

**Institute for  
Volunteering  
Research**

**YOUNG PEOPLE,  
VOLUNTEERING AND  
CIVIC SERVICE**

**A review of the literature**

**A report for the  
Institute for Volunteering Research**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The context for volunteering is changing rapidly through globalisation, technological and demographic change, and the political drive to promote voluntary action as central to civic responsibility and democratic regeneration. These influences, combined with apparent declines in young people's involvement, have put youth volunteering under intense scrutiny.

This review summarises findings from the literature on young people's attitudes towards and participation in voluntary work and civic service. It is important to distinguish the two while noting that there is some overlap. Volunteering denotes freely given, unpaid work of benefit to others, while civic service is a more structured period of engagement, often full-time and with some monetary compensation, with greater emphasis on participant benefits. For the moment, most commentators are prepared to accept civic service under a broad volunteering umbrella and explore its potential for youth involvement.

### **Section A Young people and volunteering**

Recent discussion of young people and volunteering divides into those who emphasise the disaffection and alienation of young people from society and those who assert their willingness to participate and their redefinition of political action. The former view, very prevalent in the 1990s, is yielding to a more upbeat assessment of youth culture and engagement marked by greater tolerance, a collective consciousness and concern with social justice.

Surveys show that close to one half of young people have experience of volunteering with the most common area being sports and exercise, followed by hobbies and recreation, youth and children's services, and health and social welfare. Minority groups such as black and minority ethnic young people, disabled people and marginalized people tend to volunteer less than 'white middle class' young people, and young women tend to volunteer more readily than young men. However, many young people of all types and backgrounds are involved in informal voluntary and community action. Studies show around three quarters of young people have been involved in 'constructive social participation' through community networks, neighbourliness, campaigning or informal political action.

The prevailing image of 'volunteers' and 'volunteering' tends to deter young people. While they have generally positive views of their nature and role in society, they tend to see volunteering as a limited concept denoting a narrow range of activities usually carried out by older people. They dislike the term 'volunteering' and tend not to apply it to themselves. Negative views are particularly strong among young men and more marginalized young people, and may also increase with age. Young people link volunteering to citizenship but have their own perspectives on what 'citizenship' and 'community' mean, which may vary by age, background and circumstances.

Most young people get into volunteering by word of mouth and being asked. Family and friends are an important influence, and workers in youth clubs, sports clubs, church and faith groups, schools and colleges also provide access. Printed materials and advertisements are a less common route, but the internet is a growing access point. Age and hence institutional setting can be important influences on the routes available into volunteering.

Young people volunteer for a wide range of reasons, but place particular importance on gaining skills, experience, qualifications and references. But they also get involved for altruistic motives and concern about social issues, for mutual support and to have fun. The priority given to different motives may vary by age, gender and ethnicity.

The benefits from volunteering generally match their aspirations - new skills, greater confidence and improved employability - but also show increased levels of altruistic and social satisfaction. The satisfaction they gain from helping other people and their sheer enjoyment of volunteering encourages them to attribute less self-seeking motives to their involvement than they originally envisaged.

Young people experience a considerable array of barriers to volunteering. As well as the image they hold of volunteering and the lack of information and access routes, they feel restricted by shortages of time and money. They may also experience negative peer and family attitudes, and lack of confidence and of a sense of control over their lives which affects their ability to make a commitment. The attitudes and policies of organisations, which include lower age limits, a belief that young people require extra supervision, and offering them limited 'menial' work, are also deterrents.

What young people want from volunteering is interesting and rewarding work in a well-organised setting with a friendly, informal atmosphere. They prefer a combination of efficiency and flexibility in the way they are managed. They want to be treated as responsible and to be involved in making decisions, but be allowed to progress at their own pace. They want good support when they need it and training that will help them do their volunteering well and stand them in good stead for the future.

The major incentive for young people in volunteering is developing their skills and gaining career-related experience. They want appreciation and tangible recognition in the form of certificates, awards, references and qualifications. Altruistic incentives are also important, along with the social and satisfaction aspects of volunteering. Young people are ambivalent about financial incentives, but their out of pocket expenses should be met in full. They generally feel that getting paid for volunteering is a contradiction, yet recognise the financial deterrent and the opportunity costs of volunteering. Evidence from schemes that

pay stipends and allowances shows that this removes barriers for young people on low incomes.

## **Section B Civic service schemes**

Civic service originated in the early twentieth century and has been seen as an antidote to economic depression and long-term unemployment, youth alienation and disaffection, and rising crime and lawlessness.

Youth civic service appeared in the UK nearly 50 years ago with the founding of Community Service Volunteers. In Europe, civic service programmes as an alternative to compulsory military service provided the template for the development of large-scale voluntary schemes. Germany, France, Italy and Israel all have national programmes for long-term voluntary service by young people. Europe also has the European Voluntary Service, which offers transnational volunteering experiences of six to twelve months in return for expenses and an allowance.

In the past decade, the UK government has funded several youth volunteering schemes, such as the Young Volunteer Development Programme, Millennium Volunteers (MV) and Young Volunteer Challenge (YVC). MV gives excellence awards to mark 200 and 100 hours of volunteering carried out over one year. YVC provides a nine month full-time volunteering placement for young people on low incomes in return for a weekly allowance and lump sum payment on completion. After successful piloting YVC is to be rolled out nationally.

The menu of youth volunteering opportunities in the UK also includes voluntary-run civic service-type schemes such as Community Service Volunteers and Prince's Trust-Volunteers; gap years, of which Voluntary Service Overseas is the leading provider; student volunteering programmes; youth action groups; community service or service learning in schools, as part of the citizenship curriculum; employer-supported volunteering; Time Banks and Local Exchange Trading Schemes (LETS).

Evaluations of programmes reveal a range of positive impacts for volunteers: personal development, increased confidence and self-esteem; generic skills such as social, communication and organisational skills; vocational skills and employability, including qualifications and career choices; educational attainment and motivation; attitudes and tolerance, notably greater understanding of others and respect for diversity; empowerment and civic awareness, in the form of greater self-efficacy, understanding of citizenship and feeling part of the community. As a result of volunteering, many continue to be involved in their local communities and in civic activities.

The United States has been a leader in developing civic service for young people and AmeriCorps is its flagship programme. More than 300,000 people have participated since it was established in 1993, half of whom are from black and

minority ethnic groups. Service learning, in which community service is integrated into the curriculum, is also widespread in American schools and colleges.

The impacts on 'servers' reflect many of the effects found in the UK and there is also some evidence of benefits for recipients, organisations and communities. Participants gain significantly in self-esteem, skill development, educational opportunity and performance, satisfaction from serving, civic responsibility and tolerance of diversity. Most AmeriCorps alumni take up the opportunity to use their educational credits and many remain involved in local community groups and civic life. However, participants are generally well educated and committed to service when they enrol and this may predispose them to these benefits.

### **Section C Lessons and conclusions**

The literature gives clear pointers on what attracts and satisfies young people in volunteering and what deters or excludes them. Several recent publications have crystallised these elements into civic service proposals, including Connecting People, a National Youth Action Programme, Experience Year and Project Scotland. Despite variation, these all outline schemes for long-term full-time voluntary service with financial support and completion awards.

These and other sources suggest that the key features of an effective and successful youth service programme should include: partnerships of multiple stakeholders and providers; building on and expanding existing structures and capacities; great variety in types of work and opportunities; choice, flexibility and room for experimentation; strong emphasis on youth-initiated and youth-led activities; time built in for reflection and review of participants' experiences; targets that measure quality as well as quantity; and inclusiveness, with sufficient resources to engage, support and reward all types of young people.

A civic service programme should be part of an overall youth volunteering 'meta-strategy' which enables young people to have a volunteering career which begins in school (secondary or even earlier) and offers opportunities at every juncture as they progress through their teens and into adulthood. This would encompass full-time, part-time and occasional volunteering, team-based and individual, local, national and international volunteering, and e-volunteering.

The strategy should have six guiding principles: an image make-over for volunteering with young people instrumental in its re-branding; multiple promotion and marketing with a message that hits the right notes for young people; easy and inclusive access through institutional gateways, referral networks and the internet; incentives to attract and reward participants and remove barriers; youth ownership to maximise personal growth and civic responsibility; and full and adequate resourcing, particularly for socially excluded and marginalized young people.

While much research has been done on young people's volunteering and civic service, there remains a need for further research on forms, processes and impacts. In particular, it is not entirely clear what types and styles of volunteering maximise the growth of civic responsibility and engagement. It is also not yet known what effects incentives have on motivation and the sustainability of positive impacts. Other gaps in knowledge include how to engage the most excluded young people and change organisational cultures to accommodate a significant increase in young volunteers; attitudes of employers to supporting volunteering and valuing it when recruiting staff; and the potential for expanding youth involvement in new forms of reciprocal volunteering.

An important area highlighted by this review is the extent to which young people's perceptions, attitudes, motivations, influences and behaviours change from early teens, through middle and late teens and into their early twenties. Greater understanding of age variation would enable organisations and programmes to respond effectively to these differences.

A key consensus in the literature is that policies and programmes must begin with an understanding of young people's own perspectives, understandings and practices. They must avoid a 'strident and punitive' tone in which young people are seen as problems and not positive contributors. What is needed is a new reciprocity and the provision of genuine opportunities that respect young people's abilities and give them the chance to explore and develop their talents.

Commentators have emphasised that the process of political and civic engagement is not instant but develops as young people mature. Most importantly, it begins when young people have opportunities to develop 'a strong sense of identity, self-worth, responsibility and confidence'. Few would disagree that volunteering in all its incarnations can provide these opportunities but only if policy makers and organisations see young people as a valuable resource and are prepared to make the changes necessary to welcome their involvement.

## **SECTION A YOUNG PEOPLE AND VOLUNTEERING**

- **The rapidly changing context for volunteering and declines in young people's involvement have put youth volunteering under intense scrutiny;**
- **Volunteering and civic service are distinct but related concepts;**
- **In the 1990s, young people were characterised as apathetic and disconnected;**
- **Recent research emphasises a broader politicisation and involvement in social and community action by many young people.**

### **1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT**

The context for volunteering, and for young people's voluntary activity, is changing rapidly. Recent commentary emphasises the influences of globalisation, technological transformation, public policy, social and demographic trends, an evolving civil society, post-modern values, changes in family life, work patterns and support structures (Dekker, 2002; Kearney, 2001; Davis Smith, 2000; Burns, 2001).

Among the influences on the volunteering context - and viewed not entirely positively by some - is a political drive to promote voluntary action not only as a good thing for individuals and for the delivery of services but as central to the regeneration of democratic society (Kearney, 2001; Brown, 2004).

Volunteering has therefore come under more scrutiny than at any time in its long history. And because of the apparent decline in young people's voluntary participation and concerns about social responsibility and citizenship, young people's volunteering has been a particular focus. This review examines young people and volunteering, their attitudes and their participation.

Section A reviews evidence on the practice of volunteering, its image among young people, motivations and benefits, routes in, barriers, organisation, and incentives. Section B presents examples and impacts of civic service and service learning schemes in the UK and internationally. Section C reviews recent UK proposals for civic service schemes, sets out key elements and principles for civic service and a youth volunteering strategy, and identifies knowledge gaps.

#### **1.1 Definitions**

Section A relates primarily to volunteering as traditionally understood. Volunteering is generally agreed to have three core elements: the activity is unpaid, it is freely undertaken and it is of benefit to others in the community (Davis Smith, 2003). It can also be of benefit to the volunteer, and it is now recognised that volunteering is an exchange relationship, in which the volunteer can get back as much as s/he puts in. Volunteering encompasses formal

volunteering - for and with an organisation - and informal volunteering - for neighbours and in the community, without organisational affiliation.

Section B focuses on civic service, which is defined as 'an organised period of substantial engagement and contribution to the local, national or world community, which is recognised and valued by society, and for which there is only minimal monetary compensation to participants' (Sherraden, 2001). It also includes information on a related concept, service learning, which is popular in the United States. Service learning is 'a credit bearing experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets needs identified by the local community, and then reflect on the service activity to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility' (Bringle and Hatcher, 1996).

Commentators have raised questions about the relationship between 'traditional' volunteering and civic service. In particular, 'we can pose the question as to whether civic service can be seen as volunteering at all?' (Davis Smith, 2003). Although identifying some common elements, Davis Smith identifies two key differences - one of inclusion and one of exclusion. One attempt to harmonise the two activities places them at opposite ends of a continuum or continua stretching from free will to compulsion and sporadic involvement to full-time engagement (Cnaan et al., 1996). But they may be best viewed as distinct concepts, 'with a strong element of overlap' and occasionally merging into one, as in Community Service Volunteers (Davis Smith, 2003).

The great concern of many commentators on volunteering is that the growth of new forms of 'volunteering' with elements of compulsion and payment will destroy the essence of volunteering. This carries the risk of distorting the nature of volunteering and, with it, the willing support which it receives from millions of people. For the moment, most are prepared to accept civic service under a broad volunteering umbrella and explore its potential for youth engagement (Spence, 2002).

## **1.2 A 'disconnected generation'**

Recent discussion of young people and volunteering, prompted by some research which suggests a decline in participation, divides crudely into two major camps. One emphasises the disaffection and disconnection of young people and its threat to social stability and future democracy. The other, very much a response to this thinking, asserts their willingness to participate and their redefinition of political action, and shifts responsibility to the systems and culture which do not engage and value young people's contribution.

Evidence of young people's failure to participate in society's traditional institutions - the church, party politics and elections - led to conclusions in the 1990s of 'a deep-seated rejection of society's central institutions', 'an historic political disconnection' and a 'potentially explosive alienation' among young

people (Wilkinson and Mulgan, 1996). The lack of engagement in social values and activities created problems of 'privatism and social withdrawal, crime, drug abuse, incivility and other public vices' (Briscoe, 1995).

Studies highlighted a change in cultural values affecting younger generations on an international scale: 'a gradual shift from 'Materialist' values (emphasising economic and physical security above all) towards 'Postmaterialist' priorities (emphasising self-expression and the quality of life) (Inglehart, 1990). The European Values Study noted that the young 'appear to inhabit a different moral and cultural universe than the old' (Barker, 1993).

Studies have suggested that young people are generally not interested or involved in traditional party politics, and that this is not exclusive to the UK (Roker et al., 1999; White et al., 2000). In 2000, Pirie and Worcester used MORI survey data to identify a new 'Millennial Generation' with 'quite startling differences in outlook and aspiration' from the previous cohort of young people. They found low levels of involvement in the political process at any level, little identification with the civic society, a rejection of personal activism and participation, including volunteering, and a personalised view of citizenship (Pirie and Worcester, 2000).

There were a few dissenting voices. Jowell and Park, for example, noted that the young have always been less interested in politics than their elders and in most measurable ways 'there are surprisingly few differences in the fundamental attitudes and values of the young from those of their older counterparts' (Jowell and Park, 1998).

Dekker observes that 'the outlook for volunteering appears bleak' if one listens to, among others, 'the politicians and social critics talking about civil society' (Dekker, 2002). The cultural phenomenon known as 'individualisation' 'is widely considered as 'the most dangerous threat to volunteering, eroding what solidarity still remains among citizens'. Moreover, 'growing up in a climate of increasing freedom of choice, the younger generation is the most susceptible to individualisation' (Hustinx, 2001):

'As a result, a negative picture of present-day young people prevails: apolitical, egocentric, indifferent, materialistic and captured by a television or computer screen.' (Hustinx, 2001)

However, both commentators argue that through replacing dependence on authority and tradition with personal judgement and fostering a sense of personal responsibility and civic-minded behaviour, individualisation can open up great possibilities for volunteering. With the 'apparent gain of freedom' individualisation induces 'temporariness and doubt' and 'new forms of compulsion, uncertainty, inequality and dependency' (Hustinx, 2001). Through voluntary work, young people can minimise these uncertainties and find a route to fulfilment and identity. Hustinx finds evidence of this in the 'new volunteerism' practised by

young people, which is characterised by personal interest, topical issues, local/global awareness, short term, erratic, conditional and reciprocal volunteering.

Research on young people in the Flemish VIA, a partner of the international youth volunteer network Service Civil International, found that volunteering accelerated the individualisation process, causing the young people to re-evaluate their own lifestyles and identity in a positive way. They used volunteering as a means of reducing the risk factor in their lives by experimenting with different activities and preferred an organisation which allowed them to develop through exercising choice and responsibility. And if they could not make a one hundred per cent commitment, they preferred not to get involved at all - 'for once they have committed themselves, they feel responsible' (Hustinx, 2001).

