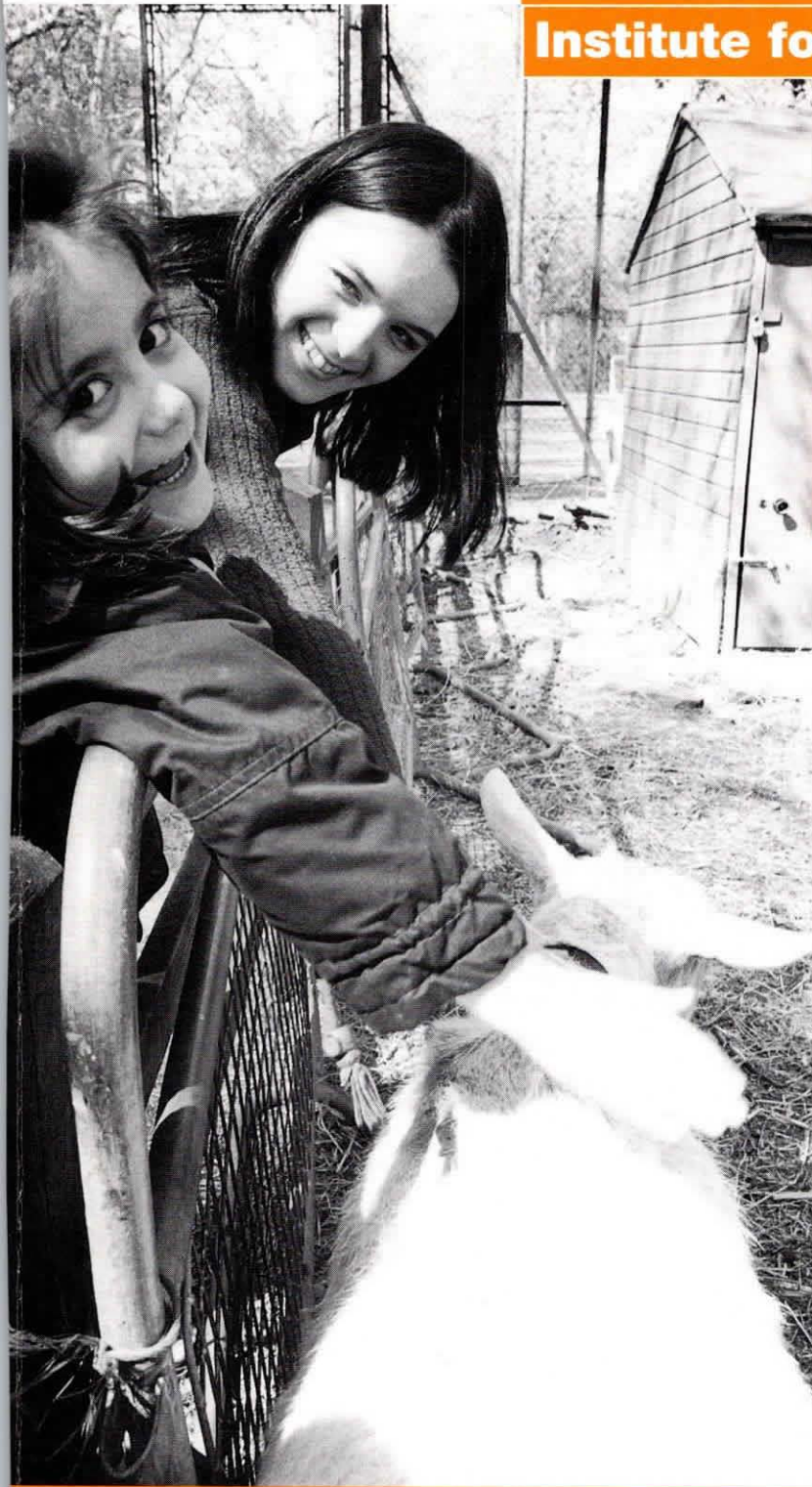


Institute for Volunteering Research



What young people want from volunteering

Katharine Gaskin

An initiative of

 the
national
centre for
Volunteering

in association with

 UeL

UNIVERSITY of
EAST LONDON
CENTRE FOR INSTITUTIONAL STUDIES

What young people want from volunteering

Katharine Gaskin

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank all the young people who took part in the focus groups for their hard work and thoughtful contributions.

Thanks also go to those in the following organisations who helped arrange groups:
Birmingham Association of Youth Clubs,
Holland Park School, Leicester University,
Marks and Spencer Marble Arch, St Gabriel's
Community Centre, St Paul's School,
Uppingham School and Walsall Youth Arts.

A final thanks to Dr Justin Davis Smith,
Director of the Institute for Volunteering
Research, for commissioning and supporting
the research.

Katharine Gaskin PhD

First published in 1998 by The National Centre
for Volunteering, Regent's Wharf, 8 All Saints
Street, London N1 9RL, Tel: 0171 520 8900
Registered Charity Number 265866

All rights reserved. No part of this publication
may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval
system or transmitted in any form or by any
means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying,
recording or otherwise, without the prior
written permission of the publisher.

