



A befriending service for families with pre-school children

Volunteer Recruitment Project Evaluation: End of Project Report

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1. Introduction

Home Link is a voluntary service dedicated to offering quality support to families with at least one child under the age of five. Many of the families who use the Home Link service are among the most disadvantaged and socially excluded and will rarely use any other local services or activities. Most of the Home Link families have a wide range of complex problems and Home Link offers them a package of support including: careful assessment of their needs; matching them with a trained and supervised befriender; advocating on their behalf and encouraging them to access other appropriate sources of support. Over the last 19 years, Home Link has supported over 1000 families in Edinburgh and Midlothian.

The purpose of the current Home Link Project was to test the effectiveness of creating a discrete post and employing a part-time Volunteer Recruitment Officer (VRO). Up to July 2003 local volunteer recruitment was part of the job remit of the part-time project workers and city-wide recruitment fell to the Manager and Administrator, all of whom are part-time workers. Following a consultation/capacity building exercise, Home Link decided that effective volunteer recruitment requires a temperament, aptitude and skills that belong to a discreet post. They also agreed that employing someone specifically for this job would mean that project workers' time could be more effectively used, whilst at the same time increasing the number of much needed volunteers.

1.1 Project Objectives

To evaluate the effectiveness of employing a VRO, the project had the following main objectives

- (1) To research the volunteer market and draw up a recruitment strategy,
- (2) To design and produce new high-quality recruiting publications for different target volunteer groups and to make contact with relevant agencies, companies and organisations,
- (3) To develop and to test a variety of established and new innovative methods of volunteer recruitment,
- (4) To increase the number of 'high calibre' volunteers who are recruited, trained, screened and matched with families, so that in turn more families and children can be supported,
- (5) To set up effective ways of evaluating the calibre of volunteers recruited in conjunction with the other Home Link staff,

(7) To encourage growth and development in the volunteer befrienders and encourage them to use the Home Link pathway to take up training and learning opportunities,

(8) To develop, adapt and extend the role of the VRO.

2. Methods and Procedure

The Home Link Volunteer Recruitment Project aimed to evaluate the overall effectiveness of employing a Volunteer Recruitment Officer (VRO) who has a dedicated remit for volunteer recruitment. Qualitative methods were used to collect information on measures of effectiveness and to evaluate each of the Project Objectives in the following way:

2.1 To research the volunteer market and draw up a recruitment strategy:

This was successfully carried out at the beginning of the Project. The VRO produced a report of the recruitment strategy which is attached in Appendix 1 No further action was required.

2.2 To design and produce new high-quality recruiting publications for different target volunteer groups and to make contact with relevant agencies, companies and organisations:

In the first year of the post the VRO worked extensively to design, produce and distribute different types of volunteer recruitment publications and to build up collaborative working relationships with agencies, organisations and individuals who could support the VRO in the recruitment process. The VRO collected information describing each recruitment method and the number of volunteer befrienders recruited as a direct result of each method. Findings are presented in the Results section below. In the second year of the Project, when the initial ground work had been done, the VRO was able to develop and adapt her role with the support of Home Link. This was then included as an objective and evaluated in its own right (see point 2.6 below).

2.3 To develop and to test a variety of established and new, innovative methods of volunteer recruitment:

The VRO has developed and implemented a range of volunteer recruitment methods over the 2 years of the Project. A procedure was developed to record the recruitment channel taken by new volunteer befrienders recruited during the period of the Project. The resulting figures are presented in the Results section below and the effectiveness of each method is discussed.

2.4 To increase the number of 'high calibre' volunteers who are recruited, trained, screened and matched with families, so that in turn more families and children can be supported:

First it was important to define and understand what is meant by the term 'high quality'.

Everyone seemed to have an intuitive idea about this concept but there was no clear definition as to the exact qualities that made a 'high calibre' volunteer. Questionnaires were used to collect befrienders' and project workers' definitions of this term and a working definition was developed.

Due to some of the priorities of one of the funders, the current Project also aimed to find out how befrienders feel that they best: support the growth of children's social and language skills; improve family use of local/city-wide services for children and parents; improve communication between children and parents and enable better understanding and management of children by parents. Twelve befrienders returned questionnaires to say how they felt they had benefited the families that they had supported. Their descriptions were collated and are presented in the Results section below.

2.5 To encourage growth and development in the volunteers and encourage them to use the Home Link pathway to take up training and learning opportunities:

A procedure was developed to monitor and record all training undertaken by each volunteer befriender. Twelve befrienders returned questionnaires to say what benefits they had gained from the training that they had received since volunteering with Home Link. This information was collated and is presented in the Results section below.