### **1.3 A reconnecting generation?**

Even with the characterisation of young people in the 1990s as 'a wholly apathetic generation' (Wilkinson and Mulgan, 1996) there was recognition of a new politicisation, with younger generations exhibiting 'a more secular trend, greater permissivity on moral issues, an emphasis on personal autonomy and greater attention to human rights, social justice and environmental issues.' (Barker, 1993): 'Dissatisfaction with the political process and diminishing confidence in institutions coupled with a desire for self-expression' has created a greater willingness to engage in protest action (Barker, 1993). While young people are said to 'exhibit less civic responsibility than their elders' they are more tolerant and inclusive in their support for marginalized groups than older generations and particularly concerned about certain social issues (Barker, 1993; Wilkinson and Mulgan, 1996; Gaskin et al., 1996).

There is a growing body of research which has challenged the assessment of young people as apolitical and emphasised a broader type of political participation. A survey by Youth Action Network and Clubs for Young People revealed that 74 per cent of young people surveyed plan to vote at the next election - but they feel intimidated by 'adult' politics and want parties to produce information specifically targeted at young people (Power Up, 2003). Membership of the youth wings of the main political parties is not insignificant (ibid).

More importantly, young people are involved in a variety of forms of political and community action and are concerned with issues on the political agenda (Lister et al., 2002; Morris and John, 2003; National Centre for Social Research, 2000 cited in YouthActionNet, 2003). Declining respect for authority and trust in institutions which characterise postmodern societies has generated rising support for democracy, political activism and 'elite-challenging forms of participation' (Inglehart, 1999). There is particular affiliation by young people with single issue campaigns and charities 'where they can see a direct result from their action' (Wilkinson and Mulgan, 1996; Roker et al., 1999).

Young people link voluntary work with good citizenship, but much of this 'constructive social participation' takes place outside formal organisations (Lister et al., 2002). While practically all young people in this study had at some time engaged in constructive social activities, for one half of these this meant informal activities, through community networks, campaigning or informal political action (ibid).

Redefining political action to include these activities, Roker et al. concluded that 76 per cent of their sample of young people were 'involved' - 'a remarkable finding, and one that challenges the stereotype of young people as selfish and uninvolved' (Roker et al., 1999). Similarly, a Charities Aid Foundation study concluded that young people's definition of charity and giving 'goes beyond formal organised charitable activities, focusing more on engagement through active involvement' (Walker and Fisher, 2002). This includes 'neighbourliness and something akin to citizenship', giving goods to charity shops, buying the Big Issue and taking part in charity events. They conclude 'widening our understanding of charitable giving means recognising that young people do a lot more than they are sometimes given credit for in society' (ibid). The Giving Campaign came to a similar conclusion in its survey of more than 1,000 secondary school students: 'a great deal of charitable activity already takes place in schools and 11-16 year olds are more switched on to giving... than many people give them credit for' (Giving Campaign, 2002).

The Future Laboratory reinforces this shift in young people's attitudes by emphasising the rapidity of change in younger generations' values and characteristics. Its report *Sunshine Teens* asserts that the new teenagers across Europe 'have a maturity and optimism that is a great contrast to the sulky adolescents of Generation X' (Future Laboratory, 2004). Unlike Generation X 'who were happy to shun all things ethical and political, teenagers born post 1984, are among the most politically and vocally active ever'. Over half of British teenagers interviewed for the study said they were interested in politics and most, while 'brand-conscious', expect brands to be ethically charged, socially responsible and driven by values. Pointing to the rising membership of youth political groups across Europe, the report states that events such as 9/11 and the Iraq war, and environmental issues and GM crops, have created among teenagers 'a culture of protest and grassroots activism'.

Moreover, *Sunshine Teens* have a collective consciousness and sense of bonding absent from their predecessors: 'inclusiveness, connectivity and belonging were all words used by this group again and again'. They are 'a generation that values friendships and family ties above the material goods and hedonism that dominated the teen wish-list in the 80s and 90s'. Their greater respect for their parents, who have given them a more liberal upbringing and a sense of responsibility, helps create 'a transgenerational flow of values and influence' but their greatest reference point is their peer group. They function using 'collaborative networks built on trust' and on 'peer recommendations'.

Much of their communication is technologically based, with 80 per cent of the respondents using mobile phones as their favoured communication channel and computer email, chatrooms and weblogs not far behind (Future Laboratory, 2004).

The report concludes that it is a generation 'prepared to work hard and play hard' which wants to maximise its returns and is prepared to invest time and effort in education. But they also want to have fun. This sounds like fertile ground for potential volunteering!

## **2 YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTARY WORK**

- **Up to one half of young people have experience of volunteering, lower than adults, according to some studies, although the most recent Home Office Citizenship Survey (HOCS) found the highest levels of volunteering among young people;**
- **Minority groups such as black and minority ethnic young people, disabled people and marginalized people tend to volunteer less than 'white middle class' young people, especially in formal activities;**
- **However, young people, including minority groups, do take part in a substantial amount of informal political, community and voluntary activity;**
- **Young women tend to volunteer more readily than young men.**

### **2.1 Levels of participation**

Close to one half of young people have experience of volunteering. In 1997, according to the National Survey of Volunteering, 43 per cent of young people had volunteered, a decline from 55 per cent in 1991. The mean number of hours contributed was considerably lower than the national average, at just 0.7 hours per week (Davis Smith, 1998). This apparent slump in young people's involvement and their lower rates than older people triggered the recent debate on their volunteering.

Other studies find rates of 43 per cent (14-25 year olds) currently or recently volunteering (Brunwin, 2002); and 50 per cent (14-16 year olds) (Roker et al., 1999). A summary of 20 local mapping surveys carried out under the Young Volunteer Development Programme found levels generally between 40 and 60 per cent (National Youth Agency, 1998).

The Home Office Citizenship Survey, however, disputes the suggestion that young people are under-represented in volunteering. The 2001 study found that 40 per cent of 16-24 year olds had done formal volunteering in the last twelve months - the highest across the age groups (Attwood et al., 2003). Further, this age group had the highest levels of informal volunteering (73 per cent) and social participation, which denotes involvement in groups, clubs and organisations (70 per cent). Their civic participation - including petitions, demonstrations and

contacting MPs - stood at 28 per cent, lower than other age groups except 75+ (Attwood et al., 2003). Results from the 2003 survey are awaiting analysis.

Youth volunteering schemes, which include voluntary sector programmes like Community Service Volunteers and Prince's Trust-Volunteers and government initiatives Millennium Volunteers and Young Volunteer Challenge, continue to attract good numbers of young people. These are reviewed more fully in Chapter 9.

## **2.2 Types of activity**

In terms of the activities that young volunteers are engaged in, according to the National Survey, sports and exercise leads, attracting 44 per cent, the largest percentage across the age range. Hobbies, recreation and art involved 17 per cent and youth and children's services, and health and social welfare, each occupied 14 per cent of 18-24 year olds (Davis Smith, 1998). Young people tend to be attracted to activities in areas they are interested in such as sports, arts, media, environment, computers and fashion (National Youth Agency, 1998; Vincent et al., 1999; Gaskin, 1998a). Sports and ICT have been found to be particularly effective in engaging young men and more disaffected young people (Home Office, 2003).

According to the National Survey, the most common type of volunteering was fundraising and more than one half of young volunteers took part in organising or helping run events. About one quarter were committee members or engaged in transporting people (Davis Smith, 1998). Compared to older people, however, young people are under-represented in 'responsible' voluntary roles such as management committees and school governing bodies (Davis Smith, 1998; Ellis, 2003). Black and minority ethnic people, disabled people and unemployed or low income people are also under-represented at this level (Ellis, 2003).

## **2.3 Social class and gender**

There is a strong positive correlation between volunteering and social class, with those with more education, employment and higher incomes more likely to participate (Attwood et al., 2003; Davis Smith, 1998; Pancer & Pratt, 1999, Schroeder et al., 1995; Davis Smith et al., 2002). People in employment have higher rates than those without a job (Attwood et al., 2003; Davis Smith, 1998). However, among young people being employed is often linked to low volunteering and in some areas being 'marginalized' associates with high levels of interest in voluntary and community work (Gaskin et al., 1996; Gaskin, 1998a; National Youth Agency, 1998). Young people engaged in social action groups were found to have a diversity of backgrounds and ethnicity and not meet 'the predominant stereotype' of white middle-class young people (Roker & Eden, 2002).

The available literature on young volunteers shows a mixture of findings about gender. Among the population as a whole in several countries, there is gender

equality in volunteering rates (in the UK as a result of a decline in women's volunteering) and in several European countries more men than women volunteer (Pancer and Pratt, 1999; Davis Smith 1998; Gaskin and Davis Smith, 1995). US studies are inconclusive about whether female adolescents are more likely to volunteer than males or whether rates are similar (Keith et al, 1990; Raskoff and Sundeen, 1994). It is clear that males and females tend to take on different volunteering activities and that people tend to offer the type of help that is most appropriate to their perceived gender role (Davis Smith, 1998; Schroeder et al., 1995).

Studies of particular projects and programmes indicate greater participation by female young people than male, although the content (eg computers or sport) can change this (National Youth Agency, 1998; Roker and Eden, 2002; Davis Smith et al., 2002; Gaskin, 2003a). Millennium Volunteers was 'relatively unsuccessful in engaging young men' (Davis Smith et al., 2002). In social action more females than males were involved but young men were heavily involved in youth councils, which may have had a more 'masculine' image (Roker and Eden, 2002; Roker et al., 1999).

#### **2.4 Ethnicity**

Black and minority ethnic people have seemed to volunteer slightly less than white people, though this may be a function of definition and measurement since there is a long tradition of informal volunteering in communities (Davis Smith, 1998; Niyazi, 1996). In the Young Volunteer Development Programme areas, large numbers of minority ethnic young people volunteered, but often within their own communities rather than for mainstream organisations (National Youth Agency, 1998). The Home Office Citizenship Survey shows broadly similar participation rates among white, Asian and black populations (Attwood et al., 2003).

A survey of 95 charities in 2000 found that BME people were considerably under-represented in their volunteer workforces and trustee boards, at just 3 per cent of all volunteers (National Coalition for Black Volunteering, 2000). This 'serious under-representation of black people at all levels' in mainstream voluntary organisations was due to a preference for informality, a culture clash with bureaucratic middle-class organisations and the operation of racism and tokenism (Niyazi, 1996).

A study of young BME people's volunteering in the South West found that 60 per cent were current or recent volunteers and 69 per cent had done informal volunteering (Kamat, 2001). One fifth volunteered in faith organisations. Volunteering for BME or mainstream organisations was evenly spread and one quarter were active in both. A significant majority had made no deliberate decision to volunteer for one or the other; and 'there is no clear relationship between being black and volunteering for black organisations alone' (Britton, 1999).

Mainstream organisations in the South West particularly attracted black people under 25 (Kamat, 2001). This probably reflects a generational difference: 'young people are less concerned about the source of the opportunities than their quality' (Gaskin, 2003a). The size and longevity of the white voluntary sector means it can offer a wide range of types of work in different fields and, compared to smaller community groups, provide the kind of experience and training that many young people are after.

Volunteering programmes that target less well-off young people show that more 'atypical' young people can be attracted to volunteering. The evaluation of MV showed that significant steps had been made towards achieving the programme's aim of opening up volunteering to a broad cross-section of the community, including people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and unemployed people (Davis Smith et al., 2002). The Black and Minority Ethnic Twinning Initiative, which focused on BME volunteering in BME and white-led organisations was successful in dispelling 'the myths and misconceptions about volunteering' in BME communities and attracted large numbers of young volunteers (Gaskin, 2003a).

## **2.5 Other minority groups**

While there is relatively little information on volunteering by disabled young people or those with mental health problems, gay and lesbian young people, and those with drug problems or criminal records, it is generally agreed that their rates of volunteering are low because of the barriers to their involvement (IVR, 2004).

Projects and organisations which have prioritised recruitment of minority groups such as disabled people and gay and lesbian people have also been successful in attracting them (Niyazi, 1996). In one study a gay recruit made a revealing comment in his 'surprise' at seeing a poster reflecting his community's concerns: 'it's nice to get away from the image of the housewife helping Oxfam' (Gaskin, 2002).

Programmes that seek to engage the most alienated and at risk young people, including those with substance abuse problems and criminal records, have shown that the right approach, support and activity can have a dramatic impact. Initial reports from the evaluation of Young Volunteer Challenge indicate successful recruitment of lower income young people and good retention through intensive support and quality placements (GHK, 2004). Positive Futures, while not strictly a volunteering programme (though a route to volunteering for participants), has built on pioneering projects carried out by NACRO and engaged nearly 35,000 of the most vulnerable and at risk young people, aged 10-19, in its sports initiatives (Home Office, 2003 and 2004).

A key point about these successful schemes is that special efforts are made to

target, inform and support the minority group in question. This has implications for programme target-setting, which can conflict with inclusivity, and for resources. The importance of this will be returned to later.

### **3 IMAGES OF VOLUNTEERS AND VOLUNTEERING**

- **Young people have generally positive views of volunteering and volunteers;**
- **The view persists that volunteering is the domain of older people, but a new image may be gaining ground;**
- **Volunteering appears to be a rather exclusive concept that deters involvement;**
- **Young people dislike the term ‘volunteering’ and do not use it for their own activities;**
- **They link volunteering to citizenship but have their own views of citizenship and community.**

#### **3.1 The role of volunteers and volunteering**

Young people demonstrate mixed perceptions of volunteers and volunteering. They have a strongly positive view of the general role of volunteering and voluntary organisations. A large majority of 18-24 year olds agree that a society with voluntary workers is a caring society (Davis Smith, 1998). Three quarters (more than 25-44 year olds) feel that voluntary workers offer something different that could never be provided by the state or paid professionals (Davis Smith, 1998b; Gaskin & Davis Smith, 1995). They tend to reject the idea that voluntary workers are less efficient than paid workers or are ‘incompetent amateurs’ (Gaskin, 1998a). However, they are less likely to see them as qualified, competent and professional than older age groups, although they do rate them above paid workers in their degree of commitment, their belief in what they do and their role as ‘like friends to the people they help’ (Davis Smith, 1998). They are the least likely across the age range to believe that receiving a service on an unpaid basis is like taking charity (Davis Smith, 1998).

#### **3.2 Images of volunteers and volunteering**

The issue of young people’s perceptions of ‘volunteering’, ‘volunteer’ and voluntary work has been highlighted for some time. Parliamentary hearings in 2001 concluded that ‘volunteering needs a new and livelier image’ (Dingle & Heath, 2001).

According to the literature, many young people appear to hold a negative view of the kinds of people who volunteer and their motivations: ‘self-righteous’ people and the classic stereotype - ‘middle-aged housewives with nothing better to do’ (Foster and Fernandes, 1996; Richardson, 1990; Meisel, 1988). Reviewing the lack of diversity in volunteering, one writer has argued that ‘the culprit is the v-word itself, with its inevitable blue-rinse connotations’ (Little, 2001).

However, some of these studies are more than ten years old and perhaps a more positive view is emerging among new generations. Research in 1997 shows that, when asked to rank images of volunteers, young people placed most emphasis on approved characteristics such as caring and altruistic motivations (Gaskin, 1998a). Volunteers are most likely to be people who like to help others, who want to help the community, animals or the environment, and improve things in society. They are widely seen as committed and trustworthy, not 'do-gooders and busybodies' and people with 'too much time on their hands'. The young people in this research were aware that all kinds of people volunteer and dismissed quite strongly the notion of volunteers as predominantly white, female and middle class.

Research to aid in the development of a Scottish civic service scheme found that young people identified volunteers as 'good people', caring and confident, who think about others and are interested in the activity. However, they also had a strong visual image of 'old ladies and charity shops' when asked what volunteering is (NFO, 2003).

This reflects the consistent tendency to see volunteers as older people (National Youth Agency, 1998). Two thirds of survey respondents felt that people of their age were less likely to volunteer than older people (Gaskin, 1998b). This was partly because the main things volunteers do, in young people's opinion, are working for charities and voluntary organisations, 'caring' activities, raising money for causes and helping in the neighbourhood and community (ibid; National Youth Agency, 1998). Taking part in youth groups, school or college projects, campaigning, environmental action and youth award schemes all rated lower in importance (Gaskin, 1998b). Thus image is affected by the perceptions of the scope of voluntary work, which often exclude sizeable areas of volunteer activity. Black and minority ethnic people tend to equate 'volunteering' with a narrow range of activities undertaken in formal 'mainstream' organisations (IVR, 2004).