© The National Centre for Volunteering 1998
ISBN 1897708 084

Designed by Ideology
Printed by Direct Image Ltd
Cover photo by Louise Wheatley/Islington
Volunteer Centre

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Executive Summary | 5 |
| | |
| 1. Introduction | 11 |
| 1.1 The research | 11 |
| 1.2 Methodology | 12 |
| 1.3 The context | 12 |
| | |
| 2. Flexivol | 15 |
| 2.1 Reshaping volunteering | 15 |
| 2.2 The Flexivol wish-list | 15 |
| 2.3 A strong consensus | 16 |
| | |
| 3. Flexibility | 17 |
| 3.1 The pressures on young people | 17 |
| 3.2 The problem of commitment | 19 |
| 3.3 A preference for paid work | 21 |
| | |
| 4. Legitimacy | 23 |
| 4.1 Views of volunteering | 23 |
| 4.2 Visions of volunteers | 25 |
| 4.3 The image problem | 27 |
| 4.4 Improving the image | 29 |
| | |
| 5. Ease of access | 31 |
| 5.1 Finding information | 31 |
| 5.2 Gaining access to organisations | 32 |
| 5.3 Gatekeepers to volunteering | 33 |
| | |
| 6. Experience | 37 |
| 6.1 Work-related experience | 37 |
| 6.2 Personal development | 38 |
| 6.3 Bad experiences | 39 |
| | |
| 7. Incentives | 43 |
| 7.1 Work-related incentives | 43 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 7.2 Payment as an incentive | 44 |
| 7.3 The 'altruistic' incentive | 45 |
| 8. Variety | 49 |
| 8.1 Form and structure | 49 |
| 8.2 The field of work | 49 |
| 8.3 The type of work | 51 |
| 9. Organisation | 53 |
| 9.1 Young people-friendly | 53 |
| 9.2 Support. | 53 |
| 10. Laughs | 57 |
| 10.1 A good time | 57 |
| 10.2 Volunteering as 'punishment' | 57 |
| 11. Marketing volunteering. | 59 |
| 11.1 The word 'volunteer' | 59 |
| 11.2 Education and awareness-raising | 60 |
| 11.3 Using other media | 62 |
| 11.4 The message. | 63 |
| 11.5 Summary | 65 |
| 12. Conclusion | 67 |
| 12.1 Vanishing volunteers?. | 67 |
| 12.2 Young people's wish-list | 67 |
| 12.3 Strategies for change. | 68 |
| 12.4 The need for change | 70 |
| References | 71 |
| Appendix A – Methodology | 73 |
| Appendix B – The cue cards | 79 |

Executive Summary

The research

The 1997 National Survey of Volunteering has stirred up controversy with its finding of a 'sharp reduction in levels of participation by young people aged 18-24' and of more negative views of volunteering among the younger generation than older age groups. These findings have been challenged by some in the youth volunteering field, who stress that young people are participating at a high level.

This research, funded by the Institute for Volunteering Research, set out to explore through focus groups of young people their understanding of voluntary work and their view of its relevance to them. Attention was focused on the conditions and incentives that would attract them to voluntary work, and the best ways of publicising and marketing volunteering opportunities to young people. Topics covered included the image of volunteers; motivations and perceived benefits for young people; their views of the opportunities for them to volunteer, and the availability of information and access routes; and their perceptions of the barriers, deterrents and disadvantages.

The findings are presented as a 'wish-list' for volunteering. 'Flexivol' summarises the essential requirements of 16-24 year olds, and serves as an acronym for the most important elements:

Flexibility
Legitimacy
Ease of access
Xperience
Incentives
Variety
Organisation
Laughs

The context

The context for young people's voluntary activity is rapidly changing, with the introduction of New Deal 'Welfare to Work' schemes in pilot areas and the imminent launch of Millennium Volunteers. Concern has been expressed by youth organisations about 'enforced volunteering' undermining the essence of free choice in voluntary work. The emphasis on the disaffection of young people and the potential role of voluntary work in promoting training for employment and citizenship has placed youth volunteering high on the policy agenda. Recent government initiatives have created unprecedented opportunities to expand youth volunteering.

Research evidence has grown rapidly in the last few years, indicating that many young

people, while disliking the term 'volunteering', believe in the value of voluntary work both for society and for themselves. Instrumental motivations to volunteer – to gain work experience, qualifications and skills – are increasingly prominent among the young. However, young people are keenly aware of barriers and obstacles to their involvement. Solutions have been proposed and this report endorses them, with fresh emphasis on key areas. Above all it argues for the principle of flexibility to accommodate the pressures which young people experience and the preferences which they express.

Flexivol

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. Volunteering suffers from out-dated associations with worthy philanthropy and conjures images that do not appeal to the young. However, it is recognised as potentially offering opportunities to young people which are scarcely available anywhere else. This study suggests, as do previous ones, that there is a vast pool of young people who could benefit from voluntary work. Many are on the edge of involvement, and many could do more than they already do, but certain conditions need to be met in order to achieve this. Changes are needed to raise levels of knowledge and awareness, to increase access routes and information and, once involved, to improve the quality and value of the volunteering experience.

The Flexivol wish-list

'Flexivol' summarises the essential requirements of 16-24 year olds.