2.6 To develop, adapt and extend the role of the VRO:

During the life of the Project the role of the VRO naturally evolved and changed. The VRO and Home Link responded to this by explicitly developing and adapting the role to ensure maximum efficiency. Importantly Home Link is determined that the VRO role remains clearly focused on volunteer recruitment but they are aware that the previously narrow focus of the role could be widened to good effect. A meeting was held with the VRO and the Home Link manager to provide information about a range of ways in which Home Link propose to develop the role. This information is presented in the Results section below.

3. Findings

3.1 Effectiveness of employing a VRO

This was the overall aim of the Evaluation project. At the end of the Project, the VRO Project has been successful in its aims and in many respects has superseded expectations. It appears from formal feedback from Project Workers and from the numbers of volunteers recruited, that it has been extremely valuable to have someone employed specifically to recruit volunteers. Home Link relies on volunteers coming forward to work with families and recruiting enough volunteers even to meet some of the need requires a great deal of time and commitment. It appears that having someone employed in the VRO role has a wide range of benefits for Home Link as an organisation and for Project Workers and families individually.

Home Link staff felt that there were many direct benefits of having someone specifically employed in the VRO role. They reported that the quality of the publicity material had improved 100%. They all agreed that the Home Link presentations were now more

professional and that there had been a marked increase in publicity. They felt that they now had more time to focus on family work and the VRO had helped to keep them focused on the issue of recruitment. They felt that the VRO was a good representative for Home Link and that this encouraged good follow up of contacts and increased networking. They all agreed that the VRO had worked hard and the results of the Project were very successful. The following quote illustrates the Project Workers' views:

“The VRO is extremely good at her job, really excellent. We feel that volunteer recruitment requires skills that individually we don't always feel that we have. The VRO has all the right skills. She is organised and reliable and a really positive team member. She is clear and knowledgeable. She has recruited a much wider cross-section of people. We can always be confident that if we pass on people to her, she will take up the contact. We can be confident in her in general. She has a broader sense of where to look for volunteers and she's a great net-worker. A level of guilt has been taken away because she has the skills that the Project workers don't have. Now we can focus on our job and work to the skills that we have. We used to worry when we couldn't find volunteers but we don't feel bad now”.

3.2 Effectiveness of each volunteer recruitment method

Each recruitment method was tested and the evaluation was based on the perceptions of the VRO and on the numbers of volunteers who were recruited, trained and matched with a family, as a result of each method. Table 1 below, provides an overview of all recruitment channels used by volunteers over the last two years.

Table 1: Methods Evaluated during the Project (July 2003 – May 2005)

Method	No of Enquiries as a result of method	No of volunteers recruited, trained and matched
Leaflets, posters and bookmarks* **(see below)	7	1
Volunteer Centre*	22	3
Volunteer Fairs*	24	1
Information Stand*	66	6
Newspapers*	12	10
VRO Presentations*	6	5
Word of mouth	4	4
Fairs, Gala Days*	1	0
Home Link Staff	1	1
Home Link Volunteer	3	2
Other organisation	3	4
Bus advertisement*	12	4
Home Link Website	7	1
Other (not specified)	5	2
	Total	44

* = Methods that were specifically evaluated in this Project,

** = Leaflets, posters and bookmarks could not be evaluated separately because they were handed out at all events and it was not always possible to tell where the potential volunteer had picked up the information.

The table shows that overall; the Project was a great success. Forty-four volunteer befrienders were recruited, trained and matched with families during the period of the Project, which means that forty-four families and their children are being supported.

It appears that methods that reach a larger number of people are more effective. For example advertising on buses and in newspapers is an effective way to recruit volunteers. Writing articles for publication in the media does require specific skills and the Home Link VRO found it useful to liaise with other professionals who had expertise in this area.

Volunteer recruitment fairs and services have recruited 4 volunteers. Although this is a fairly limited number, this method has the advantage of providing important networking opportunities and is useful for raising the Home Link profile with other agencies (this is important as other agencies have already helped to recruit a further 4 volunteers).

Using the Home Link information stand created a high level of interest among potential volunteers. Six volunteers were recruited as a result of this method although this number does not reflect the initial interest and it may be worth exploring why potential volunteers do not pursue their initial enquiry. Overall it seems that this method is less effective if the Information Stand is not staffed. If the VRO remained with the stall she was able to answer questions and raise Home Link's profile. Some venues seem to be more productive (for example the Volunteer Fair),

Presentations given by the VRO are time consuming, requiring a great deal of preparation and time commitment. Furthermore they appear to have limited success in recruiting volunteers. However, the VRO reports that this is a useful way of profile raising, establishing and maintaining contacts with course leaders and has led to further useful opportunities and offers of support. It may be constructive to limit the number of presentations given, to situations where there is a clear benefit from doing so,

Publicity material such as leaflets, posters and bookmarks appears to generate a steady (although fairly small) level of interest among potential volunteers. They are a useful way to provide information and contact details and it is possible that if this method was perhaps expanded to include a larger scale distribution, it may be more effective at recruiting a larger number of volunteers.