As Lukka and Ellis note, there is one excessively dominant construct of volunteering, which has emerged from a specifically Western setting and has served to marginalise other, minority definitions. As a result, individuals who are potential volunteers but who do not conform to, or identify with, this dominant construct are inadvertently excluded from 'volunteering' (Lukka & Ellis, 2001).

Negative or stereotypical images of 'volunteers' and 'volunteering' are a particular deterrent for young people and for BME people, but also affect minority groups such as disabled people, gay people and ex-offenders, who feel they do not fit organisations' preferred volunteer profile (Niyazi, 1996; Gaskin, 1998 & 2003; Lukka & Ellis, 2001; IVR, 2004).

In a survey of predominantly white voluntary organisations in the South West, many admitted that they did not promote their organisation as offering meaningful

opportunities to BME volunteers: 'perception of mainstream organisations as white and middle-class was identified as a major barrier' largely due to the fact 'that organisations had not proactively promoted themselves as anything other' (Kamat, 2001).

An image issue for disabled people is that traditional volunteering is seen as being based on a 'helper and helped' power relationship, which casts them as passive recipients rather than active volunteers (IVR, 2004). Hence the rise of groups *of* rather than *for* disabled people, in which patronising attitudes are banished and mutual aid, empowerment and rights are the driving force.

Part of volunteering's image in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that volunteers are overworked and that once someone has started as a volunteer 'it would open the floodgates and my time would no longer be my own' (Gaskin, 2003b). This perception was also found to be a significant deterrent among young people in sports volunteering: because of the shortage of volunteers, they witnessed current volunteers being obliged or pressured to take on more and more (Sport England, 2003).

### **3.3 Young people as 'volunteers'**

Young people often do not identify what they do as 'volunteering' (Gaskin, 1998a; Duffy, 1998; Gaskin, 2001). Many young people say they have not volunteered but have in fact taken part in activities that are clearly identifiable as volunteering (ibid). One Millennium Volunteers manager revealingly reported participants' view that 'we're enjoying it, so it can't be volunteering' (Davis Smith et al., 2002).

Even if they do recognise what they do as volunteering, they prefer not to use the word. This indicates the lack of esteem in which volunteering is held by their peers. One of the three main issues discouraging volunteering was 'feeling embarrassed by it' (the others were its image and not being paid) (Roker et al., 1999). Two thirds of survey respondents felt that most people their age can't see the point of volunteering and close to half said their friends would think it wasn't cool to volunteer: 'It's like: "Do you want to come and do some voluntary work?" leave off! I've got a reputation to uphold. If my mates see me down there....!' (Gaskin, 1998a).

However, a recent survey of more than 1,000 secondary school students by the Giving Campaign found that 68 per cent agreed that 'it's cool to volunteer to help other people' (Giving Campaign 2002). Females were more positive about this - 78 per cent agreed compared to 59 per cent of males.

### **3.4 Gender and age differences**

Negative attitudes are felt particularly to apply to males and to people in their middle teens, and this raises the important issue of gender and age variation in attitudes to volunteering. The Prince's Trust study of disadvantaged young people found that unemployed males were most likely to dismiss the idea of

volunteering and were unwilling to work for no money, even if this offered the experience that they desperately need: quoting an 18-24 year old saying 'Someone tried to get me to do volunteer work. Working for no money. Yeah, right.' (Prince's Trust, 2004). The more negative view among young men emerges in other research (Gaskin, 1998a; Roker et al., 1999). Millennium Volunteers was 'relatively unsuccessful in engaging young men', and recruited most from the 16-18 age range and least from 22-24 year olds (Davis Smith et al., 2002).

Although much research on young people focuses on what appears to be a narrow age group - say, 16-24 - there may be considerable variation within this band. There are indications that those in their early teens have a more positive, probably idealistic view of society and what volunteers can achieve, but also are more susceptible to peer pressure. People who have reached their late teens feel more able to make their own decisions and have developed a more realistic idea of what they want to do with their lives but may be more cynical about society. If they have become increasingly marginalized and have low self-esteem through lack of achievement and perhaps poor experiences of compulsory training or job placement schemes, their negativity may harden (Gaskin, 1998a).

A Prince's Trust study of disadvantaged 'hard to reach' young people found significant change from the age band 14-17 to 18+ (Prince's Trust, 2004). The younger ones placed more emphasis on work and material achievements, while those aged 18-25 focused on relationships and self-fulfilment. Young teenagers were 'optimistic about their chances of getting good, well-paid jobs'; however, 'these ambitions quickly dissipate as they face the reality of either low-paid, low-skilled jobs or a lack of training opportunities'. Those 14-17 identified as a major barrier their own bad behaviour, while older people felt they were held back more by a lack of qualifications. As they reached 22-25, they blamed a lack of suitable jobs for their failure to find employment. These older people were also much more mobile than their younger counterparts, causing further problems with affiliating or accessing opportunities (Prince's Trust, 2004).

This study, one of the few to distinguish attitudes by age, recommends using 'narrower age bands' in the structuring of youth agencies to 'recognise the specific nature of intervention required'. This finding, of the necessity of breaking down 'youth' into groups with different perceptions, aspirations and peer reference is an important pointer to structuring youth volunteering.

### **3.5 Citizenship and community**

Young people demonstrate a good understanding of citizenship and support a greater focus on developing citizenship understanding and skills amongst young people (Lister et al., 2001; Roker and Eden, 2002). They understood citizenship as 'describing individuals' reciprocal relationships with society' and held five general models of citizenship: universal status; respectable economic independence; constructive social participation; social-contractual rights and

responsibilities; and 'the right to a voice' (Lister et al., 2002). Research on young people aged 16-24 found two different models of adulthood: an individualised model stressing feelings of maturity and autonomy and a relational model focusing on responsibilities and care for others (Thomson et al., 2002).

In Lister's study, self-identification as a citizen increased over the three year period of the study but varied in relation to factors such as whether or not they had achieved waged employment and paid tax, undertaken voluntary or community work; voted or had an effective say; 'felt significant, respected, independent or a sense of belonging' (Lister et al., 2002).

A majority of young people associate voluntary work with 'good citizenship' (Lister et al., 2002). More than 80 per cent of young volunteers and two thirds of non-volunteers in Northern Ireland thought volunteering contributed to active citizenship (Gilhooly, 1999). In Roker and Eden's study, nearly all those interviewed believed there should be citizenship education in schools and that young people should be encouraged to participate in their community (Roker and Eden, 2002).

As long ago as 1984, 78 per cent of 15-24 year olds supported a youth volunteer service programme and in 1995 63 per cent welcomed the idea (CSV, 1994 and 1995). In the 1997 National Survey, nearly two thirds of people aged 18-24 said they supported a government campaign to encourage young people to do a period of voluntary or community work (and 78 per cent supported this for unemployed people) (Davis Smith, 1998). When asked if this should be compulsory, the percentage dropped to 33 per cent.

Citizenship may embrace different elements for different groups of young people, although there were few differences in defining the concept between 'insiders' (educated, employed) and 'outsiders' (few qualifications, unemployed) (Lister et al., 2002; MacDonald and Marsh, 2002)). Economically marginalized young people, who experience 'serious disengagement' from the political system, felt they were labelled as 'second class citizens' and unemployed youngsters 'were more likely not to identify themselves as citizens at all' (Lister, 2001). When young people do not show civic responsibility, it is because they do not feel like fully entitled citizens and are therefore not bound by the obligations they associate with citizenship.

Black and minority ethnic young people view citizenship in the context of living in a society that is dominantly white. They therefore had a 'strong perception' that citizenship is 'hierarchical and unequal' and that their British citizenship was not as 'weighty' as other people's, partly because it was equated to length of residency and 'roots' in this country (Harris et al., 2002).

Many young people have a localised sense of identity and citizenship, tying it closely to their local community and, for minority ethnic groups, the 'black

community'. In this context they could gain and give respect and, for them, this was an important aspect of citizenship, in addition to rights and obligations (Harris et al., 2002). In general, young people feel that community and citizenship have a strong local orientation (Lister, 2001; Roker and Eden, 2002).

Young people of different ages appear to have different perceptions of their community. Rather than a geographical sense of community, they define community as more of a community of interest based around 'school, town centre and street, friends and relatives' houses...' (Morrow, 2002 cited in YAN, 2004). This suggests that traditional ways of looking at social capital *a la* Putnam 'might be misleading' (YAN, 2004).

For those emerging from childhood, community appears to be a narrower concept than those approaching adulthood; for example, when seeking advice and help, '14-17 year olds rarely looked beyond their immediate circle of family and friends' (Prince's Trust, 2004). The use of external sources of advice and help, such as specialist support agencies and youth charities, increased dramatically over the age range, with nearly three quarters of 22-25 year olds turning to them, compared to fewer than half 14-17 year olds. The youngest age band also complained most about a lack of things for young people to do in their community.

Community can be 'double-edged', operating as a source of support and information but also as a site of tension and exclusion. This was certainly the case for lesbian and gay young people and young D/deaf people (Valentine et al., 2002)

After reviewing what young people want from volunteering and what appears to work in contributing to civil renewal, Stanley concludes 'there is no obvious contradiction between what young people want and the civil renewal agenda' (Stanley, 2003).

## **4 ROUTES INTO VOLUNTEERING**

- **Word of mouth and 'being asked' is the main way young people become volunteers;**
- **Family and friends can be an important influence;**
- **Printed materials have less effect, but the internet is a growing route into volunteering;**
- **Routes into volunteering vary by age and institutional setting.**

### **4.1 Word of mouth**

Much volunteer recruitment occurs through word of mouth and this applies equally to young people. Half the 18-24 year olds in the National Survey got into volunteering because 'someone asked me to help' (Davis Smith, 1998). Word of

mouth is a major recruitment method for Millennium Volunteers and Young Volunteer Challenge. Most young people involved in social action got into it in an informal manner: through teachers or youth workers, or invited to join by family and friends (Roker and Player, 2002). However, the danger of relying on word of mouth is that, as in MV, it 'tended to lead to a cloning effect', thereby limiting diversity (Davis Smith et al., 2002).

Word of mouth contacts can include workers in youth clubs, sports clubs, church and faith groups, and education, as well as family and friends. Word of mouth also works through direct contact with organisations' or projects' workers, and personal presentations and conversations have been found to be the most effective way of attracting young people to volunteering (GHK, 2004; Gaskin, 1998a). Young Volunteer Challenge's strategy of basing staff for a week in schools for one to one interviews has been 'the most effective way of stimulating interest' (GHK, 2004).

Young Volunteer Challenge has also made effective use of referral agencies, such as jobcentre plus and Connexions, to make direct contact with disadvantaged young people and route them to the programme (GHK, 2004).

#### **4.2 Family and friends**

Many young people get involved through a combination of 'family, friends, boredom and chance' although some seek out opportunities because of strong feelings about an issue (Roker and Eden, 2002). More marginalized young people - for example, disabled, young carers or gay and lesbian - often come together with peers for mutual support and then broaden their aims to include campaigning and social action (ibid).

Family is particularly important in providing a route into volunteering for young people: 83 per cent of 18-24 year old volunteers say that other family members had been active in voluntary work (Davis Smith, 1998). An American study concluded that 'socialisation for volunteer work occurs both in the family and in volunteer work itself', although in that study father's volunteering was a positive influence, while mother's was negative (Fitzsimmons, 1986). American teenage volunteers were more likely to have parents and family members who also volunteer and also be from households in higher socio-economic groups (Raskoff and Sundeen, 1994; Kirkpatrick Johnson et al., 1998). Family and community networks were found to be the most common factors in motivating young people's social participation (Lister et al., 2002).

The family has been shown to be 'of vital importance' in the adoption of socially responsible thinking and behaviour by adolescents (Hart and Fegley, 1995; Pancer and Pratt, 1999). Parents can influence children by serving as models of altruistic and caring behaviour, transmitting moral values and goals, providing opportunities for the children to volunteer and supporting them in it (Eley, 2001). Positive family influence is likely to be stronger among those in the higher social

grades (Gaskin, 1998b).

### **4.3 Advertising, media and internet**

Responding to printed materials and advertising is a less common route into volunteering for young people, though they may be effective as part of a larger strategy (National Youth Agency, 1998; DfES, 2003; Roker and Player, 2002; Gaskin, 1998a). Posters and leaflets are easily ignored and require initiative to respond, but their effect can be increased by strategic placement - in, for example, pubs, clubs, post offices and public transport (Gaskin, 2003b). Using advertisements and local media, as well as direct mail shots to potential recruits, were part of YVC's recruitment strategy (GHK, 2004).

Young people are more likely than older age groups to have seen appeals for volunteers in the media (Davis Smith, 1998). They have mixed views about the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement for volunteering, depending very much on the credibility and appeal of the celebrity (NFO, 2003; Gaskin, 1998a).

The internet is a growing access point as well as enabling virtual or e-volunteering, described as a major growth area in Europe (Ellis, 2000). An access site, do-it.org.uk, which provides on-line volunteering projects and a database of opportunities, received 110,000 visitors per month in 2003 (Hurley, 2003) and the internet was the leading source of information for CSV applicants (DfES, 2003). However, young people still say it is often difficult to find readily available volunteering information on the net (Gaskin, 2003b).

### **4.4 Age and social class**

Age can be an important factor affecting access to volunteering. Younger teens tend to get into volunteering through school, family, church and youth clubs; older teens through college and university, friends and schemes like Millennium Volunteers; and people in their twenties have a possible work-related route through employer-supported volunteering. Unemployed young people may be pointed towards voluntary work through Jobcentre Plus, although this is very variable.

Those who are outside or out of touch with institutional settings may find it hardest to find a route into volunteering. Since 1994, nine per cent of people aged 16-19 are not in education, training or employment, approximately 160,000 young people (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999). In 1999, there were 130,000 people aged just 16 and 17 who were 'off-register' and 'completely out of the system' (Gaskin, 2000). Nearly half of these 'status zero' young people had no qualifications and the group as a whole 'displays characteristics that are markers of serious exclusion' (Bentley and Gurumurthy, 1999). A majority of them, however, want to work but cannot find a route into employment or volunteering.

## 5 MOTIVATIONS AND BENEFITS

- **Young people are particularly motivated by the desire for experience, skills, references and qualifications;**
- **Altruistic motives are also important to them;**
- **They want to have fun and make friends but it is not a primary motivation;**
- **Motivations vary by age and gender;**
- **They value the career-related benefits from volunteering but also satisfaction, enjoyment and making a contribution to the community.**

### 5.1 Motivations to volunteer

The motivations of volunteers are well known to cover a wide spectrum. The National Survey offers 12 reasons for volunteering spanning a range of altruistic and egoistic motives. People aged 18-24 were more likely than older age groups to volunteer because the work 'is connected with my needs and interests' and because 'I thought it would give the chance to learn new skills' and less likely to cite need in the community and the desire to improve things and help people (Davis Smith, 1998).

Other research reinforces the importance of gaining work-related experience, skills and qualifications in motivating young people's volunteering (Foster and Fernandes, 1996; Gaskin and Davis Smith, 1995; Gaskin, 1998; Ellis, 2002; NFO, 2003; Volunteer Canada, 2001). Ninety four per cent of 15-19 year olds surveyed agreed that volunteering is a great way for young people to get experience (Gaskin, 1998b). There may be some difference between more privileged young people who go or expect to go to college and university and from there into jobs, and those without such prospects. For the former 'voluntary experience was another string to their bow' while for the latter 'the voluntary experience could be a lifeline' (Gaskin, 1998a). Gap year participants placed less emphasis on skills development and more on altruism, taking a break from studying, and the opportunity to travel (Jones, 2004).

Among Young Volunteer Challenge volunteers, the main motives for participating were to develop new skills, help them get employment, and gain a qualification – these far outweighed the attraction of receiving financial support. The opportunity to help others and to make new friends did get mentioned lower down in the list (GHK, 2004).

Young people exhibit a mixture of pro-social and egoistic motives and it is important to note that responding to community needs and helping others are well in the mix (Eley, 2001 and 2003; NFO, 2003). Roker and Eden's study of social action found that reasons for becoming involved included self-help and support, concern about a social issue or practice, desire to address local issues and provision, for social reasons, and to improve skills and qualifications (Roker

& Eden, 2002)

Young people also volunteer to have a good time. More than two thirds of 15-19 year olds said volunteering offers the chance to enjoy themselves and have fun (Gaskin, 1998b). In the National Survey, one fifth of 18-24 year olds volunteered because they wanted to meet people and make friends, lower than most other age groups (Davis Smith, 1998). Although the social side is not a primary reason for volunteering, it may be more important for younger teenagers and certainly contributes to the likelihood of continuing as a volunteer (Gaskin, 1998a).