Flexibility is given top priority by young people, particularly in respect of flexible work and working times for volunteering. The young have many pressures and demands on them and find it hard to make the time and commitment. They have a sizeable number of other outlets for their free time and volunteering has to compete with this. Much of their life is controlled by others and it is important to them to have an element of choice and spontaneity in volunteering.

Legitimacy is a widespread need. Better education from an early age about the full range of voluntary work and its significance, and more positive images, would make volunteering seem 'normal' and 'cool' to young people. Their view of volunteers is basically favourable but negative stereotypes persist. Peer pressure, particularly on boys, prevents many young people from getting involved for fear of being labelled as suckers or wimps.

Ease of access is a requirement that has been highlighted in several studies and access is still a barrier. Most of the young people in this research did not have much idea of

how to find out about volunteering opportunities. A major reason for not volunteering was simply that they didn't know how to go about it. More information, more encouragement and easy access points would help break down these entry barriers.

Experience is high on young people's wish-list for volunteering. They want relevant and interesting experiences which will stand them in good stead in their personal and career development. Volunteering needs to offer opportunities to learn new skills, to take on challenges, to explore different careers, and to get work experience. These instrumental motivations are not new, but are increasing rapidly among young people.

Incentives are important because of the competition for young people's time and attention. Inducements may be needed to help tip them into involvement, and once there certain rewards would sustain them. Most prominent is the incentive of tangible outcomes in the form of a reference or a qualification, to validate their experience and demonstrate their achievement to employers and others. In the absence of the main incentive for working - pay - the incentive of full payment of expenses would, at least, ensure that young people do not end up out-of-pocket.

Variety is an obvious and widely recognised requirement. Variety in types of work, issues and structures would accommodate the huge range of individual interests, goals, constraints and preferences among the younger generation. Variation should be offered in the amount of commitment, the level of responsibility and the type of activity in order to attract the widest possible range of young people.

Organisation of the volunteering needs to be efficient but informal, providing a relaxed environment in which young people feel welcome and valued. They would like some appreciation and the right kind of advice and support. They do not want to be over-organised and heavily supervised but to have people there who can support them when they need it, and help them progress when they are ready.

Laughs should not get left out of the picture because of young people's serious ambitions for self-development. Volunteering should be enjoyable, satisfying and fun. Since some of the competition for young people's time is from the attraction of a good time socially, it is a distinct bonus if volunteering also offers some laughs. While young people may not volunteer primarily for the social side, they are more likely to continue if they are enjoying themselves.

A strong consensus

Using young people's own words, the report shows that these are not unreasonable demands by a selfish generation, but practical preferences in the context of young people's lives. Their reasons are well thought out and represent sometimes difficult

choices as they negotiate their way through the pressures and freedoms of adolescence and early adulthood. Despite their varied backgrounds – and some variation in their views – the central messages are strong, with a substantial consensus on the eight Flexivol areas.

Marketing volunteering

To increase legitimacy and knowledge of volunteering opportunities, young people advocate much more widespread promotion and advertising, so that their generation encounters images of volunteering in many different settings. They recommend an educational and awareness-raising approach in schools, reinforced with personal talks and visits from representatives of organisations and young volunteers. This would familiarise young people from an early age with the varied world of volunteering and the opportunities available to them. It would also help expand understanding of the term 'volunteer' so that it becomes more acceptable to young people.

Although the personal touch in communication about volunteering is most strongly recommended, young people also see scope for using other media. Short television advertisements and 'fillers', and local radio features are most popular. The printed word, in youth magazines and comics, posters and leaflets is not as likely to attract young people's attention. Telephone helplines and the Internet get minority votes.

The message should concentrate on people's achievements and potential gains, as well as the fun side, to counter volunteering's traditional image of worthiness. If a sustained programme of awareness-raising were to be carried out, this would help legitimise volunteering for young people and remove or reduce the apparent stigma associated with it. In the words of an eighteen-year old volunteer, 'If a lot of people do it, then it looks normal, it's cool, because everyone's doing it'.

Strategies for change

The report posed the question: are young people losing interest in volunteering? The answer is a qualified 'no'. Young people have not given up on volunteering, but there is a raft of factors which affects their likelihood of becoming volunteers.

The overwhelming desire for flexibility in volunteering that was expressed by all types of young people suggests that organisations and government need to rethink volunteering in the light of the realities of young people's lives. Instead of presenting volunteering as a given into which young people should fit, we need to take the preferences and imperatives of young people's lives as the basis, and reshape volunteering to accommodate them.

Young people's recipe for improving the youth volunteering situation involves both short term and longer term strategies and action at a number of levels. Local and national voluntary organisations, statutory agencies and private companies, schools and colleges, need to examine their publicity, information, organisation and incentives, and adopt policies that encourage and support young people as volunteers. The government can play a guiding role by setting the policy framework and overseeing broader strategies to develop infrastructure for youth volunteering and in developing educational policies. It can also continue to allocate funds to youth volunteering development and shape national initiatives such as Millennium Volunteers in response to young people's preferences and priorities.