3.3 'High Calibre' Volunteer Befriender Profile

Project workers and befrienders were asked to list the qualities that they felt make a 'high calibre' volunteer befriender. They listed the following characteristics (the numbers in brackets show how many people listed the characteristics and so gives some indication of how important this quality may be):

-
- Non judgemental (x6),
- Broad minded,
- Flexible (x2),
- Reliable,
- High tolerance,
- Willing to work alongside
- family,
- Not saying what they think is right,
- Supportive (x2),
- Be patient (x4),
- A good listener (x8),

- Confidentiality (x2),
- Respect (x2),
- Understanding (x3),
- Bubbly/happy personality,
- Open-minded,
- Easy to talk to,
- Smiling,
- Can take the initiative, e.g. For playing games, avoiding a tantrum,
- Not afraid to ask for help,
- Good knowledge of services available,
- Experience of life and of kids if necessary,
- To be able to judge situation and not overreact,
- Open-minded,
- Trustworthy,
- Confidence (x2),
- Encouraging,
- To be able to leave your own values at the door if need be,
- Good communicator,
- Friendly (x3),
- Work within boundaries,
- Non-interfering,
- Able to say 'no',
- Someone who stands alongside a person/family,
- Takes interest,
- Values the child/family,
- Realisation that family life is not always easy,
- Able to give suggestions and options to deal with situations without sounding like you are dictating to them,
- Able to pick up on the atmosphere, potential problems, good things that can be focused on and praised,
- Creative,
- Not trying to give advice/views, just acting as a sounding board,
- A positive person who focuses on encouraging and supporting,
- Reliable person,
- 100% dedication,
- Courage,
- Strength,
- Outgoing,
- Determination,
- Funny,
- Full of life,
- Giving,
- Easy going,
- Sense of humour,
- Compassion,
- Warm,
- Trust,
- Right body language,
- Working with in the guidelines.

This list of characteristics provides a useful definition of what the term 'high calibre' can mean. Listening skills and a non-judgemental attitude were listed by more people than other characteristics and may be key characteristics in a 'high calibre' volunteer. An important point was made by Project Workers illustrated by the quote below:

"It's a hard job and some people can't move beyond making judgments. There are a range of levels of 'goodness'. Some are not good at complex situations whereas some may not be good at listening. It's about matching skills with needs. Self-knowledge is important; they have to know what their skills are and have self-awareness".

So potential volunteers do not need to have all of the characteristics listed above to be a 'high calibre' volunteer, they just need to have some of them. An important part of the process of becoming a 'high calibre' volunteer befriender is in the choice of the match with a family. Home Link plays a valuable role in this respect as they match befrienders with families. A befriender with 'high calibre' qualities may work well with one family and

not so well with another and it may be that 'high calibre' befriending is not just down to the characteristics of individual befrienders but is a quality of the Home Link organisation as a whole.

3.4 Benefits for Families

Befrienders were asked to say how they thought they had benefited the families that they had worked with. Their responses to this question provide a rich source of information about the wide range of ways in which befrienders can support families and children:

- It allowed the mother to know attention and time is being spent with her son and that he is doing activities he enjoys. It gives her son a chance to do and participate in activities he would not otherwise be able to do (such as going to the Dinosaur exhibition at the National Museum),
- Hopefully my work has brought a wee break to a family each week, given the children a few hours of fun, laughter and special attention and the parents a couple of hours when they can escape! Also, as I've gotten to know the family better, they have shared more of their life with me – which is possible evidence that I am seen as a listening ear and someone who is here to share their troubles with and I can possibly help out in some way,
- I have only been with one family, but think that it has been positive for the kids in that the parents are being more encouraging and giving praise when necessary. Mum realises that this works and the kids are calmer and better behaved,
- I can only speak about my family. Mum has mental health issues which impact on the whole family. The trust we have built up over twelve months has helped her confidence in dealing with the children. We have visited places (e.g., Home Link party, Gorgie Farm),
- It's too early as yet to say if the family I am matched with have found support from me. At this stage, I can only hope that time given to the family is a help,
- It gives them the opportunity to do things that may not have occurred to them to do / wanted to do but did not have the capabilities or facilities and also gives them insight into how other people are (i.e. the personality or interests of the befriender),
- I think the child looks forward to her outings and really enjoys them. The one-to-one attention is also (I hope) very good/beneficial to the child. The (single) mother is given a break,
- Giving them someone to vent their frustration to,
- I have given the entire family a bit of laughter and happiness. I have helped to show the children the importance of confidence, being happy, showing affection and not throwing garbage on the ground,
- I think I've given the family that I work with a bit of breathing space. A time for the mother to get some things done without having to worry about her children,
- The mother has someone to have an adult conversation with. I am also able to help with things around the house. She can plan this when I can visit as having so many children is difficult.

