirely positive and was very passionate about the benefits, both in terms of personal fulfilment, working with a variety of people and learning new skills, including communication and media skills, time management, project management, and developing an empathy with young volunteers.

I do think volunteering is a wonderful way of opening your horizons, it just opens your eyes...

It's actually having some beneficial effect for somebody else, but I'm getting personal experiences as well. And people often forget that, and they think oh volunteering, I can't be arsed, what do I get out of it? Actually you get loads out of it, you get to do things that you've never even dreamed of doing before.

...it's personally rewarding and it's given me skills and the opportunity to meet different types of people who, whereas the closed off world of school and college and university, just doesn't allow you, you don't really get out into the real world and meet real people that much.

It's the people who've got proper jobs after uni' and moved on that have missed out on the opportunities, not me.

In terms of encouraging volunteering, he feels the key is raising the profile of organisations such as v and the opportunities that exist (and not just by giving a list of things to do), while not patronising young people; for example he feels sometimes projects are given names which can come across to young people as 'old people trying to appear cool'. Although he thinks that in some ways that teachers are not necessarily best placed to inspire young people to volunteer, he feels that in reality schools are the best place to reach young people.

It seems to ruin a bit of the youth relationship aspect of it if these things are having to go through teachers, whereas I'm sure young people would rather just do these things for themselves.

Sadly it's annoying that schools are the best way to reach young people, but they are ... Kids, young people go on school field trips and they're always educational based. Why do they never go volunteering for the day?

Views on compulsory citizenship programme proposals

He felt that a citizenship programme in schools would be a good idea, as long as the students had a choice about where they were going.

They were thinking about introducing compulsory things for up to 25 years old, and I think well, after 18 isn't, nothing's meant to be compulsory is it? (But) I don't know why you couldn't do GCSE and A Levels in volunteering. I don't know why, instead of sitting in a classroom just learning things that you don't really want to learn, you can't be outside doing some good for your communities.

Case Study 4

Male – sports coaching (c.15 hrs per week)

Motivations for full-time volunteering

This volunteer is volunteering with Rugby league teams in his local area. He does coaching sessions in secondary schools as well as PE lessons and after school clubs. He is currently at the first year of university in Liverpool studying product design. His studies only take up two days of his time, and he is free to volunteer outside those hours. His original motivation was to keep himself busy for the days when he was not studying. He is very keen on the volunteering itself, as well as the experience it has given him and the avenues it has opened up – he is now considering a career in sports or coaching, whereas before he had been more interested in design.

Benefits and encouraging full-time volunteering

Although his initial motivation was to keep himself busy when he was not studying, volunteering has now become a more important part of his life than his studies - the reason he went to Liverpool in the first place. His main reason for continuing the volunteering was to build up his coaching experience:

At the moment I've done coming up to 200 hours of voluntary work - of course I'm using it to put to my CV. But I'm using it for experience as well - and it's something that I wouldn't mind adding to my skills and my interests and stuff like that, not just to stick on my CV at all.

Some of the work is paid, but very little, though this isn't a problem for him as he sees the volunteer work as the start of his career in sports management.

The volunteering has helped him attain the requisite coaching skills as well - as part of the volunteering he is able to work towards various coaching awards. He also has a desire to help inner city children and popularise the game.

In some ways, he sees the volunteering as free, 'on the job' training which is easily transferable if and when he decides to pursue coaching full time. Should that not be possible, some of the skills are still relevant to other careers - one of the key things he has learnt as part of his volunteering is assertiveness. He has also learnt how to control a large group of children, something which he views as another valuable transferable skill.

Though the volunteering had originally been intended as something to keep him busy in his free time and to complement his university course, it has now become a much more important part of his life - though it is important to separate his love of the sport from his thirst for full-time volunteering - his aim is to get a full-time position in sports management.

Crucially, his decision to volunteer has radically altered the course of his life - he was much more animated talking about rugby and the possibilities that are now open to him than his studies, and a vocational career that he would not have enjoyed as much.

Case study 5

Female - Agents 4 Change

Motivations for full-time volunteering

She began volunteering part time initially, while at university, which is where she first got involved with Agents 4 Change. She then took over the full-time co-ordinator role shortly after finishing university.

She had been offered a place on a Masters course but deferred this for a year because she felt the opportunity was too good to turn down, as it would provide experience related to the career she wanted to pursue at the time, in event management. It would also give her a break from studying. Knowing that she could go on to take up the Masters place the next year seemed to be reassuring.

I deferred my university place so I would have something to go onto afterwards but living in the city isn't the cheapest thing to do anyway and (thinking) can I do it on next to nothing was quite a hard, it was a bit of a daunting, task. But it was something that I thought the opportunity itself outweighed so I didn't mind too much.

Perceived barriers to full-time volunteering

When she first agreed to take the position she did not know she would receive expenses for housing, living expenses and travel, so she thought she would only be able to volunteer for three or four months, but the financial support meant she could commit to the full nine months. It was still a low income to survive on but she found it was acceptable as she knew that it was for a specified length of time and then she would move on.

I think in the end the opportunity itself outweighed the fact that if it was going to be a little bit difficult for a while, because it's not a permanent thing I think that helps you make the decision, because you know that this isn't how it's going to be forever.

However, she still felt that finances could prove a barrier to many people.

I understand that not everyone can afford to do a full-time volunteering placement, it's not something that is the easiest thing in the world if you don't have budgeting skills. But I would definitely recommend it...