Most challenging for volunteering providers will be addressing the need for flexibility and putting in place options that accommodate it. Flexible volunteering may require more effort and resources to organise but if large numbers of people become involved then the advantages are obvious. Moreover, it is likely that a low-pressure, 'toe in the water' introduction to volunteering will translate into more committed involvement over time for many young people.

Methodology

Eight focus groups were held in March and April 1998 in London, the East Midlands and the West Midlands. The groups contained between six and ten people and captured variation by age, socio-economic status and experience of volunteering. All the groups were mixed by gender, and a number contained young people of African-Caribbean, Asian and other ethnicities.

A topic guide of questions was used in conjunction with five sets of 'cue cards'. Each index-sized card showed a statement or description, and the groups were asked to sort each set into three piles, denoting level of importance. The cards proved popular and achieved their goal of varying the pace of discussions and encouraging the young people's interest and participation. Thanks are expressed to all those who took part, and to people and organisations which helped set up groups.

In presenting verbatim quotations, the letters A, B, C and D are used to denote different participants responding in sequence, and the letter R denotes the Researcher.

1.1 The research

The 1997 National Survey of Volunteering (Davis Smith, 1998) has stirred up controversy with its finding of a 'sharp reduction in levels of participation by young people aged 18-24', down from 55 per cent in 1991 to 43 per cent. This fall 'has reversed almost all the growth which took place between 1981 and 1991 and participation is now down to its 1981 level'. Not only the percentage volunteering but also regularity and amount of time have fallen; young people 'were considerably less likely to be involved on a regular basis' and their input has reduced from an average of 2.7 hours in 1991 to less than one hour in 1997. Young people 'put by far the least amount of time into their voluntary work' compared to all the other age groups, whose input has increased, nearly doubling in some cases. In addition, they appear to have more negative views of volunteering than older age groups.

These findings have been challenged by some in the youth volunteering field, who stress that young people are participating at a high level. This research, funded by the Institute for Volunteering Research, set out to explore with a range of young people their understanding of voluntary work and their view of its relevance to them. Attention was focussed on the conditions and incentives which would attract them to voluntary work, and the best ways of publicising and marketing volunteering opportunities to young people. Topics covered in the discussions included the image of volunteers; their motivations for volunteering and the perceived benefits for young people; their views of the opportunities for them to volunteer, and the availability of information and access routes; their perceptions of the barriers, deterrents and disadvantages for young people in relation to volunteering.

The findings are presented as a 'wish-list' for volunteering. 'Flexivol' summarises the essential requirements of 16-24 year olds, and serves as an acronym for the most important elements:

Flexibility
Legitimacy
Ease of access
Xperience
Incentives
Variety
Organisation
Laughs

The report reviews these eight areas, discussing and illustrating the rationale for those choices through the words of the participants. This is followed by a summary of young people's recommendations on how to publicise and market volunteering to the younger

generation. Chapter 12 draws conclusions and suggests what needs to be done to respond to the findings of the research.

1.2 Methodology

Eight focus groups were held in three regions, with their composition designed to capture variation by age, socio-economic status and relation to volunteering. A topic guide and five sets of 'cue cards' were used to stimulate discussion. Full details of the methodology are shown in Appendix A. Appendix B presents the cue card categories showing their ranking by importance and average 'score' across the groups.

1.3 The context

The context for young people's voluntary activity is rapidly changing, with the introduction of New Deal 'Welfare to Work' schemes in pilot areas and the imminent launch of Millennium Volunteers. Concern has been expressed by youth organisations about 'enforced volunteering' undermining the essence of free choice in voluntary work. The emphasis on the disaffection of young people and the potential role of voluntary work in promoting training for employment and citizenship has placed youth volunteering high on the policy agenda. Government initiatives such as the Make a Difference Challenge Programme and the Youth Volunteer Development Programme have created unprecedented opportunities to expand youth volunteering.

Research has indicated that many young people, while disliking the term 'volunteering', believe in the value of voluntary work both for society and for themselves (Gaskin, Fenton and Vlaeminke, 1996; Roker and Player, 1997). Instrumental motivations to volunteer - to gain work experience, qualifications and skills - are increasingly prominent among the young. However, a significant minority are disinterested in volunteering and the remainder are keenly aware of barriers to their involvement (Foster and Fernandes, 1996; Gaskin et al., 1996; Fryer, 1997).

A number of studies in the early nineties highlighted disaffection felt by young people towards volunteering. They suggested that many young people regard voluntary work as being irrelevant to their lives. It was viewed as badly organised, boring, old-fashioned and expensive, and as being the preserve of white, middle-aged, middle class women with time on their hands (Volunteer Centre UK, 1990). The European Values Survey suggested that volunteering needed to 'improve its image' (Barker, Halman and Vloet, 1992). Young people have more freedom and are demanding much more from their lives, so unless volunteering can sell itself as a genuinely challenging activity, it will not appeal to new generations (Niyazi, 1996; Wilkinson and Mulgan, 1995).