It is evident from these quotes, that befrienders support families to use of local/city-wide services for children and parents; to improve communication between children and parents and can promote a better understanding and management of children by

parents. It is not clear if children's language skills are supported by befrienders but their social skills will be supported by participation in activities, improved home situations and attention from caring adults.

3.5 Benefits for Volunteer Befrienders

Befrienders were asked what benefits they thought that they had gained since becoming a volunteer for Home Link. They gave the following responses:

- Satisfaction, more confidence,
 - Increase in patience and understanding,
 - Increased confidence when meeting people,
 - Helpful training which has developed listening skills,
 - Opened my eyes to what families face,
 - I get to play silly games and make crafts for two hours a week which I love,
 - Good experience,
 - Have learned to listen more,
 - Feeling of achievement when advice given is acted on,
 - Found induction course informative,
 - Gives my week some structure,
 - Feeling of well being,
 - Being accepted as a volunteer has boosted my confidence,
 - Really valued training,
 - Found training on ADHD helpful,
 - Better understanding of the relationship between parent and child (a child's behaviour is linked to home environment / influenced by surroundings but also external contact), feel like I am helping others, the community,
 - I think I've become more understanding and accepting of different people,
 - It's made me much more aware of parenting issues,
 - Many interesting courses which
- I have the opportunity to attend,
- Feel a sense of purpose and achievement in helping someone else,
 - Good experience for social care jobs,
 - I'm a stronger person,
 - More confidence,
 - Better understanding of other people's lives,
 - Satisfaction
 - I am enjoying working with the family I have, they are very nice and I get on well with them,
 - I think the charity and its views are excellent. It makes me want to work for something similar later on,
 - I have really enjoyed befriending through Home Link. The training was of a good quality, all the staff have been warm and friendly and I have felt supported throughout,
 - To be able to provide a way forward for a family and see the results however small gives a great sense of achievement. The fact that someone has a lot of faith in your advice is a big responsibility,
 - Being a befriender has enabled me to spend time with children – I really enjoy this,
 - Have just completed an 'open learning' 10-week course on child development – I really enjoyed this and would like to

- learn more on child care,
Supporting the families with

children is important – it is not easy to raise children.

It is interesting that the befrienders felt that they benefited in such a wide variety of practical, emotional, vocational and educational levels. These comments also display the quality of self-awareness and knowledge of their own skills.

3.6 Developing and adapting the VRO Role

This Project has highlighted the necessity for the expansion of the VRO role to include screening (including Disclosure), and induction parts of the process. This redefinition of “recruitment” is required because the numbers of befrienders available has risen as a result of the Project and this has increased the case loads for project workers. At the same time a lot of contacts and systems are now in place to more easily and quickly implement the various recruitment methods established as worth pursuing. As a result, the job of the VRO has been streamlined, releasing time within the post for this expansion of the role.

Home Link is dedicated to providing support and training to its befrienders and has recently improved and expanded the induction course. In the past there have been four or five inductions a year but, with many more people coming through to train, Home Link are now looking at limiting the number of induction training courses to three, or even two a year. This gives time to process the larger batches of new people through the Home Link screening, assessment and matching system and settle them in before the next new batch is ready for training. It means that the VRO can take her role further supporting volunteers through the process of induction, building relationships with them and at the same time taking some pressure off the Project Workers as the volunteer numbers increase. It also means that the VRO can plan recruitment drives at set times of the year with induction course dates in mind. Ongoing general methods (Volunteer Fairs, Information stands and publicity materials) will be continued as a useful profile-raising and back up to these recruitment drives. In addition, it has also been identified that having the VRO do the exit interviews with volunteers at the end of their Home Link commitment could enable a truer and more honest evaluation of their experience and this information will be fed into the Home Link quality assurance and planning systems. This has therefore been incorporated into the new VRO remit.

4. Conclusions

The Evaluation Project found that the employment of a dedicated VRO is beneficial on several levels and has worked well as a means to recruit volunteers. Although some methods are more effective than others, it seems that volunteer recruitment is most effective when a variety of methods are used, in a range of settings. The task of volunteer recruitment is time consuming and the job requires a dedicated staff member who can give the time that is necessary for developing and implementing a range of methods at any given time.