Young people volunteer for religious reasons much less than any older groups. Fewer than one third said it was part of their religious belief or philosophy of life to give help, compared to two thirds of 25-34 year olds and 89 per cent of 65-74 year olds (Davis Smith, 1998). The Home Office study of religion in the 2001 Citizenship Survey found civic participation by 16-24 year olds of any faith to be the lowest across the age range, although the young were most likely to be involved in clubs and groups. In general, there was little difference in civic participation between religious and non-religious people and different faith groups (O'Beirne, 2004).

The priority given to different motivations may vary according to age, gender and ethnicity. Younger teens may have more social motives and find it interesting to learn about different sorts of jobs while older people are particularly motivated by a career or vocational focus as the prospects of employment or further education loom large (Eley, 2001; NFO, 2003). Young women place more emphasis on helping others and contributing to society than young men who favour action-oriented activities (Eley, 2003; NFO, 2003). In the National Survey, men were more likely to have volunteered in response to their own needs and interests and because they were attracted to the social benefits of volunteering, while women responded more to perceived needs (Davis Smith, 1998).

Black and minority ethnic volunteers (not differentiated by age) divided equally into those with altruistic, semi-altruistic and self-benefiting motivations (Britton, 1999), although the young are particularly keen on gaining experience for employment (Gaskin, 2003a).

## **5.2 Benefits from volunteering**

Analysis of the benefits which young people gain from their volunteering bears out the findings on their motives, but also shows interesting development. They tend to rate the benefit of learning new skills and getting a qualification more highly than older volunteers (Gaskin and Davis Smith, 1995; Davis Smith, 1998). While findings are mixed, they appear also to rate highly the benefits of enjoying it, the satisfaction of seeing the results and gaining a sense of personal achievement, meeting people and making friends (Gaskin and Davis Smith, 1995; Davis Smith, 1998).

Eley found that 15-19 year olds reflecting on their volunteering rated most highly enjoyment and self-esteem factors, followed by learning and skills development, with citizenship benefits a close third (Eley, 2003). Participation in volunteering and social action produces benefits in the development of greater confidence, team-working and communication skills and greater awareness of community and diversity. It 'impacts on young people's socio-political views, developing identities, and understanding of citizenship and related concepts' (Roker & Eden, 2002). Impacts will be reviewed in more detail in Chapters 9-11.

Volunteering can increase employability, particularly for those most disadvantaged in the labour market (Gay, 1998; Hirst, 2001; Gaskin, 2004). Hirst's survey of volunteers on benefit found more than half reporting that their volunteering had a positive impact on their chances of employment (Hirst, 2001). For young people voluntary work can operate as 'a form of apprenticeship' in certain occupational areas and is seen as almost essential in some fields, like conservation and environment (Thomas et al., 1999; Gaskin, 2004). Refugees and asylum seekers placed particular value on gaining work experience and references, as well as confidence, social contact and language skills, through volunteering (Stopforth, 1999; Scottish Executive, 2004).

Comparison of motives and benefits reveal that higher proportions derive altruistic, social and community benefits from actually doing voluntary work than those who give these as reasons for getting involved in the first place (Gaskin, 1996; Rochester, 2000; Eley, 2001 and 2003). For example, in Northern Ireland the three main reasons for starting volunteering were skills and career-related, but the three main benefits were gaining experience, doing something worthwhile and having fun (Gilhooly, 1999).

Among participants in a sport-based MV programme, twice as many gave 'working in the community' as their prime motive for volunteering *after* the programme than before it: 'their experience of volunteering in the community was sufficiently rewarding for them to come to see it as the most important reason for having become involved' (Eley, 2001 and 2003). After nine months of involvement, altruistic motivations gained in importance: 'after firsthand experience of volunteering, these young people not only attached greater importance to voluntary activity but also \_rganizati that their motives for getting involved included altruism' (Eley, 2003).

This points to an interesting developmental effect and the 'transformational' impact of doing voluntary work. More and broader benefits ensue from volunteering than young people envisage. The importance therefore of providing sufficient incentives to get even relatively uninterested young people involved in volunteering is highlighted, because the practice of volunteering may be the best winner of the argument.

## 6 BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING

- **The main barriers are the image of volunteering, lack of awareness of what is available, access to information and opportunities, lack of time, financial constraints, benefits rules, lack of confidence and sense of control, peer and parental attitudes, and organisations' attitudes and practices.**

The barriers to young people's volunteering include both supply and demand factors. On the supply side, there is lack of time, many other demands and activities, the unpredictability of change in their lives, the need or desire to earn money rather than work for nothing, and lack of confidence. On the demand side, there are perceived and actual barriers imposed by volunteer-involving organisations, negative attitudes towards and low expectations of young people, and the lack of readily available information and routes into voluntary work. For less 'typical' volunteer groups such as black and minority ethnic young people, unemployed young people and disabled young people, these barriers can be intensified and additional ones such as transport and cultural barriers are added.

The National Centre for Volunteering's 1995 study of barriers identified five main ones: young people are unaware of the benefits to themselves; volunteering is seen as boring; it has a reputation for being badly organised; it is seen as the preserve of older people, especially middle class females; and it is expensive and time-consuming (Niyazi, 1995). A study of young people in Northern Ireland found the top three barriers to be lack of finance, of time, and of information. The perceived image of volunteering came fourth and benefits rules fifth (Gilhooly, 1999). The main barriers to effective participation by young people in social action were older people's attitudes, infrastructural and organisational rigidity; lack of resources; lack of confidence; and the need for leaders to facilitate their involvement (Evans et al., 2002).

### 6.1 Time

Lack of time is a common reason for not volunteering across the age range. In the National Survey, this is the major reason given by six out of ten non-volunteers (Davis Smith, 1998). This was also a primary reason across all types of young people (Gaskin, 1998a; Gilhooly, 1999). In the Home Office Citizenship Survey, around one third of 18-24 year olds cited time commitments or working or educational commitments as a barrier to both formal and informal volunteering (Attwood et al., 2003). Two thirds of young people aged 15-19 felt that most young people have too many pressures and other commitments to volunteer (Gaskin, 1998b).

There are also family and social commitments and the wide range of 'youth culture' diversions available to young people, with which volunteering has to compete for their time. The pressures on their time, both real and perceived,

have a strong influence on their ability to make a commitment to volunteering: 'if you're doing work or a degree, plus you want to go out with your friends, and then you have to find time to volunteer as well' you have to be 'mega organised' as one non-volunteer in her twenties expressed it (Gaskin, 1998a). Making a regular commitment was problematic for disabled people and ex-offenders, for different reasons (IVR, 2004).

Young people are particularly concerned about pledging their time on a regular basis and then letting people down. They are also mindful of the possibility that they will be pressured to take on more as a volunteer and find it hard to say no (Gaskin, 1998a; Sport England, 2003). So they would rather not put themselves in that position in the first place (Hustinx, 2001).

Research to aid the development of a Scottish civic service scheme found that time was a major concern of the 16-25 year olds questioned (NFO, 2003). Younger people were 'particularly sensitive' to the idea of a one-year commitment - 'a big turn-off' - and had concerns about being away from home, missing out on socialising with friends and being stuck in something if you hated it. They wanted a trial period and shorter 'modules' to ensure variety and a chance for a break (ibid). One school student said 'you are not getting paid and you want time to do something else', which brings up the interplay between barriers of time and money.

## **6.2 Finance**

Lack of money is an important obstacle to volunteering particularly for low income and young people. As in Latin America and the Caribbean, 'the resource-privileged are more likely to be able to "afford" to participate' (Johnson et al., 2003). Many young people would rather work for money: 'don't want to work for free' was ranked as a primary reason for not volunteering by a large majority of young people (Gaskin, 1998; Gilhooly, 1999). And people on Jobseeker's Allowance, including many young people, were not interested in volunteering because they wanted to earn in a paid job (Gaskin, 2004).

In a study of Australian compulsory youth volunteering, 'many respondents expressed that they would much rather be working for pay, particularly as many viewed volunteering as mundane, uninteresting work' (Warburton and Smith, 2003). This is a reflection of the lack of choice and sense of exploitation which participants felt but it also captures a more general inclination to work for money among young people.

The biggest concern of 11-16 year olds about their future in a survey by Youth Action Network was about getting into debt, chiefly in education (Power Up, 2003) and the incurring of loan debt has added to the financial barrier in young people's minds. CSV comment that 'the decline in student grants has excluded some from volunteering since they need to earn money to reduce their debts' (Williams, 2002). Scottish young people also raised concerns about debt and

preferred the idea of volunteer service in an after-school gap year before student loan debt was incurred (NFO, 2003).

Young people on benefits may find barriers in the rules governing voluntary work. There has long been evidence that benefits offices are inconsistent in how they interpret and apply rules, and that many people are afraid to volunteer in case it jeopardises their benefits (Niyazi, 1995; Gilhooly, 1999; Gaskin, 2004). The 'biggest emerging issue' in Young Volunteer Challenge is how participation impacts on the benefits situation of young people and their families (GHK, 2004). Reductions in housing benefit, council tax relief and incapacity benefit as a consequence of the weekly allowance make it 'difficult to overestimate the degree to which the benefits question has clouded the impact of the financial incentive' (ibid).

Young people feel that at the very least volunteering should not cost them money and that all their expenses should be met. Systems for reimbursement should be transparent and prompt and, for some, payment in advance is important. In the National Survey, payment of expenses is a fairly minor drawback for people 18-24, compared to older age groups (Davis Smith, 1998). However, it is still possible for young people in 2003 to say that 'they barely want you to volunteer if you want expenses' and 'some charities make you feel guilty if you want your expenses paid' (Gaskin, 2003b). It is likely that, as organisations have recognised this as a barrier to some people's participation, many have made it an easier process than in the past, but this is not universal.

### **6.3 Information and access to opportunities**

A major barrier for young people (and volunteers of all ages) is simply lack of knowledge of what is available and how to find out and get involved. Research repeatedly shows that many people do not know what is on offer nor how to find out about voluntary opportunities (Niyazi, 1996; Hutchison, 1999; Gaskin, 1998; CSV, nd; Attwood, 2003; National Youth Agency, 1998; Roker et al., 1999; Gilhooly, 1999; Brunwin, 2002). Even motivated young people are hampered by the lack of information and access points to route them into volunteering. Young volunteers often fall into volunteering by accident by 'helping out' at a club, youth group, church or sports group.

The access barrier can operate differently for different age bands, although all show a considerable lack of awareness of routes into volunteering (Gaskin, 1998a). We have noted how institutional settings influence access to volunteering and that as young people mature and institutional contacts diminish, finding routes into volunteering becomes harder. Their awareness of Volunteer Bureaux is limited and many are not given advice about volunteering at school, by careers advisors or other potential 'gatekeepers'. Even highly motivated computer-literate young people may have difficulty finding out what's available (Gaskin, 2003b).

Just as family can be a positive source of information about volunteering, conversely it may deter young people from volunteering because of ignorance or negative attitudes, such as the view that they should 'get a proper job'. Parental pressure was found to be potentially significant in preventing less well off young people from volunteering because they are seen as wasting time working for free and not contributing to the household (Gaskin, 1998a; NFO, 2003).

Young people would like to see much wider availability of volunteering information in, for example, schools and colleges, careers offices, libraries, the jobcentre, youth clubs and on the internet (Gaskin, 1998a and 2003). Many specifically seeking information about volunteering in these places have found very little to help them. A key point is that there is little consistency within these categories of information sources. Some may actively promote it and post information about opportunities, while others provide almost nothing. This was found, for example, to be the case in jobcentre plus offices, where awareness of the benefits of volunteering (especially for young people) and promotion of it were extremely variable by office and even by advisor (Gaskin, 2004).

#### **6.4 Lack of confidence and a sense of control**

Two further barriers to young people's involvement are their low opinions of themselves and a sense of powerlessness.

Lack of confidence is highlighted by the Prince's Trust study of disadvantaged young people. In reporting what holds them back from achieving their goals, large numbers of 14-17 year olds cite lack of confidence - 37 per cent of males and 48 per cent of females (Prince's Trust, 2004). A third of 18-21 year old females also feel this, although lack of confidence diminishes in the older 22-25 group. Without venturing a full psychological analysis, this would appear to be an internalisation of others' perceptions of their uselessness, a realistic assessment of their prospects, and a feeling among adolescents that they may not have much to offer.

Lack of confidence was also a key barrier to the involvement of disabled people, BME people and ex-offenders. It was exacerbated for individuals who had experienced exclusion in other areas of life, and when volunteering took place in unfamiliar environments (IVR, 2004).

Some disadvantaged young people have a strong 'sense of powerlessness' which leads to lack of 'faith in their own ability to direct the course of their own lives.' (Edwards and Hatch, 2003). Describing a 'fatalism' among some young people, particularly teenage boys, the authors warn of low expectations 'colluding with young people's sometimes low assessments of themselves and their capabilities' (ibid)

Lack of confidence appears to be much less prevalent among better educated young people with good family support systems and more optimistic life

prospects (Lister et al., 2001). Among the reasons that young people don't volunteer, 'they don't have anything to offer' was an important reason to a number of focus group participants. The groups who ranked it lowest in the list of reasons were public school students and employed people aged 20-24 (Gaskin, 1998a).

Lack of confidence and anxiety about doing something on their own were also identified as a barrier to young people's engagement in social action (Roker et al., 1999; Evans et al., 2002). Roker et al. further found that young people were fearful of getting involved in violence or being arrested during campaigning activities. Apart from this, there is little evidence that fear over personal safety may be a deterrent to young people's volunteering. There is some fairly anecdotal evidence that safety concerns affect parental attitudes to Asian young people's volunteering, particularly for girls.

Lack of control over their own lives was identified as a key barrier to young people's greater involvement in voluntary work, particularly those in their teens (Gaskin, 1998a). This is a combination of not having enough time and the fact that 'their lives seem to belong to others'. 'There tends to be someone else in charge of what you're doing when you're young' said one volunteer (ibid). A study of 18-25 year olds found that while young adults generally feel a sense of control, this is 'limited by social and institutional factors' (Evans et al., 2002). Moreover, unemployed young people 'felt they had little control over their present situation' and tended to take personal responsibility for their own failure (ibid) and socially excluded young people in general are susceptible to a wide array of often negative influences and 'unpredictable consequences of critical moments' in their environment (MacDonald and March, 2002).

'The transition from dependent childhood to independent adulthood' notes Carnegie 'has changed at a pace which is possibly unprecedented', creating 'an extended period of partial dependence, usually on parents' (Cutler and Frost, 2001). Added to this mix is the decline in deference to social institutions, which has impacted most on young people (Inglehart, 1999). So many of the old certainties have dissipated, leaving young people with 'new freedoms, challenges and opportunities' but also 'complexity and uncertainty ... risks and dangers' (ibid). 'Many young people expressed a feeling of being under immense pressure to make a great number of choices about their future career at too young an age.. And were aware that because of their ever changing circumstances small problems could turn into large problems overnight' (Power Up, 2003). The pressures on young people and the pace and unpredictability of change in their lives creates a reluctance to take on new and unknown ventures and to make a commitment if they cannot be sure of fulfilling it. This is the major reason young people want flexibility in volunteering opportunities (Gaskin, 1998a; Hustinx, 2001).

Other barriers include the geographical spread and travel distances for rural

young people (Gaskin, 1996); language and cultural attitudes, travel problems, and racism for black and minority ethnic young people (Kamat, 2001; Davis Smith et al., 2002); access, travel and support needs for disabled young people (IVR, 2004).

### **6.5 Organisations' attitudes and policies**

Young people's attitudes to voluntary activity relate broadly to perceived barriers to young people in general. They feel they are labelled, excluded from important decisions, not listened to and considered threatening: 'teenagers are demonised in our society. We see them as feckless, troublesome, and economically dependent - not as contributors' (Sinclair, 1997).

Arguing that young people 'need to feel part of their community and take responsibility for both its problems as well as its assets', an IPPR report comments that 'they often feel they are typified as a problem, a nuisance or simply not a priority. ... seen as a cause of problems rather than positive participants in the local community' (Edwards & Hatch, 2003).

A review of youth volunteerism in Latin America and the Caribbean notes the greater potential for youth involvement but reflects 'the paradox of youth is that they are often excluded from legitimate social participation' (Johnson et al., 2003). A YouthActionNet publication comments that 'youth are generally marginalized in the process of decision-making. In their work with NGOs and other organisations, the young are commonly engaged in repetitive duties where they don't have a chance to share their ideas and feel a constructive part of the project they're involved in' (YouthActionNet, 2004).