More recent studies have seen increasing problems for young people in engaging with

voluntary work and a rising clamour for solutions to 'youth alienation'. But young people are caught in a difficult situation: 'teenagers are demonised in our society. We see them as feckless, troublesome, and economically dependent – not as contributors' (Sinclair, 1997). Young people are berated for their apparent lack of social concern, but everywhere encounter barriers to participation. Negative stereotypes, suspicion and even fear, coupled with pressures from many directions, have given them little room to manoeuvre. Young people may appear to have more freedom and opportunities and a more rewarding lifestyle than previous generations, but they 'cannot use this freedom creatively because they do not feel in control of their own destinies' (Niyazi, 1995).

The National Centre for Volunteering's 1995 study of barriers to volunteering identified five obstacles for young people: they are unaware of the benefits volunteering can bring them, it is seen as boring, it has a reputation for being badly organised – with poor management and support, it is seen as the preserve of white, middle aged, middle class females, and it is expensive and time-consuming (Niyazi, 1995). By examining case studies of good practice in organisational involvement of young volunteers, solutions were proposed.

Key strategies for breaking the deadlock between young people and volunteering have been identified as positive outreach and publicity, which takes the message in person into schools and youth and community centres (Niyazi, 1995; Greenwood, 1997); providing strong organisational frameworks with good support systems, variety, flexibility, recognition and progression (Niyazi, 1995; Fryer, 1997); and responding to the desire for volunteering to assist in personal and career development (Greenwood, 1997). These are now recognised as good practice, although not widely enough. A summary of reports produced within the Youth Volunteer Development Programme, which 'maps' youth volunteering in 41 areas of England, produces continuing evidence that prejudices and bad practices survive (Oldfield, 1998; Gaskin, 1998).

A recent publication on Millennium Volunteers, which summarises responses to the consultation document, highlights the most up-to-date thinking of a wide range of organisations and individuals in the youth volunteering field. It is seen as important that the programme 'not only raises the profile of volunteering but also carries images of volunteering which are relevant and meaningful to young people' (DfEE, 1998). Acknowledging that young people are less likely to volunteer for 'purely altruistic' reasons, emphasis is put on 'linking the voluntary activity to their own aspirations' and to mainstays of youth culture such as sport, music and fashion.

The document makes the strongest bid to date for the principle of flexibility in youth volunteering. This has been touched on, for example in Niyazi's review, where 'allowing young people to volunteer when and how suits them best' and over-recruiting a large pool of volunteers to accommodate problems of regular availability are identified as

good organisational practice (Niyazi, 1995). However, flexibility has now become so important that Millennium Volunteers considers adding it, as a result of consultation feedback, to its set of core principles for the whole programme.

Flexibility covers several dimensions: equal opportunities, enabling excluded (such as disabled and disaffected) young people to participate fully; time and input; type of activity 'to find the volunteering ifiti for their interests and lifestyle'; and degree of commitment, with proposals for trial periods and introductory offers (DfEE, 1998).

The principle of flexibility is finally being recognised as a vital element in the relationship between young people and volunteering. This report elevates it to the position of the fulcrum of the youth volunteering experience. By examining volunteering from the point of view of young people's lives, it strengthens the argument that certain key conditions are needed for volunteering to become popular amongst the young.

2.1 Reshaping 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. Volunteering suffers from out-dated associations with worthy philanthropy and conjures images that do not appeal to the young. However, it is recognised as potentially offering opportunities to young people which are scarcely available anywhere else. This study suggests, as do previous ones, that there is a vast pool of young people who could benefit from voluntary work. Many are on the edge of involvement, and many could do more than they already do, but certain conditions need to be met in order to achieve this. Changes are needed to raise levels of knowledge and awareness, to increase access routes and information and, once involved, to improve the quality and value of the volunteering experience.

2.2 The Flexivol wish-list

'Flexivol' summarises the essential requirements of 16-24 year olds.

Flexibility is given top priority by young people, particularly in respect of flexible work and working times for volunteering. The young have many pressures and demands on them and find it hard to make the time and commitment. They have a sizeable number of other outlets for their free time and volunteering has to compete with this. Much of their life is controlled by others and it is important to them to have an element of choice and spontaneity in volunteering.

Legitimacy is a widespread need. Better education from an early age about the full range of voluntary work and its significance, and more positive images, would make volunteering seem 'normal' and 'cool' to young people. Their view of volunteers is basically favourable but negative stereotypes persist. Peer pressure, particularly on boys, prevents many young people from getting involved for fear of being labelled as suckers or wimps.

Ease of access is a requirement that has been highlighted in several studies and access is still a barrier. Most of the young people in this research did not have much idea of how to find out about volunteering opportunities. A major reason for not volunteering was simply that they didn't know how to go about it. More information, more encouragement and easy access points would help break down these entry barriers.

Experience is high on young people's wish-list for volunteering. They want relevant and interesting experiences which will stand them in good stead in their personal and career development. Volunteering needs to offer opportunities to learn new skills, to take on challenges, to explore different careers, and to get work experience. These

instrumental motivations are not new, but are increasing rapidly among young people.

Incentives are important because of the competition for young people's time and attention. Inducements may be needed to help tip them into involvement, and once there certain rewards would sustain them. Most prominent is the incentive of tangible outcomes in the form of a reference or a qualification, to validate their experience and demonstrate their achievement to employers and others. In the absence of the main incentive for working – pay – the incentive of full payment of expenses would, at least, ensure that young volunteers do not end up out-of-pocket.