The Project has been a success on many levels. Having a dedicated member of staff to take on the development of this part of the work has allowed Home Link literature to be updated, procedure streamlined and more importantly a large increase in the number of families that Home Link can now support.

Home Link stated that they are now able to be more focused in their recruitment of volunteers. There is more choice and they are able to now be more streamlined in the recruiting and training processes. There are a wider range of people volunteering now, which means that higher quality matches can be made between families and befrienders. Project Workers felt that in the past some referrers have lost contact with Home Link because no befriender could be found and that it would be a useful next step to contact all referrers to let them know about new developments. Home Link has proposed that the VRO should also develop her role further to build working relationships with larger organisations that could collaborate with Home Link to recruit volunteers.

Appendix 1: Report on Volunteering

REPORT ON VOLUNTEERING

Sarah McCormick

8th August 2003

Introduction

“Volunteering underpins our civil society in Scotland. It is an essential component of a free society and an integral part of a strong and active citizenship. It creates a sense of community identity and ownership, and helps to build social capital based on trust, solidarity and participation.” (Ian Ball, Chair, Volunteer Development Scotland.)

In our society there is increasing recognition and value being attached to the positive social and economic contribution made by volunteering.

The aims of this report are to explore the background of volunteering in the UK through the following approaches;

To outline the **nature** and **trends** of volunteering in the UK based on the current figures and statistics

To put volunteering in it's **political context**

To discuss research findings that consider the **motivations** of volunteers

To discuss the potential **benefits** and **drawbacks** to volunteering

To propose a **strategy for the recruitment** of volunteers for Home Link

Volunteering in a Political Context

The positive outcomes of volunteering are increasingly recognised and valued by the government. The economic value of volunteering is estimated at over £15 billion, and there is wide recognition of the social impact of volunteering for the volunteer and society as a whole. In a recent document 'Next Steps on Volunteering and Giving in the UK' (2002) the National Government outlined its strong commitment to promoting a culture of giving and volunteering for all. The Scottish Executive has recently announced new plans to develop a new, updated strategic framework for volunteering in Scotland.

The recruitment of volunteers is currently taking place in a context in which volunteering is highly regarded and supported by government, media and employers.

How many people volunteer?

There is a lack of statistical evidence on the total numbers of people involved with befriending voluntary work, but what is available are figures on the numbers of people involved in volunteering in the broader sense. There are currently four main surveys that give statistics on the number of people who volunteer. They are the National Survey of Volunteering (NSV) (1997) with a sample of 1,486, The Home Office Citizenship Survey (CS) (2001) with a sample of 15,475, the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) (2001) and the Home Office British Crime Survey (BCS) (2001) with a sample of 10,148. The volunteering figures given in each report are different. This can be accounted for by the inconsistency in how the questions on volunteering are asked and how volunteering is defined, perceived and reported by the different survey respondents.

The SHS found 25% of adults say they gave up time in the previous 12 months to help as an organiser or volunteer for a charity, club campaign or organisation.

CS (2001) reported 26% of people volunteered formally at least once a month. People were most likely to have volunteered formally by carrying out the following tasks:

Raising and handling money - 22%

Organising or helping to run an activity or event – 21%

Giving other practical help - 14%

Being a leader or a member of a committee – 13%

Giving advice, information or counselling – 11%

Providing transport or driving – 10%

Despite the variations on the exact figures of people volunteering in Britain, it remains undisputed that millions of the population do use their time to volunteer in some capacity.

General Trends in Volunteering

The National Survey of Volunteering in the UK (1997) used a sample of 1,486 people to provide a picture of the extent and nature of volunteering in the UK and to track the trends in volunteering over the past 16 years. Although these trends may now have changed over the past five years, they do provide interesting insight on the nature of the volunteering market.

The key findings of the NSV are as follows;

The level of volunteering dipped slightly between 1991 and 1997 from 51% of the adult population to 47%.

Existing volunteers were putting more time into their volunteering, up from 2.7 hours a week in 1991 to 4 hours a week in 1997

Sports, education and social welfare were the most common fields of volunteering; with fundraising, organising events and committee work the most common activities

People volunteer for a mix of altruistic and self-interested reasons, with more emphasis being placed on skills development than in 1991, particularly among young people.

Who volunteers?

Socio-Economic Background

The NSV (1997) found a strong correlation between participation and socio-economic group, with those from the highest groups twice as likely to take part in a formal voluntary activity as those from the lowest. The Scottish Household Survey (2001) confirm this trend that rates of volunteering increase as household income increases. The Citizenship Survey (2001) confirmed the link between rate of volunteering and socio-economic background. The CS findings show people in the least deprived areas were the most likely to participate in voluntary and community activities. Those in the most deprived areas were least likely to participate in voluntary and community activities.