The Carnegie Young People Initiative research on young people's involvement in public decision making found that 'contrary to the despairing or dismissive views of some people, our work has shown a real hunger by young people to take greater responsibility for their own lives, and frustration when this is thwarted' (Cutler and Frost, 2001). They continue that 'far too often young people are denied these opportunities or offered them in a tokenistic way so that they feel disconnected and disempowered' and 'young people are formally disenfranchised as a group in a special way and .. there is a prevalent culture which sees them as incapable' (ibid).

Young people are criticised for their apparent lack of social concern, but everywhere encounter obstacles to participation. This sense of powerlessness is expressed by an unemployed young person: 'It's not that young people don't care. They are put in that position by society. You've got no responsibility, no say in what happens, so there's this problem, but they say "you can't solve it, you're too young"' (Gaskin, 1998a).

The generalised mistrust of young people's abilities is particularised in the attitudes of voluntary organisations, both perceived and actual. In 1996, a report

for the Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector commented that 'perhaps the greatest obstacle is the negative attitude to young people as volunteers: many organisations continue to see young people as problematic and not capable of playing a significant role in their activities... not worth the risk and necessitating levels of support and supervision which the organisations are unwilling or unable to provide' (Gaskin et al., 1996; Vounteering Partnership, 1996; Popowski, 1985; National Youth Agency, 1998 and 1999; Brunwin, 2002).

The organisational barriers include: older people's attitudes to young people (Niyazi, 1996; Sport England, 2003; Evans et al., 2002); infrastructural and organisational rigidity; a lack of resources and staff time; insufficient training for young volunteers; and lack of support from youth workers and other leaders (Evans et al., 2002; Ellis, 2002).

Additional prejudices may come into play when the young people concerned are black, disabled, ex-offenders, gay or refugees or asylum seekers (IVR, 2004; Gaskin, 2001; Niyazi, 1996; Kamat, 2001). In its study of social exclusion and volunteering, the Institute for Volunteering Research found under-representation of BME people, disabled people and ex-offenders as volunteers in the majority of organisations (IVR, 2004).

In many voluntary organisations, minimum age limits are enforced, application procedures seem discouraging and young people may be allocated unchallenging, 'menial work' which do not make use of their skills and initiative (National Youth Agency, 1998; Gaskin, 1996). In 1998 a survey of over 500 volunteer-involving organisations found that more than half had lower age limits, frequently 18 years (despite the fact that young people were their top priority group for recruitment!) (IVR, 1999). Young people who are accepted by organisations have complained of being 'treated like a skivvy' or 'a doormat' (Gaskin 1996). It is almost shocking that two young student volunteers - clearly educated and motivated - described in 2003 pre-university attempts to volunteer in the following terms:

*'Quite a few places I volunteered I ended up being the dogsbody'.*

The staff didn't really know what to offer people like me. They would put together a list, like litter picking... it got a bit repetitive and boring. I was, like, pencilling margins in books and things. You don't really get a lot of return from doing stuff like that!' (Gaskin, 2003b)

Little wonder that a third of young people surveyed think that organisations simply don't want them as volunteers (Gaskin, 1998b).

The crucial importance of offering variety - of field, activity, organisation and level of responsibility - is emphasised in many studies. Young people want interesting and exciting opportunities in fields that appeal to them, such as arts and music,

fashion and design, video and media, sports and outdoor pursuits, city farms, environmental projects, computers, the fire brigade and police (Vincent et al., 1998; Gaskin, 1998b). Both the Young Volunteer Development Programme and Millennium Volunteers succeeded in developing new opportunities and activities, resulting in high levels of satisfaction among participants (Davis Smith et al., 2002; Gaskin, 2001).

## **7 ORGANISATION OF VOLUNTEERING**

- **Young people want good organisation with flexibility, efficiency with informality;**
- **They want to be treated as responsible, and to have different options for level of commitment;**
- **They want support when they need it but not overbearing or intrusive;**
- **They want good training opportunities.**

### **7.1 Ethos and organisation**

Young people tend to report dissatisfaction with their volunteering experiences (more so than any other age group) (Foster and Fernandes, 1996; Davis Smith, 1998). The 1997 National Survey found that nearly nine out of ten 18-24 year olds felt things could be much better organised, higher than any other age group. They also exceeded other age groups in their views that they sometimes get bored and lose interest, that their efforts aren't always appreciated, that they don't get asked to do the things they'd like to do and that they can't always cope with the things they do get asked to do (Davis Smith, 1998).

These are very telling indications of the failure of many voluntary organisations to deploy and manage young people's contributions effectively. A bad volunteering experience can put a young person off the idea completely (Gaskin, 1998a; Warburton and Smith, 2003).

Young people want their voluntary work to be well-organised but retaining a friendly, informal atmosphere. The numbers who found poor organisation to be a drawback shows they are very alert to this. However, they do not want to be 'over-organised'; they place high priority on an organisational setting which 'isn't too stuffy or bureaucratic' (Gaskin, 1998a; Davis Smith et al., 2002). They have enough authority figures in their lives and need to feel that volunteering offers scope for spontaneity and choice. Like adult volunteers, they want a combination of efficiency and flexibility in the way their time is managed (Gaskin, 2003b).

Young volunteers found recruitment procedures too drawn-out and often discouraging. They sometimes felt this was deliberately to put them off and could lose interest if the gap between applying and starting voluntary work was too lengthy (Gaskin, 1998a; IVR, 2004). Over-formal recruitment and selection

procedures could be particularly off-putting to people whose first language was not English, for people with visual impairments, and those with low levels of literacy (IVR, 2004).

Many are interested in working with people from different backgrounds. Many younger people (under 20) would like to work alongside other young people and in general team-working appeals to most young people (Gaskin, 1998a; NFO, 2003). However, in general they are not overly choosy about the context in which they volunteer as long as they feel they are getting real benefits from it (Gaskin, 1998a).

Those in their teens and older unemployed people place particular importance on a relaxed and friendly setting in which they feel welcome and supported - probably a reflection of their lack of confidence (Gaskin, 1998a). People from groups such as black and minority ethnic and disabled young people also prioritise a welcoming ethos, to reduce their feelings of unfamiliarity (Kamat, 2001; Niyazi 1996; IVR, 2004).

## **7.2 Responsibility and level of involvement**

Young people generally want to be treated as responsible and allowed a measure of autonomy. They respond particularly well to opportunities in which they are allowed to make decisions on design of projects, planning and implementation (Roker and Eden, 2002; Youth Action Network, 2004). These often have the strongest effects in terms of self-development, self-efficacy and civic responsibility. Enabling youth-initiated, youth-led and youth-managed projects requires well-judged inputs from adults and significant investment of resources.

However, there is variation in the degree of responsibility which young people want; some, mainly younger people, are happier being given a task and being told what to do (Gaskin, 1998a). The most important factor is that each young person is treated as an individual, enabled to work in a role in which s/he is comfortable and given the appropriate amount of support. Allowing the young person to develop at their own pace requires attentive support and supervision which can enable them to progress, when ready, to higher levels of responsibility.

Young people often state a preference for short-term, occasional volunteering rather than long-term, full-time activities. It is clear that varying levels of commitment suit different young people's needs. Scottish young people were worried about a lengthy full-time commitment and thought a trial period would be a good introduction (NFO, 2003). The uptake of longer-term, full-time opportunities - such as CSV or gap years - indicates a market for this kind of volunteering, but the majority of young people's voluntary action is not regular and sustained (Davis Smith, 1998; Gaskin, 1998a).

Various programmes have found advantages in allowing initial short-term or one-

off involvement, rota systems that permit flexibility, and short placements, all of which accommodate young people's other commitments, mobility, wariness of long-term voluntary commitment and boredom thresholds (Britton, 1999; GHK, 2004). In many cases, a gentle introduction to volunteering can lead to more sustained involvement.

### **7.3 Support and training**

The National Survey found that only four out of ten young people found the advice and support they received to be very adequate, the lowest of any age group (Davis Smith, 1998). However, they do not want support to be overbearing or intrusive, just there when they need it: 'you don't want someone always watching you, on your case. You don't want a boss' (Gaskin, 1998a); 'we want to be independent but have the support if needed' (Davis Smith et al., 2002). Support was important in the initial stages, allowing time to identify possible areas of interest and volunteer roles that suited the young person.

Millennium Volunteers' individual one-to-one supervision and support for volunteers, an open-door policy whereby volunteers could seek assistance at any time, and support mechanisms such as MV support groups, peer mentoring, newsletters and social groups, ensured that the vast majority of participants felt adequately supported (Davis Smith et al., 2002). Projects did find, however, that youth-led activities and supporting disadvantaged and disaffected groups required extra support for which they did not always have the resources (ibid).

Training is 'an expectation' which 'mitigates fears of being thrown in at the deep end' (NFO, 2003) and contributes to their aspirations for skills development through volunteering. The National Survey showed that three quarters of 18-24 year olds had not received training (which may not have been necessary for much of the work they did) and, again, 40 per cent found their training 'very adequate'. Clearly there is room for improvement.

Support, management and training need to be tailored to the volunteers' needs, the role for which they are being prepared and the needs of the organisation and its beneficiaries. As with adult volunteers, this emphasises the need for variety and flexibility, and not adhering to a single management model (Gaskin, 2003b; Rochester, 1999; Zimmeck, 2000; Davis Smith, 1996; Meijs & Hoogstad, 2001).

## **8 INCENTIVES AND REWARDS**

- **The main incentives for young people are skill development and career-related experience;**
- **They want appreciation and tangible rewards for their achievements;**
- **They are ambivalent about financial incentives but these remove barriers for low income young people;**
- **Altruistic incentives should not be neglected, nor should the social and**

## **satisfaction factors.**

### **8.1 Skill and career-related incentives**

Volunteering 'needs to offer real incentives to compete with the other demands on their time and attention' (Gaskin, 1998a). The most prominent incentive identified by young people is that of tangible rewards in the form of a reference, certificate or qualification, something which validates their experience and demonstrates their achievement to employers and others. The option of 'training, a reference or qualification' was prioritised by 14 of the 16 groups and came second only to flexibility in their ideal volunteering conditions (ibid): 'if you knew you'd get good training and something that proved you'd done a good job, it would be a big plus' was the view of one 16 year old.

Young people want recognition for their volunteering. More than half the people 18-24 in the National Survey said this was important to them, the highest of any age group (Davis Smith, 1998). And they wanted more 'formal' recognition such as a certificate, award, medal or plaque, or mention in the press or organisation newsletter, as well as a simple thank you, encouragement and support (ibid; Gilhooly, 1999). Scottish young people wanted a 'thank you' and a points system which rewarded their activities (NFO, 2003). Millennium Volunteers were 'particularly enthusiastic' about the certificates and awards they received (Davis Smith et al., 2002). In Northern Ireland, two thirds of young volunteers and 74 per cent of unemployed volunteers would be more attracted to volunteering if it led to accredited certification (Gilhooly, 1999).

### **8.2 Financial incentives**

Financial incentives are currently receiving a lot of attention. Full and prompt payment of out of pocket expenses is essential for most young people. Paying a wage or stipend is a different issue on which young people display ambivalence. However, 'if we are going to successfully engage young people from disadvantaged groups, it is crucial to think about the cost of participation' (Stanley, 2003).

Young people have mixed attitudes to the suggestion that voluntary work might be paid (Gaskin 1998a; NFO, 2003). Most see it as a contradiction and show 'high awareness and sensitivity' to the definition of 'voluntary' (NFO, 2003). However, their attitude towards payment may be based on the view that voluntary work would not pay a full wage rate and that they would therefore rather have a paid job 'and get paid twice as much'. (This assumes, of course, that they have that option.) For those people who have little alternative, payment could make a difference. Non-volunteers in their early twenties and public school students thought that 'a modest wage' would make volunteering 'more appealing' (Gaskin, 1998a).

Scottish young people saw particular financial barriers for those in lower socio-

economic groups and raised the opportunity cost of not going into work and losing time which could be spent training or gaining experience. They agreed that appropriate financial help should cover living expenses, accommodation, subsistence and travel but rejected as inappropriate 'anything that implies "paid work"', such as sizeable wages. This would attract the 'wrong' sort of people. They had mixed views about a cash bonus, with less well off youngsters more positive about the idea. They were ambivalent about receiving a lump sum towards future education, training or housing costs and felt that any payment should be ringfenced for those purposes to avoid the temptation of 'blowing it'. Young men were more enthusiastic about the idea of monetary compensation for voluntary work if it meant they didn't have to worry about money and also improved their chances of getting paid work afterwards (NFO, 2003).

An Israeli paper cites evidence that 'when the level of remuneration for volunteer activities rises, the number of hours volunteered increases' (Carmel Institute, 2001a). However, only two studies are cited and they are more than 14 years old. The paper does, however, examine the issue of the opportunity costs borne by volunteers and how financial remuneration can help offset these, increasing the likelihood of volunteering (ibid). A second study asked young people who had said they would not volunteer in a National Youth Service if they would change their mind if offered a package of benefits including tuition, housing cost subsidies or income tax credits. One third said they would (Carmel Institute, 2001b).

One of the few studies to directly examine financial incentives is a 1999 paper by the Institute for Empirical Research in Economics in Zurich (Frey and Goette, 1999). This reports 'puzzling' results that payment can decrease volunteering because of the impact of remuneration in displacing internal motivation ie people invest less effort when they are paid to perform a task because the compensation is perceived as a form of control (ibid).

Similar concerns are raised by Student Volunteering UK: 'the most important right any volunteer has is the right to say "no"... once you introduce financial incentives into the equation ... the volunteer becomes a quasi-employee and loses that element of choice' (Ramsey, 2002). Ramsey notes that 'the lure of financial aid could turn volunteering into a "battery farm" where students churn out time to earn more credits' (ibid). Arguing that civic renewal assumes civil, moral and democratic growth, Nash warns that if people undertake voluntary activity just because they want the financial rewards, then they are no morally richer as a result (Nash, 2002).

The YVC evaluation concludes at this stage of the programme that the financial element is 'not a major incentive' but it 'definitely helped' and made it possible for low income young people to take part. (GHK, 2004). Among AmeriCorps members, disadvantaged participants (unlike their more educated counterparts) frequently cited the allowance as a key reason for joining (DfES, 2003). However,

in the German civic service scheme the provision of financial support has not proved attractive to socially excluded young people and the majority of participants are well-educated and already active in voluntary work (DfES, 2003).

A Latin American study commented 'the issue of stipended service is controversial but may be an important variable' for those on low incomes or 'who could not otherwise leave the workforce' (Johnson et al., 2004). Payments are about 'facilitating access' as much as 'rewarding participation' (Stanley, 2003; NFO, 2003). In a slightly different area, the removal of financial barriers through the Educational Maintenance Allowance has made a 'major impact' on improving participation, retention and achievement rates in post-16 education. The payment of larger bonuses had most effect in increasing retention (Maguire et al., 2003).

Schemes which give money-saving offers to young volunteers might also provide an incentive to volunteer. These could take the form of 'volunteer reward cards' or loyalty cards with discounts at high street stores or reduced charges for certain services (Gaskin, 1998a).

### **8.3 Other incentives**

Young people also suggested small incentives have a role to play. This is more in the vein of 'perks' such as missing first lesson at school following a talk in assembly or getting the day off work for employees (Gaskin, 1998a). Offering something at an introductory session might draw people in and encourage them to consider volunteering. One charity gained a lot of support from teenage girls because their heart-shaped badge became a desirable fashion accessory (Gaskin et al., 1996).

The 'altruistic incentive' should not be overlooked, despite the importance of self-advancement and finance to young people. Since most young volunteers recognise the value of caring and helping in voluntary work, and many profess their own desire to help others, the incentive of making a difference and a contribution remains strong. This may be particularly true for faith volunteers and those from minority communities. However, 'helping change things in society' may be too grand an ambition. Most young people relate better to more localised goals and impact, and to particular issues (Roker and Eden, 2002; Gaskin, 1998a).

## **SECTION B CIVIC SERVICE SCHEMES**

- **Civic service schemes and programmes are a growing focus in Europe and particularly the USA;**
- **Civic service type programmes in the UK and the USA produce a range of positive impacts for volunteers: personal and skill development, attitudes and tolerance, career development and employability, empowerment and civic awareness;**
- **There are also benefits for beneficiaries and communities, although they have been less researched.**

### **9 Civic service in the UK**

Civic service has attracted interest from governments throughout Western Europe from the early twentieth century onwards. It has been seen by both Right and Left as an antidote to economic and social problems - economic depression and long-term unemployment, youth alienation and disaffection, and rising crime and lawlessness (Davis Smith, 2003; Sheard, 1992). And since the 1990s and into the twenty first century, it is again a hot topic with many European governments introducing national strategies and schemes for citizen participation, with a particular focus on youth.