Variety is an obvious and widely recognised requirement. Variety in types of work, issues and structures would accommodate the huge range of individual interests, goals, constraints and preferences among the younger generation. Variation should be offered in the amount of commitment, the level of responsibility and the type of activity in order to attract the widest possible range of young people.

Organisation of the volunteering needs to be efficient but informal, providing a relaxed environment in which young people feel welcome and valued. They would like some appreciation and the right kind of advice and support. They do not want to be over-organised and heavily supervised but to have people there who can support them when they need it, and help them progress when they are ready.

Laughs should not get left out of the picture because of young people's serious ambitions for self-development. Volunteering should be enjoyable, satisfying and fun. Since some of the competition for young people's time is from the attraction of a good time socially, it is a distinct bonus if volunteering also offers some laughs. While young people may not volunteer primarily for the social side, they are more likely to continue if they are enjoying themselves.

2.3 A strong consensus

In the following sections, each of the eight dimensions of Flexivol are explained from young people's point of view. Using young people's own words and summarising the flow of the discussions, the detailed review aims to show that these are not unreasonable demands by a selfish generation, but practical preferences in the context of young people's lives. Their reasons are well thought out and represent sometimes difficult choices as they negotiate their way through the pressures and freedoms of adolescence and early adulthood. Despite their varied backgrounds – and some variation in their views – the central messages are strong, with a substantial consensus on the eight key points.

Flexibility is the top priority that young people identify in their requirements from volunteering. This is given even greater prominence than in previous research although, as noted, the results of the Millennium Volunteers consultation highlight its importance. 'Flexible work and working times' was selected as a top requirement by fifteen out of sixteen subgroups of young people, the highest priority accorded to any option (see Appendix B). Volunteering must therefore offer this latitude if it is to engage large numbers of young people.

3.1 The pressures on young people

The importance of flexibility rests on the pressures which young people experience. They articulated strongly the shortage of time and control over their lives. 'Not enough time' was a primary reason given by all the sixteen subgroups in identifying the factors preventing young people from volunteering. It scored the highest of any reason for not volunteering. The pressures on young people to study, do exams, go to college, work and earn money tend to dominate their time. The 16-19 year olds at school described this:

A: Some people have loads of work, like if you're doing three A-levels and you have family as well, you just don't have time to do volunteering.

B: Most people have Saturday jobs now as well.

C: And some people work all through the weekend, you've not got time to do everything. It would be too much for them, they wouldn't be able to cope.

(State school students)

A: We're expected to do a lot more in school now, we're expected to do more by our parents as well.

B: You've got a lot of pressure on you.

C: Don't have so much free time any more.

R: And you're very conscious of having to get a job?

B: Yes, definitely, it's competitive, you've got to do your best, get as far as you can, otherwise you're going to get nowhere and you don't want to go on the dole and end up needing help from other people! (State school students)

In the past ten, fifteen years, there's a lot more pressure on everybody to do well, because of the government, particularly my generation, you've got to be a mother, a daughter, you've got to have a career, and look after your kids as well. You can't do everything, but that's the message that the government, the past government, and I don't think this government is going to be much better, on how we should live in society. (Volunteer 16-19)

Many commented on the large number of other outlets and activities available to young

people and noted the increased availability of part-time work:

- A: There's more things for kids to do other than voluntary work, like computers, Internet, games systems.*
- B: I think we've become more materialistic and to get material things you need money. There are more kids going into part-time and evening work, especially at college.*
- C: And it's the economy, there is more part-time work about these days. Saturday jobs.*
- D: Even on Sunday, shops are open and you're just getting kids working there.*
- C: Having a part-time job gives you work experience and you get paid.*
(Non-volunteers 20-24)

It's hard enough to get money as it is at our age and to give away our time free is a big commitment. (State school student)

There is also youth culture, with its diversions, pressures and image:

Others are just too busy doing their own thing, going out having a good time.
(Volunteer 20-24)

There's more emphasis on kids having a certain look, certain clothes and games, so they want to have a job to pay for it. (Non-volunteer 20-24)

- A: There are so many other things to do.*
- B: Like clubbing, and ecstasy.*
- C: And drinking! (Non-volunteers 16-19)*

I think as we get older and have our own children, that's when we become more aware of problems and what we can do to help. Like our parents do now. But as young people, that's how it is, more carefree. (Employee)

For both employed and unemployed people, there is shortage of time and energy:

- A: All you want to do when you've been at work is take your shoes off and relax.*
- B: The workplace takes too much out of you these days, it leaves you drained, you haven't got any energy to do anything else. (Employees)*

- A: People have other commitments.*
- B: You really have to squeeze it (voluntary work) in. (Unemployed)*

3.2 The problem of commitment

The difficulty of making a regular commitment is a major fact of young people's lives. Many participants emphasised their desire not to be drawn into something to which they had to make a commitment. Both the younger volunteers and the older non-volunteers reflected on the lack of control which young people have over the disposition of their time:

There tends to be someone else in charge of what you're doing when you're young. Maybe when you're a bit older and in a job, you know when you're going to be home and when you'll be free each week. (Non-volunteer 20-24)

R: Is it hard for people your age to make a longterm commitment?