Those in paid work were more likely to volunteer than those outside the labour market. A big fall was noted among unemployed people volunteering down from 50% in 1991 to 38% in 1997, reinforcing concern that the benefits system acted as a deterrent to volunteer. The Scottish Household Survey (2001) reported that higher proportions of adults who are self employed or part time workers give up time to volunteer than adults in most other economic activity categories.

Furthermore, the SHS found rates of volunteering are **higher rural areas and lowest in large urban areas.**

Gender

In terms of **gender**, the NSV(1997) found men and women were equally as likely to volunteer. Whereas the SHS (2001) found that women were slightly more likely to say they give up their time than men are.

In regards to gender differences in befriending services, recent research (Hollway, 2002, p31) painted a picture of a significant gender divide existing in befriending volunteers. The research indicated that female befrienders outnumbered males by almost 4 to 1.

Age

NSV found that volunteering tends to peak in **middle age**. There were two marked trends since 1991: an increase in the participation of retired people and a sharp decline in the involvement of young people, with the rate for the 18-24's down from 55% (1991) to 43% (1997).

Recent Target Groups for Volunteering :

Young People and Students

NSV findings showed a decrease over time in rates of volunteering among young people. The survey asked young people (aged 16-24) to give their views on volunteering.

“The message from young people is that volunteering needs a make-over. It needs to improve its image, broaden its access points and provide what today’s and tomorrow’s young people need.” (IVR)

The findings of the NSV can be presented as a young people’s ‘wish list’ for volunteering. ‘Flexivol’ summarises the essential requirements and serves as an acronym for these important elements;

Flexibility

Legitimacy

Ease of access

Xperience

Incentives

Variety

Organisation

Laughs

“Early experience of volunteering tends to encourage volunteering in later life.” (Next Step, p19) The Government has recognised the importance of promoting volunteering to young people and recently developed the successful ‘Millennium Volunteers’ scheme. Millennium Volunteers is an initiative aimed at 16 to 24 year olds to encourage them to get involved with volunteering. An Award of Excellence is presented to those who complete 200 hours voluntary activity in a year. There have been 65,000 Millennium Volunteers since the 1999, 60% of whom had never volunteered before.

Research has identified students at further and higher education establishments as a huge and untapped potential group of volunteers. Student Volunteering Scotland (SVS) is a new group established in 2002 in response to this need to promote and support student volunteering.

This target group of potential volunteers are increasingly recognising and understanding the personal benefits of volunteering and are more readily responding to volunteering opportunities that are being positively promoted to them.

Older Volunteers

“As people are increasingly retiring earlier and living loner, healthier lives, the opportunities to engage older citizens in volunteering have increased.” (Next Step, p24)

The Institute for Volunteering Research carried out some research with 400 volunteers in the 50+ age bracket from 25 organisations. The research provided information on the volunteering experiences of older volunteers.

The research showed that the most **common routes** into volunteering were;

Talking to people

Having existing contact with the organisation

Responding to advertising and publicity.

The **common reasons** that older people gave for getting involved with a particular voluntary organisation were;

To put skills and experience to good use

Because the organisation had a good reputation

Because the organisation was known to be short of volunteers

Because someone asked.

In considering recruitment of older people into volunteering it is also important to consider the potential dissatisfactions and frustrations for volunteers and staff. The research found that

More than a third of older volunteers wanted better opportunities to use their skills;

About a fifth worried about their ability to do the work;

Some volunteers were reluctant to train – some lacked the confidence, others believed that their existing skills and experience equipped them adequately for the tasks;

Problems were sometimes difficult to handle in an open way; ‘respect for one’s elders’ could reinforce a tentative approach;

Staff could feel challenged by the experience and manner of some of the older volunteers;

A strong commitment to the organisation, the task or to the people could make it difficult for a few volunteers to let go as they became less able.