#### **9.1 The United Kingdom - a brief history**

A major transition in volunteering began about fifty years ago when 'the problem of the generation gap began to enter the popular consciousness' and volunteering began to be perceived as a new role, as 'a safe, constructive outlet for the otherwise unpredictable and destructive energies of disaffected young people' (Sheard, 1992). Volunteering underwent a change from 'middle class altruism to an "industry" for the unsuccessful working class young'.

Community Service Volunteers, set up in 1962, was the first of the major organisations to tap into this. It was followed by Task Force (1964) and Young Volunteer Force Foundation (1968) and a number of smaller, local groups such as Young Volunteers, Youth Action, and Student Community Action. Meanwhile community service for schoolchildren, particularly the less academically able, was recommended by the Newsom Report (1963) and the Schools Council report in 1968 'Community Service and the Curriculum'.

By the 1970s, the assumptions which had underpinned the youth volunteer boom began to disintegrate, prompted in large part by the Aves Report 'The Voluntary Worker in the Social Services' (1969) which signalled a new direction for volunteering. The elements which had made up the young volunteer movement in the 1960s crystallised and separated.

The community development strand appeared in the relaunch of Task Force and YVFF as development agencies, and the element that focused on the social and

educational needs of young people was embodied by the Youth Action movement. The young volunteer/community service model was maintained by CSV and others, and further evolved in the 1970s in the shape of Project Trident, the Youth Opportunities Programme, Community Industry, Community Service Orders and the Community Programme. The linkage of community service with training and job creation schemes for unemployed people was a key theme especially following the 1981 riots.

It was against this background that, towards the end of the 1970s, the concept of a national community service scheme for young people began to be promoted and the linkage between voluntary work and citizenship was born. This gained renewed vigour in the 1990s as unemployment decreased and 'active citizenship' came onto the government's agenda (Hall et al., 2002). This has been even more prominent under the Labour government, guided by concepts such as communitarianism and social capital (Putnam, 1995)

In the 1990s government funded a number of programmes to encourage young people to volunteer, such as Make a Difference, the Young Volunteer Development Programme and Millennium Volunteers. There were also several proposals for community or civic service schemes for young people and/or unemployed people.

The Henley Centre (1993) for Community Service Volunteers and the Commission on Social Justice (McCormick, 1994) both proposed schemes that paid living allowances to participants, as well as travel expenses and accommodation costs. McCormick's Citizens' Service further proposed some form of crediting for further or higher education. This scheme would be modular, up to three months, while CSV's would last up to one year. Local agencies and organisations would bid for franchises to run service programmes. Citizens' Service would 'build additionality of effort and value ... by extending initiatives already in place ... to avoid creating new bureaucracies' (McCormick, 1994).

Demos proposed CONNECT, a community service programme for unemployed people with a strong focus on young people (Briscoe, 1995). Participants would have to work for at least 18 hours per week, and would receive their benefit with an extra weekly incentive payment and bonus payments. They would have a CONNECT card which would record their service and trigger bonus and reward payments. The outline of the scheme stresses diversity, with choice, autonomy and ownership by participants; mixing of participants; and explicit links to employment. Like McCormick's scheme, the programme would start in the education system to familiarise young people with voluntary work and 'nurture a universal "culture of volunteering"' (Briscoe, 1995).

## **9.2 Current UK programmes**

The UK features a range of different types of youth volunteering schemes, outlined below: Millennium Volunteers, Young Volunteer Challenge, gap years,

youth action projects, employer-supported volunteering, Community Service Volunteers, Prince's Trust-Volunteers, student volunteering, community service and service learning in schools.

Millennium Volunteers (MV), established in 2000, is an award scheme funded by the DfES for people aged 16-24. An excellence award is given for completion of 200 hours and 100 hours of volunteering, delivered through voluntary organisations or a self-designed project. This is not full-time volunteering, but aggregated time given over a period of one year.

Young Volunteer Challenge, running pilots from March 2003 to March 2005, aims to 'remove the financial barriers that could prevent young people from low income backgrounds from getting involved in community service' (DfES, 2003). It offers a nine month 30 hour a week volunteering placement to people aged 18-19 who have received Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) or are eligible for Income Support while undertaking vocational training. They are paid a weekly allowance of £45 and receive an end of experience payment of £750. The programme will be rolled out nationwide, as announced by the Chancellor in 2004.

Gap years emerged in the 1960s but participation has increased dramatically since the late 1990s. In 2002, 160,000 people took gap years before or after university. Voluntary Service Overseas is the leading provider, and much gap year activity involves working abroad in deprived communities. Although accommodation and a weekly allowance are often provided, gap years are often available only to better off young people because of the costs involved (Stanley, 2003).

Student volunteering has also grown significantly in recent years, although it has its roots in the University Settlements of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Student volunteering can consist of student community action - extra-curricular volunteering organised by students themselves and not directly related to their courses - and service learning (Ellis, 2002). In 2000 there were more than 180 Student Community Action groups involving 25,000 students (*update with 2004 figures when released*). The Higher Education Active Community Fund (HEAFC) allocated £27 million to English Higher Education Institutions for three year programmes ending August 2004, with the intention of creating 14,000 more volunteers (Hall et al., 2002).

Service learning, well established in the United States, is also growing in the UK, particularly as a result of the introduction of citizenship into the national secondary school curriculum in 2002. While community service in schools predates the citizenship curriculum in the UK, this has often been in the private or maintained education sector, and may not be as integrated into education as service learning.

Youth action is another major trend in young people's voluntary participation. This focuses on projects and activities in which young people play a leading role in planning and managing projects, although there is variation on a spectrum of youth ownership. A leading example is Changemakers, founded in 1994 by four national charities, which operates through partnerships particularly in schools and youth organisations throughout the country. It enables people aged 11-25 to design projects which they manage, help resource and review in order to achieve positive change for themselves and their communities. The Active Citizens in School pilot, a DfES initiative being delivered by Changemakers and ContinYou, is currently being evaluated by the Institute for Volunteering Research, with a view to possible national roll-out in 2005.

Employer-supported volunteering (ESV) is voluntary activity organised and supported by companies for their employees. Employee volunteering is a more general term which can encompass ESV and volunteering by employees outside their work life without the knowledge or support of the employer (Lukka, 2000). ESV may involve individual roles such as mentoring or team challenges. It has grown quite rapidly in recent years as employers recognise its benefits for staff skills and personal development, morale and motivation, recruitment and retention, and company image and marketing (Ellis, 2002; Lukka, 2000; BitC, 1998)

Community Service Volunteers is a voluntary organisation offering full-time volunteering opportunities away from home (or part-time closer to home) for people aged 16-35. Volunteers get a modest weekly allowance, travel expenses, food and lodging. Placements are available in more than 1,000 projects. CSV has a non-rejection policy, and about one fifth of its recruits are socially excluded, including people with mental health problems or a criminal record. Sixty per cent of volunteers are female. In 2003, more than 3,000 volunteers served full-time away from home and 32,000 took part on a part-time or occasional basis.

Prince's Trust-Volunteers, also a charity, offers a structured programme for 16-25 year olds which lasts 12-26 weeks. Teams are formed from a mix of employed and unemployed people and supported by paid team leaders, sometimes employees on secondment. They carry out two team challenges, as well as individual placements. The emphasis is on personal development, with generic and vocational skills development also important. Since the programme started in 1990, some 35,000 volunteers have gone through the programme.

Time Banks and Local Exchange Trading Schemes (LETS) have emerged as new forms of volunteering and community involvement which emphasise the principle of reciprocity over altruism. They accommodate flexibility and control over participation and may be a useful entry point into volunteering for young people (Kearney, 2001).

### **9.3 Impacts and benefits**

Evaluations of these programmes reveal a range of positive impacts for volunteers: personal development, 'soft' and 'hard' skill development; attitudes and tolerance, career development and employability; empowerment and civic awareness (Roker and Eden, 2003; Hannam, 2001; CSV, 2002; Gerlach, 2003; Evans et al., 2002; CSV, 2000; Eley, 2003; Davis Smith et al., 2002; Corporate Citizenship Company, 2001; Jones, 2004; Vincent et al., 1998; Student Volunteering England, 2003; DfES, 2003). Sample findings are highlighted below.

Millennium Volunteers attracted people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and was very successful in recruiting unemployed young people (one fifth) and those who had never volunteered before (one half). There were wide ranging benefits for participants who gained 'a considerable increase in human capital', including personal development, generic and vocational skills: 84 per cent said the experience had increased their confidence, 80 per cent were more aware of the needs of others and 68 per cent agreed they had become more committed to volunteering. Around two thirds of volunteers said that taking part had helped them develop future career plans and increased their chances of employment (Davis Smith, et al., 2002).

MV also made a significant contribution to the local community: increasing the capacity of organisations and social capital in communities, and providing benefits to beneficiaries and service users through enhanced access to services, improved quality of life, peer support and social contact (Davis Smith et al., 2002).

An evaluation of Youth Sport Trust's Millennium Volunteers programme for 15-19 year olds found increases in confidence and sense of personal achievement, skills, increased awareness of social issues and a greater understanding of others' views, and a greater understanding of citizenship.

Student voluntary action enhances personal development, key skills, work experience opportunities and employability, the creation of agents of social change, the quality of the curriculum and the attraction and retention of students. It 'builds a caring society of citizens' and 80 per cent of student volunteers continue to do voluntary work after they leave education. A DfES survey of 200 graduates found that 60 per cent said voluntary work had a positive effect on their career choice and 75 per cent gained employment related to their voluntary activity rather than their degree course (Student Volunteering, 2003; DfES, 2003; Williams, 1998).

Evaluation of pupil 'participation and responsible action' (including school councils and voluntary work) in 12 schools found positive effects on self-esteem, motivation, sense of ownership and empowerment, personal and social efficacy, attendance, engagement with learning and attainment. 68 per cent of pupils felt

more independent, trusted and responsible as a consequence of participation (Hannam, 2001; CSV, 2002)

An evaluation of Youth Bank in Schools, piloted by Changemakers, found involvement by pupils was directly related to increases in self-esteem, confidence, sense of responsibility, group work skills, problem-solving and enterprise skills, and relationships with others (Gerlach, 2003).

In an evaluation of Action Pays (a NCVYS/Changemakers initiative), the majority of 14-25 year old participants reported a 'very positive' experience and skills development, including self-confidence, teamwork, communication, planning and organisational skills, listening to and respecting others, being respected, a sense of achievement, making friends with people from differing backgrounds and cultures, having fun and combating boredom, and feeling part of a community and collective enterprise (Evans et al., 2002).

In an evaluation of CSV Citizens' Service pilot projects in 1996, participants reported strong positive impacts on their skills, self-confidence, attitudes to other people, and their prospects. A large majority entered full-time employment or education and the proportion of volunteers receiving unemployment benefits decreased significantly. Significant numbers continued to be involved in their local community after they left the project (CSV, 2000).

Participants in youth action groups gained a greater understanding of political and social issues, and of their own sense of identity. They felt more able to bring about change in society, but felt their potential influence was greater at local level than national (Roker and Eden, 2002).

Benefits for gap year participants were improved educational performance, aid in making career choices, employability, non-academic skills and qualities, life skills and developing social values (Jones, 2004) VSO placements were found to enhance development of interpersonal skills, flexibility and initiative, reflection on practice, and job skills (Corporate Citizenship Company, 2001).

Evaluations of Prince's Trust-Volunteers found substantial gains in confidence, decision-making, team-working and communication skills, new interests and skills for employment. Participation enabled them to gain City and Guilds and NVQ qualifications and significantly increased numbers in education and full-time employment and reduced unemployment from 52 per cent to 18 per cent. About three quarters of participants were more inclined to do voluntary work in the future as a result of their involvement. Prince's Trust-Volunteers also 'brought clear benefits to local communities' through team challenges and community projects'; each volunteer contributed work worth nearly £1,000 to the local community (Vincent et al., 1999; Prince's Trust, 1999).

Studies reported very few negative impacts. The most negative aspect to be kept

in mind is that in most cases there was a minority who did not report such beneficial effects. While '80 per cent' or even '68 per cent' sounds like a very successful outcome, this means that one fifth or one third didn't experience the particular gain.

## **10 Europe**

### **10.1 Country programmes**

Across Europe youth volunteering and civic service have been the subject of attention and new policy in the past few years. Compulsory military service programmes have in some countries enabled the creation of civic service programmes as an alternative for conscientious objectors, thereby providing the template for the development of large-scale voluntary schemes. These often exist alongside non-government civic service schemes.

This overview is taken from several reviews of European programmes and websites (IRIV, 2001; Stanley, 2003; Davis Smith, 2002).

In Germany since 1996 various programmes and measures have been set up to increase the numbers of volunteers, after a Federal Office of Statistics survey showed low levels of volunteering, especially amongst youth. State-regulated volunteering schemes such as the Voluntary Year of Social Service (FSJ) and Voluntary Year of Ecological Service (FOJ) are open to people aged 17-27. Participants serve in welfare and conservation institutions in and outside Germany for six to 18 months. The main goals are to enhance social awareness and responsibility, and professional development, among volunteers. Participants receive living allowances, pocket money and insurance, are guaranteed at least 25 days training, paid for by the state, and receive credit points for university study. Over 150,000 young people - the vast majority female - have taken part in the programme since it started (DfES, 2003).

Other German programmes include Pupils Help and similar initiatives which integrate volunteer issues into school lessons, provide opportunities for external volunteering and provide certification of voluntary work by students; and JULEICA, an identity card for tutors of youth groups which includes a certificate for training undergone and concessions on services and products.

Germany introduced the most comprehensive legislation on service in 2002 to make it more attractive for young people and for organisations. Provisions include flexibility in length of service, removing minimum age limits, enlarging the range of activities and the geographical spread of the FSJ and FOJ.

In France, a government sponsored voluntary civic service programme, which replaced military and alternative service in 2002, gives French or European citizens aged 18-28 the opportunity to volunteer full-time for six to 24 months in

areas of civil defence and security, social cohesion and solidarity, international co-operation, development and humanitarian aid (Davis Smith, 2002). The non-government Unis-Cite, founded in 1995, involves 17-25 year old volunteers in projects to reduce exclusion and social divisions. They serve six or nine months full-time, with one day a week devoted to education and reflection, in exchange for a monthly subsidy and all their transport costs.

In the Netherlands, similar concern about declining participation by young people has led to initiatives such as 'Smaakmakers (Groundbreakers), Teenagers in Action' and the Finding and Binding programme. These programmes, run by the National Volunteer Centre (NOV) with government support, include partnership arrangements, good practice guidance, a youth panel, European exchange networks, and education projects. The government has also introduced relaxation of benefit rules to allow long-term unemployed people to engage in voluntary service (AVSO, 2001, quoted in Davis Smith, 2002).

In Italy, where there is a high level of youth involvement in volunteer associations, the National Civil Service programme has been established to replace the alternative military service brought about by the end of conscription. Service is for up to one year and the State funds all or part of subsistence costs. The Ministry of Education has also introduced educational and training credits to recognise voluntary experience gained outside school time.

The National Youth Service (NYS) in Israel involves young volunteers, who are not conscripted, to volunteer for one or two years in various civic duties. Volunteers showed 'an intensification of positive attitudes toward tolerance, volunteering and community involvement' (Gal et al., 2003).

## **10.2 The European Voluntary Service**

The major transnational service programme in Europe is the European Voluntary Service (EVS) established by the European Commission in 1998. It offers structured volunteering opportunities to people aged 18-25 (recently expanded to 13-30) to spend 6-12 months in a wide variety of projects in the European Union, Mediterranean and Eastern European countries. Partner organisations are both non-profit and statutory agencies. Host organisations, of which there are more than 1,000, provide subsistence, accommodation, insurance and an allowance (average 200 euros), while the EU covers approximately 50 per cent of organisations' costs.

The programme stipulates that activities should have broad community benefit and educational content as well as the service aspect for participants. An important feature of the programme is that it provides short term placements (from three weeks' duration) to young people with fewer opportunities, who can then progress to a long-term EVS project. It aims to involve some 50,000 young people by 2006. A major problem for EVS has been the 'lack of harmonisation' among countries over the legal status of service volunteers and social insurance legislation (Davis Smith, 2002).