A: Yes. Young people's lives change so quickly, like going to college, going to university, starting a job.

R: So you can't predict and you don't have total control over what's going to happen?

A: Yes, that's right. (General agreement) (Volunteers 16-19)

For non-volunteers in their twenties:

A: You have to be mega organised, 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 really organised. It has to be something you're really passionate about, but also something that's easy to get involved in.

B: Or if it's something that you can just do once, like a one-off voluntary scheme, but not the same time every week, that's commitment again.

C: And if you have got free time, it's not until that free time comes that you realise you've got it so it's usually too late to do any voluntary work. The majority of things you have to organise in advance, and again it's really the commitment thing.

A: It's not that I don't want to volunteer, it's just that I'm not super-organised.

C: If it was something you could just drift in and out of, as and when you wanted, it would obviously be easier to fit around your busy schedule.

(Non-volunteers 20-24)

Some of the employed people had investigated volunteering:

A: I was going to join the Samaritans, but they wanted too much time, and by the time I get home from work, I wouldn't have enough time.

B: You can't always commit to a night per week (Employed)

Others emphasised the difficulty of making a commitment and felt it was better not to get involved if you couldn't be sure that you could see it through:

A: A one-off is fair enough. But if you're talking about giving up your weekends on a regular basis, that's not going to happen.

B: Yeh, you never know what you're doing from one week to the next, you'd rather go to the pub.

*C: You'd think, 'oh I've got to go on that silly thing tomorrow' and you think 'I'll blow it out'. And then you become less interested and then they'd fire you.
(Employed)*

R: Are young people worried they'll get tied in to something?

A: Yes, definitely.

B: It's more of a case that they might not like it.

C: And feel like they volunteered to do it, and these people need them and they don't want to say, I don't want to do this now, so they get themselves into something that's uncomfortable for them. (Non-volunteers 20-24)

Some felt strongly that organisations should accommodate young people's difficulty in making commitments and be grateful for the offer:

*I think if you're giving them something, then it's got to be flexible to suit you.
(Public school student)*

They shouldn't be so choosy when there's such a shortage of volunteers. Adverts are misleading, say they want volunteers, then have criteria... If you're volunteering to do it, they should be grateful for that time. It's better than nothing. There's got to be jobs that need doing that don't need training, like serving tea and coffee one afternoon.

(Employee who had been turned down by two organisations)

The younger volunteers reflected on the fact that those who are willing become over-committed and overloaded:

A: People who do it take on too much, they tend to take on more. People who volunteer usually take on the Guides, the Brownies, and people tend to put more on top of them, so it's hard for them to cope with it.

B: It's quite easy for other people who know you do voluntary work to use you. They think, oh I'll ask them, she does voluntary work, she'll do that. You get too much to do.

C: Another reason to keep it quiet! (Volunteers 16-19)

3.3 A preference for paid work

Underlying young people's feeling that they do not have the time to volunteer is the crucial point that young people would rather work for money than unpaid. 'Don't want to work for free' was given as a primary reason for not volunteering by thirteen out of sixteen subgroups, scoring second only to 'not enough time'. If young people have time to work, they will choose paid work if they can get it. Even more reason, then, that volunteering should aim to be as attractive as possible and to accommodate their need for flexibility.

It's about making time too. And most of the time they don't want to make time. They'd rather do something they get paid for. (Volunteer 20-24)

People can't afford to volunteer, they are forced to get a job, which then means they don't have time to volunteer. (Volunteer 20-24)

But while shortage of time is a genuine reason, a few participants admitted that it is sometimes used as an excuse:

I thought I didn't have time to volunteer when I had my own business, but looking back I did have time to volunteer... you can do it if you want to. (Volunteer 20-24)

But, yes, it is sometimes an excuse. (State school student)

There is no question that lack of time, both real and perceived, is a major deterrent to young people volunteering. The range of demands on them, the plethora of other activity options, a preference for paid work, the legitimate choice of a social life, their relative lack of power over their lives and the lack of control in making regular commitments, all pose major availability problems. Their preference for short-term or one-off opportunities, for taster sessions and 'introductory offers', casual involvement and scope for spontaneous volunteering suggest that the engagement of large numbers of young people in volunteering must be built on flexibility.

The preference of organisations for regular volunteering must be weighed against the advisability of engineering a more 'drop-in' approach to voluntary activity. There are strong possibilities that allowing a more informal and extemporaneous approach to involvement would yield dividends in engaging young people's interest on their terms and in many cases lead to longer term volunteering.

The mixed image of volunteering among young people has been recognised for some time. Research reveals a distinct ambivalence, with different degrees of emphasis on positive and negative associations. The young people in this study expressed a largely positive view of volunteering and volunteers, with residual stereotypes mixed into their perceptions. What did emerge strongly was the influence that peer perceptions have on many young people's willingness to consider voluntary work, and the desire for greater legitimacy for youth volunteering.

4.1 Views of volunteering

Young people have quite strong views on the value of voluntary work to society. In common with previous findings (Gaskin et al., 1996), young people thought it would be disastrous if fewer and fewer people volunteered: 'charities would decline ...the needy wouldn't get help ... people are going to go without' (non-volunteers 16-19).