The conclusion to the study of older volunteers states

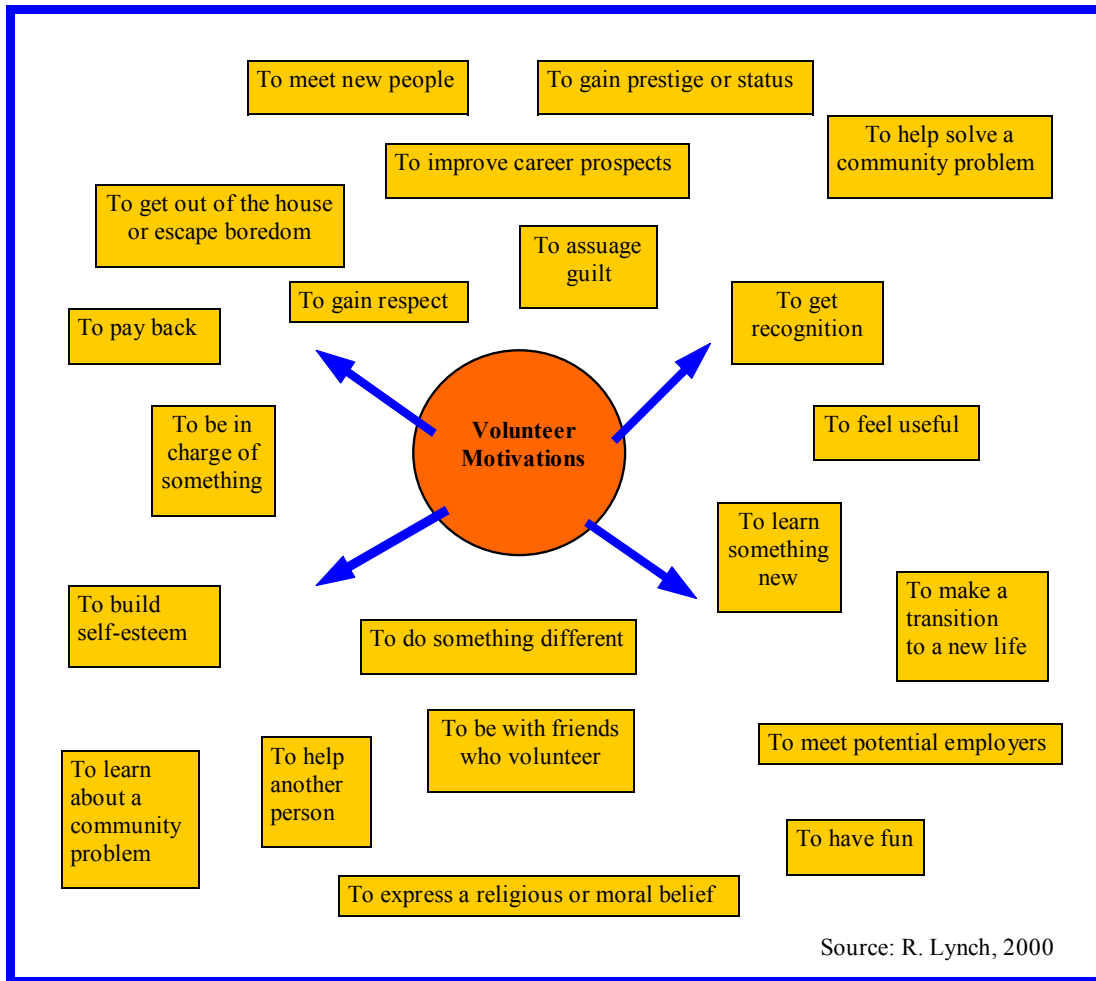
“In spite of the frustrations and difficulties, the findings paint a very positive picture of volunteering by older people... It is well worth promoting and supporting.”

VOLUNTEER MOTIVATIONS

In planning effective recruitment strategies, it is helpful to know what motivates individuals to become a volunteer. Research suggests that volunteers can be recruited by appealing to their motivations and demonstrating how the voluntary experience can meet their needs (Clary and Snyder et al, 1994). Furthermore, to retain volunteers, organisations need to ensure that they are satisfied, and one way of increasing volunteer satisfaction is to meet their motivations. (Hollway, 2002, p24)

There is a wide range of reasons for why an individual gets involved with voluntary activities.

“Research suggests that volunteers become involved in volunteering for a variety of altruistic and self-interested reasons.” (Hollway, 2002, p24) Rick Lynch (2000) has developed a comprehensive list of potential motivations that are presented in the following diagram.



Research Findings on Volunteer Motivations

The Volunteer Development Agency, Northern Ireland, states four main motivations of volunteers;

- Volunteering in response to a perceived need in the community
- A personal connection to, or knowledge of, the need/issue
- Having time to spare
- A moral or religious conviction

The common reasons given by volunteers for getting involved with a Befriending organisation include;

- Pleasure gained by doing something worthwhile – an emotional reward
- A genuine interest to work with a particular client group
- A personal experience from the past leading to a desire to support others in a situation they understand
- To gain career-related experience
- A desire to 'give something back' and to make a visible impact in one person's life
- Having time to spare and the appropriate skills

The nature of the service appeals to them.

(Taken from; Hollway Report (2002) & Notes from Befriending Network Scotland Common Ground Meetings (2003))

Gender differences in Motivation for Volunteering

Research on general volunteering patterns indicates that males are more likely to volunteer in response to their own needs and interests, and for social reasons. Females on the other hand, were more likely to volunteer in response to the perceived needs of families and friends.