A three year (2000-2003) evaluation of the European Youth programme, which includes EVS, found that it gave participants 'new personal, social, intercultural and vocational skills' and that their 'life and career choices were strongly influenced by this positive experience' (Commission of the European Communities, 2004).

A separate evaluation of EVS concluded that it made participants 'more self-confident, independent, capable of dealing with life difficulties and aware of what is happening around them in the world. It provided them with significant skills to find a job and it made them realise in many cases what their priorities were in life' (SOS, 1999).

Volunteers felt they became 'more assertive, more communicative, more socially aware and caring, more tolerant' and learnt new skills in leadership, responsibility and languages. Forty two per cent did other forms of volunteering after completing service, offering evidence that service promotes further civil participation. However, there was not conclusive evidence that EVS aids employability, and the study highlighted the need for employers to be better educated about the value of service.

More negative features were that significant numbers of volunteers felt they did not have enough say in choosing and planning their activities, did not get the chance to participate in any follow-up activities or evaluation, and had difficulties re-integrating on their return.

Organisations involved in EVS experienced problems in the level of financial support and the grants process, and excessive bureaucracy. They felt EVS was not fully inclusive of all young people, but lacked resources to reach new target groups. They also highlighted possible conflicts in the aims of the programme and the relative emphasis on the volunteers and the help they give (SOS, 1999).

## **11 The Americas**

### **11.1 North America**

Civic service is well developed in the United States and has been the subject of much research. Perry and Thomson's thorough review of civic service in the US (2004) presents a summary of its history, forms and impacts. Tracing its origins from the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933, it focuses on President Clinton's 'signature civil service program', founded in 1993, AmeriCorps. This is just one of a range of youth action programmes for young people in the US. Others include: loan forgiveness programmes, the Freedom Work-Study programme and the National Health Service Corps (Stanley, 2003).

AmeriCorps provides full-time and part-time community service opportunities in

four programme areas: education, public safety, environment, and human needs. Participants receive accommodation, a modest stipend and health insurance, and are eligible for an educational award after completion. Full-time members serve 1,700 hours and part-time 900 hours in a year to qualify for the award. Most receive an award of \$4,725 for college or graduate school fees or to pay off loans ([www.national.service.org](http://www.national.service.org)). Funding for the programme is provided through matching grants to state community service commissions and national nonprofits that dispense funds to state and local nonprofit organisations.

The programme gives financial assistance to over 50,000 school leavers each year (the target is increased to 75,000 for 2004 following a sizeable federal government budget increase) for service with 2,100 nonprofit and faith-based organisations and public agencies. More than 300,000 young people have participated. Most notably, 49 per cent of members (in 2001) were from black and minority ethnic groups (Abt Associates, 2001). In that year, however, the average age was 27.5 years, and thus the findings do not apply solely to people under 25.

AmeriCorps includes the VISTA programme (originated in in 1960s) which places full-time volunteers for a year in faith-based and community organisations working to build capacity and self-sufficiency in poor communities; and NCCC, a ten month full-time residential programme for 18-24 year olds to work in projects in public safety, public health and disaster relief.

The Youth Service Canada scheme, introduced in 1994 as pilots, are modelled on AmeriCorps, lasting six to nine months and paying a weekly stipend and completion bonus. From 2001, provinces have introduced a volunteering requirement in order to graduate from high school (Volunteer Canada, 2001). Katimavik is Canada's leading national youth volunteer-service programme, founded in 1997. It offers a nine-month full-time volunteering experience away from home for 17-21 year olds who live and work in teams of ten in a variety of community projects.

Service learning is very well established in the USA for many age levels. Experiential learning was popularised in the 1960s as student activism spilled over into government programmes such as the Peace Corps, Volunteers in Service in America and Headstart (Edwards et al., 2001). The concept has been formally recognised in education circles since the 1980s and in 1993 the National and Community Service Trust Act was passed.

In 2001 there were over 600 campus members of the National Campus Compact, offering 12,000 college courses and involving over 5,000 faculty and 500,000 students (Edwards et al., 2001; Lisman, 1998). In 1999 nearly a third of all public schools and half of public high schools in the US provided service learning programmes (Grantmaker Forum, 2000) Nearly twice those percentages had some form of community service for their students. In 2004, 1.5 million

students are taking part in service projects sponsored by Learn and Serve America, which gives grants to state education agencies, schools, colleges and non-profit organisations to develop programmes and curricula that link education with community service ([www.national.service.org](http://www.national.service.org)).

### **11.2 Impacts of programmes**

The review of evidence concludes that AmeriCorps and other programmes have beneficial impacts on participants, beneficiaries, institutions and communities. Civic service 'appears to have particularly salutary effects on server skill development and satisfaction, direct beneficiaries, service quality and quantity, and volunteer leveraging' (Perry and Thomson, 2004).

However, analysis of AmeriCorps participants on enrolment found that they were better educated than the national population and were strongly committed to service (Abt Associates, 2001). More than half had participated in service activities prior to becoming AmeriCorps volunteers and their primary reason for joining was to help other people and perform community service. Almost two thirds wanted jobs where they would be of direct service to people or work to correct social and economic inequities (ibid). These predispositions should be kept in mind when assessing impacts.

Among participants or 'servers', civic service contributes significantly to skill development, civic responsibility, educational opportunity, self-esteem, and satisfaction from serving, and moderately to tolerance for diversity.

More specifically, AmeriCorps members showed statistically significant gains on five life skills - communication, interpersonal relations, analytical problem solving, understanding organisational systems, and technology - compared to a comparison group which showed no significant changes during the year (Aguirre International, 1999). Longer exposure to service is more likely to produce positive effects (Perry and Thomson, 2004).

Civic responsibility was also boosted in evaluations of AmeriCorps and the Young Volunteer Corps of America (Aguirre International, 1997 and 1999). After their period of service, volunteers were significantly more likely to become involved in local community groups or to attend public meetings (Simon and Wang, 2000). Unlike skill development, this gain in civic responsibility was found even in short-term civic service (eg summer programmes). Civic responsibility was influenced by programme design: positive outcomes were found particularly in traditional conservation and youth corps programmes, direct service programmes and capacity building programmes.

The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth found that adolescents involved in voluntary service were less likely to be involved in defined problem behaviours (Hart & Atkins, 1998), although causality was not proven. It is therefore 'still not clear whether volunteering actually results in less deviancy or whether young

people with few problem behaviours actively volunteer' (Warburton and Smith, 2003).

Most of the evidence on increasing education opportunity (the extent to which civic service opens opportunities for further education in the period following service) relates to AmeriCorps and the award for use towards tuition or qualifying student loans. Ten studies showed positive outcomes with most service alumni taking up the opportunity to use their educational credits. However, because some programmes are relatively new, only preliminary conclusions about educational opportunity outcomes can be drawn at this time.

Civic service programmes have 'a good probability of producing favourable self-esteem outcomes' with ten studies showing favourable results. An apparent anomaly is that a study of five AmeriCorps programmes detected no change in self-esteem (Perry and Thomson, 1997), but this may be due to methodological factors.

Evidence for increased tolerance for diversity - the extent to which people accept those different from them - is mixed in different programmes. However, a survey of participants from 15 AmeriCorps programmes gave learning about people from different backgrounds the highest rating for impacts of their service experience (Harder+Company, 1998).

Satisfaction from serving emerges uniformly from all evaluation studies. An AmeriCorps evaluation found satisfaction particularly associated with the opportunities for personal self-discovery and exploration of career interests, development of interpersonal and technical skills, and contributions to their communities (Paglin et al., 1999). Perry and Thomson caution that self-selection into the programmes may predispose participants to these kinds of outcomes.

An evaluation of Katimavik conducted in 2001-2002 found significant gains for participants and partner organisations (EEC, 2002): 87 per cent of participants evaluated their leadership skills as good to very good after completing the programme, compared to 44 per cent before; 95 per cent felt they were more employable because of the professional skills acquired; 96 per cent rated their communication and conflict-management skills good to very good, compared to pre-programme figures of 61 per cent and 39 per cent respectively; and 62 per cent chose confidence as one of their primary qualities (29 per cent before).

The review of impact and outcomes in North American programmes finds a number of positive outcomes for recipients and beneficiaries, leading the authors to conclude that 'the volume of evidence for civic service as a strategy for ameliorating public problems is compelling' (Perry and Thomson, 2004). The scale of impact is certainly substantial: in 1997-98 a survey of 522 AmeriCorps programmes showed that more than 17.6 million people benefited from service, with members personally providing services to 10 million individuals. This

included two million students who received educational services such as tutoring, mentoring and after-school programmes (Aguirre International, 1999). In one tutoring programme, SLICE, volunteers helped increase reading comprehension by 116 per cent in six months (Hammonds-Smith, 2001).

There is also a great deal of evidence of positive impact on organisations and institutions, in service expansion and service quality. The institutional impacts of AmeriCorps 'were far stronger than expected' (Aguirre International, 1999). Evidence for the creation of new organisational forms or units is less and more mixed, but particularly positive in a study of 60 AmeriCorps programmes (Aguirre International 1997 and 1999). Of the Canadian Katimavik partner organisations, more than 90 per cent would recommend partnership and felt their involvement contributed to improving the quality of their services to the community, and 70 per cent said their overall level of productivity had increased as a result (EEC, 2002).

Benefits for communities are also evident, encompassing 'community strengthening' (the improvement of service networks and multi-agency co-operation), 'volunteer leveraging' (recruiting/attracting other volunteers) and social benefit-cost ratios. Volunteer leveraging is particularly high in VISTA programmes where 'the whole point' is to build programmes along with neighbourhood residents that will be staffed by local people and sustainable after VISTA withdraws. Training is provided for VISTA volunteers prior to and during service in volunteer recruitment, fund raising and communications. No tensions arise between stipended and 'traditional' volunteers because the VISTA volunteers are seen more as full-time paid organisers (Clement, 2004)

A large-scale survey in 2003 of American charities and congregations (one third of which have social service volunteer programmes) found that 90 per cent wanted to increase their volunteer numbers but many lacked the staff, resources and time to supervise and train them. The most popular capacity-building solution was the addition of a one-year full-time volunteer with a living stipend (a la AmeriCorps) with responsibility for volunteer recruitment and management (Hager & Brudney, 2004).

A key feature of AmeriCorps is its accessibility and this is attributed to allocating funds for the recruitment of and programmes that engage disabled people as participants, its childcare provision, health insurance for those not covered, and the weekly stipend. These incentives have enabled large numbers of young people to participate.

Various reviews of the evidence on the effects of service learning on students (Eyler et al., 2001; National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2002; Grantmaker Forum, 2000; Mooney and Edwards, 2001) find that it has positive effects on personal and social development, civic engagement, learning outcomes, academic achievement and career development, including: increases in personal

and social responsibility, self-esteem and self-efficacy, trust and empathy, understanding of diversity, racial and cultural understanding, communication and team skills, educational competence and reduced levels of alienation and behavioural problems (Grantmaker Forum, 2000).

Participants gained a stronger sense of civic and social responsibility and specific citizenship skills. These included greater awareness of community needs, political attentiveness and knowledge, and commitment to service. High school students were more likely to be engaged in community organising and to vote 15 years after their participation in the programme (ibid). Higher education student volunteers showed long-term effects in terms of greater commitment to serving their communities and to multiculturalism and diversity (Astin et al., 1999).

One study found service learning 'contributed significantly to students' development of a moral language about citizenship', for example 'the role of reciprocity and obligation to some generalized others as the fundamental components of citizenship' (Koliba, 2000). A cautionary note is sounded by Kahne and Westheimer (2001) about the concept of citizenship being measured in service learning impact evaluation. Asking whether this is the 'responsible citizen, the participatory citizen (or) the justice oriented citizen', they stress that research has concentrated on citizenship 'that privileges individual acts of compassion and kindness over social action and the pursuit of social justice' (ibid).

This question is pursued by other researchers. Gibboney differentiates models of citizenship that focus on charity versus justice and questions whether the former is the stronger model in terms of outcomes. She notes that for many American academics, the ultimate goal for service learning is social change or at least creating agents of change (Lempert, 1995 cited in Hall et al., 2002). Service-learning may trigger an awakening of 'moral imagination' (Loeb, 1994):

'Service work can teach students how to care, allow them to hear the voices of people scorned and discarded, and make them more critical of prevailing social choices. At their best, those involved have much to teach other activists about ways to reach out across diverse backgrounds and perspectives. They are also beginning to learn ways to pressure entrenched institutions and to articulate visions that go beyond individual caring ... They are beginning to deal with questions of power, conflict, and privilege' (Loeb, 1994).

The most negative impacts found were that, again, not all participants experienced the benefits; the issues of whether participants were learning an individualised/charity or collective/justice model of citizenship; and that in some cases, programme impacts were not maintained in the longer term. For example, civic participation can dissipate, partly because a lack of communal structure to enable continuing service (Center for Human Resources, 1999). Brav et al. also comment on the emphasis on server benefits at the expense of examining effects

on the served, and raise questions of elitism and imperialism in civic service programmes (Brav et al., 2002).

### **11.3 Latin America and the Caribbean**

Youth volunteerism and civic service schemes of various kinds are also increasing in Latin America and the Caribbean (Johnson et al., 2003). Implementing institutions include local, national and international NGOs, governments, schools and universities, faith and church-based organisations. There is also a strong strand of youth (often student)-initiated programmes, for example Opcion Colombia which brings ICT to isolated rural communities.

Common areas of activity for civic service in the region are community development, education and skills development, civic engagement, health, basic needs, environment, human rights and peace, and emergency services (ibid). Examples include the voluntary Servicio Pais in which Chilean university students and recent graduates are given the opportunity to service in poverty-stricken communities for periods of a few months to one year; and the mandatory Servicio Social in Mexico, which requires six to twelve months of service for graduation. In general, school and university service-learning programmes are 'perhaps the most prevalent' (ibid).

As with American programmes, greater emphasis has been placed on identifying benefits to servers. They tend to focus on attitudes to self and others, while behavioural and long-term change are 'rarely studied'. Positive impacts have been found on education and job skills, personal skills and social skills, notably cultural integration and tolerance, and social conduct. There are also impacts on civic engagement: primary and secondary school service learning and university student programmes have an 'important impact on citizenship education'. Servers are more likely to serve again later in life and be directed towards careers concerned with social issues. Voluntary youth involvement - in the form of networks, alliances and events like conferences - give a voice to youth in an empowering way (ibid).

Impacts on the served depend significantly on the nature and purpose of the programme: for example, educational progress and skills development, training in job skills and entrepreneurship, new information and communications technology centres for poor communities, meeting basic needs, public education awareness through HIV/AIDS campaigns and child inoculation programmes, drug prevention, and improving the environment (ibid). The report advocates more systematic research on programme scope and models, but particularly on effects, short and long-term, positive and negative, personal and communal (ibid).

## SECTION C LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- **New civic service proposals for the UK are reviewed and key features outlined;**
- **Key elements of a national youth volunteering strategy include image, marketing, access, incentives, youth ownership and resources;**
- **Gaps in current knowledge include civic responsibility, incentives, social exclusion, organisational cultures, non-traditional volunteering, employers and age differences;**
- **There is great potential for increasing youth volunteering if policy makers and organisations are prepared to make the changes necessary to welcome their involvement.**

The literature gives clear pointers on what attracts and satisfies young people in volunteering, and what deters or excludes them. This conclusion proposes a wide-ranging strategy on youth volunteering and the major themes it should include. It suggests the key features that a civic service scheme should have.

### 12 YOUTH CIVIC SERVICE

The last couple of years has produced several publications proposing possible schemes for youth service, and these are briefly reviewed below.

#### 12.1 Youth civic service proposals

Fox and Besselink (2004) propose a national youth service programme called Connecting People, which eschews the old language of service, volunteer or corps, and capitalises on young people's communications culture. It would be run by a Commission of all stakeholders and marketed extensively through the internet, schools, FE colleges and universities and incorporated into the citizenship curriculum, careers advice and jobcentres. The authors propose a lower age limit of 16 to enable inclusiveness for school leavers and an upper cut-off point of 24.

The key to engaging interest in the programme will lie in the service placements available, and the paper recommends a combination of national and local community priorities, with an enormous range of different types of work in the following areas: education, health and social care, housing, public safety, conservation and environment, heritage and culture, and overseas service.

The financial structure of the scheme would be modelled on New Deal, providing the equivalent of Jobseeker's Allowance, entitlement to housing and council tax benefits, travel costs where necessary, and a non-taxable allowance of up to £500 for miscellaneous expenses, paid monthly. The crucial element of the financial package would be the post-service credit. The authors propose a £3,000 credit for use against university tuition or other training costs, to defray the cost of house purchase or as a business start fund. Unlike the Experience

Year for All, the authors stress the importance of not limiting financial credits to education.