Support

She explained that although a key benefit of her work was the freedom she had to make the role her own. She also felt that more support being available when needed and as well as some formal training at the start would have been useful. She suggested that it would have been good to have more face-to-face contact with her peers in similar roles and that some sort of personalised hand over document for her particular role, containing locally relevant hints and tips, would have been a good idea.

I would have appreciated more formal training, that would have been nice. It's not been that I've not been able to manage without it but I think it would have been helpful. I think generally that I've loved running the project because I've got the freedom to do what I like... I don't think I've got that many complaints. I think the support and the training are my two issues.

I've really enjoyed myself as well. But I think there have been times when it's been quite difficult because, as I say, you're left to your own devices to do your own project management and your own event coordination. It can be sometimes quite hard to get the support you need.

Benefits and encouraging full-time volunteering

She had a very positive experience of volunteering and, while she took the placement initially primarily to gain experience for her career, she actually got much more out of it. She was even considering changing her career path as she had become so passionate about working for community organisations.

It's given me a great deal of experience, I've met so many people. It's also sharpened my awareness of what I actually want to do with myself and with my life ... It's really opened my eyes to the volunteering side and what it's like. Obviously I've done quite a lot of work on the ground myself and did loads of really good projects with people, but actually managing volunteers and being in charge of them was a very different experience and getting involved in so many different community groups and things like that has really changed what I wanted to do. It's moved me away from the corporate side of things like event management and pushed me much further into charity community work and I think now that's something that I would be really interested in pursuing and carrying on.

She felt that her job prospects had been improved by the volunteering and that she had her skills in many areas, including; organisation, IT, time management, creativity, and networking.

I went along and I had my interview and I talked a lot about my projects and all the skills that it brought to me as a person...volunteer management, project management, all the different things that I'd been involved in, which, as I say is quite a wide variety. I didn't get the job but the woman basically said I was second out of 100 people. So even though I didn't get it that eight months that I'd been working on this volunteer project did, automatically promote me from 100 to 2 which is brilliant really.

In her eyes, the best aspect of volunteering is the wide variety of opportunities available and the key is to find a role that will suit people's interests and character and varying levels of involvement.

I think it's just getting the message out to people that you've got to go abroad and make a well or something, that it can be something really simple that counts as volunteering and can be really helpful to a group of people or a community. It doesn't have to be world-changing.

Views on compulsory citizenship programme proposals

She was not in favour of compelling people to 'volunteer' as she felt this would detract from the experience and team work of volunteering

I think if it's compulsory volunteering it's not volunteering in my mind. As I say, the experience of having someone there who wants to do it, who wants to help, be it transform some bit of garden, conservation work or whether it's helping out at some community centre, the people who really want to do it are the people who make it an enjoyable experience.

I know it's quite recent about the compulsory volunteering coming out, but it has been in the pipes for a while, people have been talking about it and I think that puts people off. The fact that it's, that something I have to do, oh then I automatically don't want to do it.

Case study 6

Female – office admin for an international aid charity

Motivations for full-time volunteering

This volunteer was working two days a week with an international aid charity. She had been volunteering before that, and when that position came to an end, she was asked by another department if she wanted to work part time.

She did the volunteering because she wanted to further her office experience, and enjoyed the organisation and the nature of the work, which includes making training schedules and administering the volunteers across three counties.

However, part of her reasoning was that she had nothing else to do – she gave the impression that if paid work had been an option she would have taken this instead.

She was interested in the third sector since university – she studied disaster management at university so wanted to work in humanitarian aid – and the charity she worked for was a perfect fit.

Support

She was paid £5 a day for food and any travel expenses incurred – this was very important for her as she would not have been able to volunteer otherwise. She was less positive about the nature of the work as she felt a little isolated and unsure what she was doing, but was able to take advantage of the skills and training courses that the organisation offer.

They encouraged me to look on the intranet and see what courses were available and they were happy to send me on anything I wanted. They wanted to give me something back – they knew I wasn't getting paid so they thought that it would help me to put these on my CV.

Perceived barriers to full-time volunteering

She had also worked for the PAIS project in a gap year, spending a year in Northern Ireland. She also spent four months with Camp America. She gave the impression that she thought volunteering was something suited for people younger than her (she was 23).

I'd recommend a similar kind of thing to someone that was younger, I felt a bit old to be volunteering.

One key difference she had noticed between volunteering and working as a salaried member of staff was that she did not begrudge working slightly later some evenings when she was volunteering, but she was not happy to do so on a salary, as she had gone from 'paid' time to 'unpaid' time.

Benefits and encouraging full-time volunteering

She felt she would not have been offered the paid position if she had not previously been volunteering for the organisation – though she had not necessarily planned to work for the Red Cross, she realised that a part-time paid position for an organisation in the general field of her interests was better than the uncertainty of not knowing whether she would be able to get a job or not.

She alluded to the fact that she gets very nervous in job interviews and does not feel that she comes across well to potential employers. Thus, the part time job that she has is invaluable experience for an organisation within the humanitarian field.

However, she was more interested in the international side of the work, and hopes to be able to be put in touch with someone from that side of the organisation (as she was put in touch with someone within the organisation who needed some part time help).

She would recommend volunteering to other people, especially in the economic downturn, as it can open doors to paid work that might not have been opened previously.



Appendices II: Survey and discussion guides

Copies of the following research materials are available:

- Survey
- Focus group topic guide
- Case studies topic guide

Please contact research@vinspired.com