Hollway (2002, p31) notes that if female volunteers are only matched with female befriendees, then this will ultimately result in larger numbers of male befriendees remaining on waiting lists.

THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING

General Outcomes of Volunteering

The Home Office (Next Steps on Volunteering...2002, p5) outline three broad effects of volunteering;

Improvements in the welfare of others

Positive outcomes for the volunteer – personal satisfaction, new skills or knowledge, an understanding of different lives and cultures.

Effect on society as a whole. Volunteering enhances the common good, helping to build a healthy civil society – with all that entails for the level of crime and anti-social behaviour, participation and democracy. Volunteering is a positive contribution to the creation of a more cohesive and socially inclusive society.

Benefits of Volunteering for Volunteer

The NSV (1997) found the key personal benefits from volunteering to be;

The enjoyment of the activity,

The satisfaction of seeing results,

Meeting people,

And a sense of personal achievement.

Young people were more likely to cite instrumental benefits such as;

The opportunity to learn new skills,

The opportunity to get a qualification

And to achieve a position in the community.

Benefits of Befriending for Befriendees

In research on Befriending in Northern Ireland (2002), Tara Hollway interviewed some users of befriending services who said they had experienced the following positive outcomes;

Greater confidence

Improved mental health

Having a purpose

Increased social interaction.

Hollway concludes that the befriending services that took part in the research appeared to be successful in meeting the aims of;
Reducing social isolation
Providing opportunities for social interaction and
Improving the mental health of the individuals using these services. (p38)

BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING

It is important to have an awareness and understanding of what factors can play a role in hindering people from getting involved with voluntary work, so as these can be tackled and reduced.

The NSV (1997) identified the main drawback to volunteering as poor organisation of the projects, with 71% of respondents saying their volunteering could be better organised. The other main drawbacks, (with the percentage of respondents given in the brackets), are as follows;

Things could be much better organised (71%)
You sometimes get bored or lose interest (34%)
It takes up too much time (31%)
You can't always cope with the things you are asked to do (30%)
Your efforts aren't always appreciated (29%)
You find yourself out of pocket (29%).

The recent Home Office Citizenship Survey (2001) was a comprehensive study with a sample of 15,475 people in England and Wales. In this survey people were asked to identify the main barriers that existed to getting involved with formal volunteering. The main barriers identified were;

Lack of time and being too busy (33%)
Work commitments (20%)
Parenting, caring or family responsibilities (15%)
Lack of awareness and information (8%)

"Many people feel that they just do not have the time to juggle work, family commitments and leisure with volunteering. Work commitments are a particularly serious constraint on volunteers." (Home Office, 2002, p23)

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

"Successful recruitment schemes emphasise the benefits of volunteering likely to accrue to user, volunteer and the wider community." (Davis Smith, 1997)

"There are a range of reasons why people might volunteer as befrienders, therefore advertising should try to reflect these and aim to reach this wide range of people by different messages or through different media and locations." (BNS, June 2003, p8)

"Improving the image and appeal of volunteering requires making it more visible and more 'normal'. This should be done through promotional materials that are attractive and inclusive, countering common misconceptions and appealing to people with different

backgrounds, interests, motivations and degrees of commitment.” (IVR)

It is essential for recruitment material and activities to communicate the positive outcomes of volunteering, alongside challenging the myths and tackling the personal barriers that exist in becoming a volunteer. When targeting different groups of potential volunteers, recruitment must be sensitive to and appeal to the specific motivations of this group.

The Befriending Network Scotland consulted with staff involved in 34 different befriending projects (in June 2003) on their experiences of volunteer recruitment. When asked “*What message do projects feel have been most effective for them to date?*” The following responses were given on the recruitment messages that had worked best;

A chance to work with young people in their local community
Explaining what befrienders will be doing
Explaining what will be the benefit for the befriended
Highlighting that befriending is activity-based
Highlighting that training and expenses are part of the package
Playing on people’s interests/hobbies – highlighting the fact that they can enable others to do them too.

Current methods being used in advertising volunteering opportunities:

Questions

Would you like to...

Do you have time to...

Do you want to ...

Can you help...

Why not...

What we’re looking for/What it involves

We want people who are...

Being a befriender involves...

Statements/Images

Be a sweetie (picture of sweets)

Not just another day – you could make it special (picture of a diary)

Bring a smile to someone’s face – become a befriender (picture of 8 sad faces and 1 smiley one)

What we offer

Training, support, expenses ...

The Institute of Volunteering Research claim that half of all volunteers get involved because they were asked to help. Also the Citizenship Survey (2001, p6) states that people said the incentive most likely to get them involved in formal volunteering was a direct appeal for help. (38%) This shows the importance of communicating to potential volunteers the need for their help.

-ENDS-