Financial support would also be available to organisations to develop placements and train volunteers - again modelled on New Deal, this would be a subsidy of around £60 per week per placement. They authors are confident that 'a clear programme of incentives and benefits will ensure take-up across all social and economic classes'.

'Something for something: a national youth action programme' by Kate Stanley (2003) uses the term youth action as an umbrella term to encompass the full range of voluntary activities for 14-24 year olds, including formal and informal volunteering and civic service. Reviewing the civil renewal agenda and lessons from abroad and the UK, the author proposes a multi-faceted strategy that responds to six key policy questions.

1. The image problem: programmes need a brand that young people can identify with and aspire to and a concept that is 'sufficiently loosely defined' and not off putting. Young people's involvement in brand design and development is essential.
2. The nature and quality of opportunities: these must be what young people want and promote the full range of benefits to all concerned.
3. The form of programmes: new development should build on existing programmes enhancing their strengths and minimising weaknesses. The voluntary and volunteering sectors should be fully involved in development.
4. Inclusive engagement: opportunities should be targeted towards disadvantaged young people without stigmatising them. Universally accessible programmes should ensure that less well off young people can participate by providing financial support in the form of stipends and lump sum credits and payments. Resources should also be included for organisations to attract and retain socially excluded and marginalized groups.
5. Outputs and outcomes: programmes should not driven solely by numerical targets (outputs) but include measures of change in quality of life or community impact (outcomes).
6. Delivery: while a national policy framework is needed to provide strategic direction, no new superstructure is needed. Existing bodies such the Active Communities Directorate at the Home Office and voluntary sector umbrella bodies should be mobilised to identify and remove barriers. Key actions should include removing the systemic barriers to youth action in the tax and benefit system, and in public service volunteering opportunities; identifying funding sources including the private sector; targeting infrastructure development in the voluntary and community sector, including a coherent framework and code of practice for youth action programmes; and developing pilot programmes particularly based on local partnerships and stakeholder involvement.

The paper proposes three youth action programmes, responding to short term, medium term and long term needs:

The piloting of youth action grants, administered by voluntary and community organisations, to enable projects designed and managed by young people with adult facilitation; a Youth Action Programme, a new brand which rolls up the best of YVC and MV and focuses on more intensive, long-term experiences with financial support and lump sum payments; and youth action career credits, taking the form of recognition or financial rewards, that young people can accrue across the full range of voluntary and community activities. These could be used as entrance requirements for higher and further education and in the labour market. Facilitating payments would be provided for people on lower incomes.

The paper concludes by emphasising the need to build a strong evidence base for how youth action can be most fruitfully developed to maximise civic engagement.

The Social Market Foundation (Chen and Bell, 2002) proposes an ExperienceYear for people aged 17-25, based on the AmeriCorps programme and cast as a 'cousin' of the paid gap year. It targets prospective university entrants and reflects 'an innovative approach to redistributing social and economic opportunity in society based on spreading asset ownership'. It would aim to provide 10,000 places annually for young people who have finished A levels and are applying to higher education institutions. Seventy per cent of places would be earmarked for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Participants would be offered a one year or nine month option, with graded financial rewards. They would receive a living allowance equivalent to minimum wage and relocation expenses if needed. On completion of the voluntary work experience, awards of £4,000 (for one year) and £3,000 (nine months) would be paid to defray the costs of higher education. Participants would be invited to join an Alumni Association which would maintain the option of participation and contact.

Access would be available through a wide range of gateways and for a huge range of opportunities, which would be team-based and structured to maximise the acquisition of skills and responsibility.

Funding for the scheme would come partly from existing budgets for youth volunteering programmes, public and voluntary, and from other sources including the private sector and charitable trusts.

'Any Volunteers for the Good Society' (Paxton and Nash, 2002) brings together a number of proposals to promote civic renewal through volunteering. The menu includes ExperienceYear, honoraria for volunteers, a system of credits, a student

teaching assistant scheme, and a major focus on increasing volunteering in public service delivery.

The Scottish Executive has just produced a volunteering strategy, with Project Scotland as its centrepiece (Scottish Executive, 2004a/b). Identifying an 'opportunity gap in volunteering', the strategy has three strands: dismantling barriers, improving the volunteering experience, and monitoring, evaluation and ongoing policy development. It focuses on more effective promotion of volunteering 'around key life stages' and makes overcoming financial barriers to volunteering central to its access strategy.

Project Scotland will offer a year out to 16-25 year olds (the age range may be expanded in future) to do three modules of three to four months. In return they receive basic living expenses at least equivalent to Jobseekers' Allowance and points-based 'thank-you' or 'in-kind' benefits. On completion they will be eligible to apply for funding for education, training or business start-up costs. The target is for 1,000 young people to take part each year. Project Scotland will be 'a brand developed as a single portal for a range of quality assured full-time volunteering opportunities' and will be managed by a non-profit 'bespoke delivery agency'. It will rely heavily on partnership with the voluntary sector and draw in a wide range of stakeholders, including public and private sectors.

## **12.2 Key features**

Fox and Besselink (2004) note that national community service is not a panacea, but the authors maintain that 'if young people have a greater sense of control over their lives, and receive societal recognition for their contribution to the community' they have a chance of feeling less alienated and of developing 'a better sense of co-operative behaviour and community responsibility'.

The literature suggests a number of features necessary for an effective and successful youth service scheme. The design of a new programme should include:

- The involvement of all stakeholders - especially young people themselves
- Partnership and building on institutional strengths and specialisms - voluntary organisations (including smaller local ones), public sector and business
- Use and expansion of existing structures, networks and capacities rather than creating a new superstructure
- Goals which are clearly articulated, concretely focused and integrally connected to local and national needs and agendas
- A brand which avoids appearing to be government-driven or to have any element of compulsion or blame
- Targets that reflect quality of experience as much as quantity of recruitment
- Variety and diversity in what is available
- A high level of choice for participants
- Flexibility to allow participants to sample volunteering and experiment with

different activities

- Inclusiveness, with extra resources to reach and engage the more marginalized and financial assistance for poorer/excluded young people
- Removal of benefit barriers and the adoption of positive benefits policies
- Encouragement of the culture and resources to support youth-initiated, youth-led programmes
- Incorporation of multiple goals/impacts for participants including skills and educational development, employment and youth entrepreneurship, personal and civic development
- A good balance between participant and recipient goals/impacts.
- Built in time for reflection and review by participants to maximise civic responsibility gains
- Built in evaluation, to clarify causal links, what elements are most conducive to positive impacts on all parties.

The delivery and implementation of a civic service programme should prioritise:

- Time and skill in matching volunteer to placements and projects
- Introductory or taster sessions and the chance to sample different placements
- Strong emphasis on youth-initiated and youth-led activities
- Capable, supportive staff who can enable choice and control by young people
- Providing appropriate and frequent supervision, and effective training
- Anticipating and minimising any tensions between 'traditional' or older volunteers and young participants
- Educating host agencies about goals and their roles
- Maintaining good communication among partner agencies
- Providing sufficient resources for organisations and agencies to develop and maintain an effective young volunteer support infrastructure
- Providing sufficient resources to give the extra support needed by different groups such as disabled volunteers or at risk young people
- Encouraging volunteer-involving partners to become 'youth-friendly' and scrutinise their practices and policies through a 'youth lens'.

## **13 A YOUTH VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY**

A number of elements of a youth volunteering programme are in place in the UK but 'what is lacking is the overarching coherence and full scale and range of programmes designed to appeal to different personal interests and community needs' (Stanley, 2004).

### **13.1 A 'meta-strategy'**

There is therefore the need for a 'meta-strategy' with a number of elements. 'What young people want from volunteering is very diverse and the programme must accommodate this. As basic principles, the FLEXIVOL wish-list holds up

(Gaskin, 1998a): flexibility, legitimacy, ease of access, experience, incentives, variety, organisation and laughs. As Hustinx notes, 'volunteering can enable young people to deal more successfully with their freedom' and 'help to reduce the uncertainty of an individualised life', but only by offering a flexible organisational setting that guarantees the widest possible variety of volunteer programmes and opportunities to experiment (Hustinx, 2001).

The volunteering strategy should enable young people to have a volunteering career which begins in school (secondary or even earlier) and offers opportunities down several routes: post secondary schooling and gap years, community service programmes, opportunities for employability and re-integration of unemployed and marginalized young people, enhanced so-called 'traditional' volunteering in the voluntary and community sector, student volunteering and employer-supported volunteering. This therefore encompasses full-time, part-time and occasional volunteering, team-based and individual, local, national and international volunteering, and e-volunteering. The importance of engaging people at a young age and tailoring opportunities and involvement to their changing needs cannot be overemphasised. If young people are presented with definite and appealing opportunities at every juncture, there are strong indications that large numbers would be attracted to get involved.

A youth volunteering strategy, of which a service scheme may be a major element, should have the following guiding principles.

### **13.2 Image and branding**

The image of volunteering needs a make-over, and any new scheme needs careful branding. The 'traditional language of volunteering implies too narrow a range of activities, borne from too limited a set of motivations to have anything to contribute to the process of civic renewal' (Paxton and Nash, 2002). Young people should be instrumental in designing the new brand.

### **13.3 Promotion and marketing**

Promoting voluntary work to young people and marketing the new image and brand is crucial. It should focus on multiple outlets and media: schools, colleges and universities, jobcentres, careers services, youth inclusion programmes, police and probation services, mental health and disability services, churches, community and health centres, workplaces, and volunteer centres. Educating gatekeepers and identifying a champion in each setting will help achieve knowledgeable and effective promotion. Media advertisements, leaflets, postcards and posters, and celebrity endorsement also have a role to play. Major use should be made of the internet.

The message needs to hit all the right notes for young people, emphasising what they can get out of it, the value of their contribution, the variety of areas of interest catered for, and the enjoyment and satisfaction they can experience (NFO, 2003; Gaskin, 1998a). The message should be tailored for the group

being targeted, for example different emphases for excluded or disadvantaged young people versus students or young employees. The language of service and the military overtones of 'corps' should be avoided (NFO, 2003).

### **13.4 Access**

Young people should find it straightforward to access information about volunteering and find entry to opportunities at every life cycle stage. Thus the institutional settings targeted for marketing should each provide easy access. Gatekeepers in these settings should be trained and kept up to date with developments and opportunities (GHK, 2004). Referral networks should be well established and serviced. The internet should also be used to enable access and networking among young people (Howland, 2003; Carnegie Young People Initiative, 2004)

Most crucially, access must be inclusive, with accommodation of disabilities, physical and developmental, different ethnic and cultural preferences, and the costs associated with choosing volunteering over paid work.

### **13.5 Incentives**

Triggers and incentives should be built in to programmes and widely publicised. Costs to young people should be minimised and financial barriers to involvement removed through financial incentives and credits. Programmes should prioritise providing incentives and rewards in the form of experience, skills development, employability and appreciation. The satisfaction of helping people and doing something valuable for the community should not be neglected as incentives.

The greatest incentive may be simply to offer something young people want to do, that interests and excites them. Variety in the type of opportunity, field of work and nature of the activity is essential.

### **13.6 Youth ownership**

The research consistently shows the benefits of enabling young people to have a major say in their volunteering. This covers a spectrum from being able to choose and sample areas of activity to initiating and delivering projects of their own. Youth action, through its empowering effect, is associated with higher levels of personal development and, particularly, civic awareness and responsibility. It should be a major focus of new developments.

### **13.7 Resources**

Adequate resources are essential to achieving inclusivity, enabling youth empowerment and maximising learning from voluntary work. Research demonstrates that young people who are 'hard to reach', 'at risk', least likely to consider volunteering and most susceptible to negative influences, can be engaged if money and time are put into contacting them, finding out what they want and like and giving them the support they need. Young Volunteer Challenge has shown that matching interests to placements for disadvantaged young

people is 'time consuming and labour intensive for staff' and that some young people with emotional and behavioural problems require considerable support in their placements (GHK, 2004).

Enabling youth-led voluntary work is also very resource-intensive and requires highly skilled staff and organisers who can tread the 'fine line between leading and facilitating - helping, but not taking over' in order to nurture participants' skills and autonomy (Prince's Trust, 1999). A DfEE review of reports on youth programmes concludes that 'a key theme of all these reports is the recognition that young people needs good quality advice, guidance, support and personal development opportunities to help make the transition to adult and working life' (DfEE, 2001).

Skilled staff support is vital not only in youth-led action but for all types of youth volunteering. Good practice in managing youth volunteering should be more widely promoted. The research shows supervision and review sessions that enable young people to reflect on what they are doing and its implications for themselves and the community increases the growth of responsibility and citizenship behaviours: 'experiences are most successful in promoting civic attachment and a likelihood of sustained volunteer activity later in life when the volunteer service is combined with pedagogy that draws the connection between the acts of community service and broader societal values' (Brock 2001, quoted in Kearney 2001).

## **14 KNOWLEDGE GAPS**

The increased emphasis on and expansion of youth volunteering is being undertaken with 'a substantial and mixed ideological agenda' encompassing citizenship, education, vocational training, and meeting the shortfall in volunteering (ibid). The evidence suggests that voluntary and community involvement can make significant contributions to all of these, although it also points to the need for further research on forms, processes and impacts. In particular, there are gaps in knowledge on:

- Impacts on civic responsibility and engagement: what types and styles of volunteering maximise these effects and how long-term are they?
- Incentives: what impact do they have on motivation, and will there be long-term positive effects on participants who take part because of financial incentives?
- Social exclusion: what are the best ways to reach, motivate and engage the most excluded young people, and how can organisations increase their capacity to recruit and support them?

- Organisational cultures: how can more traditional organisations change the culture among staff and existing volunteers to accommodate a significant increase in young volunteers?
- Non-traditional volunteering: what is the potential for expanding youth involvement in activities other than formal volunteering, such as youth action and reciprocal schemes such as TimeBank and LETS, and what kinds of benefits for participants does involvement produce?
- Employers: how can employer-supported volunteering be increased, particularly in smaller businesses with fewer staff, and do employers place sufficient value on volunteering experience when recruiting staff?
- Age differences: how do perceptions, attitudes, motivations, influences and behaviours differ between those in their early teens, middle and late teens and early twenties, and how can organisations and programmes respond to these differences?

## 15 CONCLUSION

Although much of the rationale for increasing youth volunteering is to develop civic responsibility, the literature emphasises that the exact nature of citizenship and the pathways to it that volunteering can provide need clarification. Lister's research underlined 'the importance of a broad, inclusive understanding of citizenship; and the need for politicians and others concerned with disengaged youth not to impose their own understandings of citizenship, but to base policy and interventions on young people's own perspectives, understandings and practices'. Acknowledging how much young people already do in terms of constructive social participation is a good place from which to build (Lister et al., 2002).

Fox and Besselink (2004) stress that tackling youth disengagement must begin with an understanding of how and why this occurs. Government language and policies 'are often perceived as being strident and punitive' with young people being seen 'in an almost entirely negative way through the prism of the "rights and responsibilities" agenda'. They are always the problem and not positive contributors. Society 'systematically underestimates the ability of young people ... there is a deep reluctance to trust them and to share power. Young people are treated as citizens in waiting. They know this and resent it' (Cutler and Frost, 2001).

What is needed is a new reciprocity and the provision of genuine opportunities that empower young people. Rather than 'inculcating a sense of respect in young people by command and injunction', we should help develop their own self-respect and independence, creating circumstances in which they are 'depended

on' rather than being 'dependent on'. They should be able to explore their talents and use their skills in a supportive environment, be given financial rewards to give them some independence, and engage in genuinely valuable work.

The literature shows how energetically many young people engage in 'political' voluntary and community activities on their terms. An American commentator notes that if young people are seen as disengaged it is not that 'they are satisfied with the current state of affairs or because they do not care about their fellow citizens' but because they are 'alienated from the institutions and processes of civic life and lack the motivation, opportunity and ability to overcome this alienation'. Traditional civic organisations are dominated by issues, structures, policy solutions and civic styles that are 'anathema' to younger people who have been raised in 'a faster-paced, entrepreneurial, mass-mediated, and global environment' (Delli Carpini, 2000).

The process of political and civic engagement is not instant but develops as young people mature. Most importantly, it 'begins when young people have opportunities to develop a strong sense of identity, self-worth, responsibility, and confidence' (Grantmaker Forum, 2001). Few would disagree that volunteering in all its incarnations can provide these opportunities but only if policy makers and organisations see young people as a valuable resource and are prepared to make the changes necessary to welcome their involvement.

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