A lot of places would be nowhere if it wasn't for voluntary workers.
(Unemployed)

A: Then you're going to have no-one helping, are you?

B: Then you'd get like an underclass, where all the people – the rich would get richer and the poor would get poorer. (State school students)

You're going to need more paid people and where's that going to come from?
(Employee)

Some commented on the cutback in government services creating even greater need for volunteers providing care in the community. Young people reject strongly the view that 'government should take care of these kinds of things' is a valid excuse for not volunteering. While younger non-volunteers thought that 'quite a few people of our age would say that', a large majority in the groups were quite clear that this was not a popular view among young people in general.

A: I don't think it would cross someone's mind that I won't volunteer for that because the government should be taking care of it. Quite odd if they do...

B: Most people want to help because the government's not doing anything. They respond more to the actual need. (Non-volunteers 20-24)

A: Government obviously aren't taking care of people, so we should help.

B: Yes, but everyone pays their taxes for the government to look after them, so they should do something about it.

C: But you can't not help them just because the government should be doing it. You've got to, haven't you? (State school students)

A: I think to be honest with you, a lot of young people nowadays just haven't got any hope in politics anyway.

B: Because you don't get your views seen. You can't go up to parliament and say 'why should I do all this?'

A: If charities don't do it, the government wouldn't pay anyway, so it just wouldn't get done. (Volunteers 16-19)

*I think everyone realises the need for it. They just don't want to do it.
(Non-volunteer 16-19)*

Many felt that government should do more, but could or should not take care of everything. Some of the older people agreed that it was important to allow scope for ordinary people to help as volunteers, and that this was part of a democratic society.

The giving of time through volunteering was valued more highly than donating money, which was seen as a way of salving conscience.

A: People who go and help are more valuable.

*B: When you've got to help the individual, time is more important than money.
(State school students)*

You get more satisfaction if you give your time. (Employee)

A: Putting 10p in a bucket is nothing to slogging hours of sweat...

B: I feel my time is worth more than money.

C: A lot of people who do give money do work voluntary as well, they want to do as much as they can for good causes.

*B: You can only put so much money in, you can give more with your time.
(Unemployed)*

A: I'd value time most, but it's easier to give money.

B: If you give money, you don't know where it's going really. Instead of just writing a cheque, putting time in is a lot more valuable. (Public school students)

Money could help:

At least if you give money, you're giving something. It's better than nothing at all. (Non-volunteer 16-19)

A: Money helps, but it depends what you're giving it for.

B: It just eases you conscience, giving your 50p once a year - I've done my bit!

C: There's a lot of needs out there and sticking 50p in a rattle box doesn't suffice.

D: It depends what work they do. Like cancer research, I'm not going to be much good in a lab, am I? But if I can go down and give an hour a week in a shop, then that I can do. (Volunteers 20-24)

Volunteering is seen as a valuable to the people and causes helped, to the individual doing it, and to communities and society. 'Don't believe in it' was strongly rejected by the groups as a common reason among young people for not volunteering.

4.2 Visions of volunteers

Asked to rank images of volunteers, the young people placed most emphasis on approved characteristics such as caring and altruistic motivations. 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. Young people are aware that all kinds of people volunteer, and dismissed quite strongly the notion of volunteers as predominantly white, female and middle class. Although some acknowledged that such people do volunteer, there was wide awareness of volunteering within working class and ethnic minority communities.

A: There are unsung heroes, not people who say 'I'm a volunteer' but people in each community who will do things, it's not so much highlighted, they just get on and don't think twice about it.

B: Those people are worth their weight in gold. (Employed)

The image of volunteers is not particularly youthful, and there is a consistent tendency to see them as older people. Half of the subgroups chose 'middle-aged and older people' as a top characteristic of volunteers, while only one (volunteers in their early twenties) prioritised young people as typical of volunteers.

There was widespread rejection of volunteers as 'do-gooders and busybodies', although a few felt that *some* volunteers fit this image. The notion that volunteers are people with 'too much' time on their hands was also cast aside by the majority; while some did agree that volunteers are people with time on their hands, they explicitly rejected the negative connotations of *too much* time. Some pointed out that do-gooding characteristics were not necessarily negative; you needed people like this to run things.

They are the people who get things done. (Unemployed)

A: It has to be a pretty active person to spend time like that.

B: I would think of my brownie guide as being a bit of a busybody, but they've got to be like that to get all the work done. (Non-volunteers 20-24)

Also strongly dismissed was the label 'incompetent amateurs'. On the contrary, many participants stressed that volunteers are often as competent as or *more* competent than paid workers. Most, upon reflection, had been on the receiving end of volunteers' work, in youth clubs, scouts and guides, sports and school activities, hospitals, fundraising events and challenges, and only an occasional negative comment was made. Typical are these views that volunteers' commitment and hard work can often outstrip those of paid staff:

A: *They can do just as good a job as someone getting paid, who may not be putting their heart in it.*

B: *You put your heart in it, if you're doing something for nothing, you've got to really want to do it. (Employees)*

A: *Sometimes they can be better than paid people.*

B: *Volunteers do it from the heart as well.*

A: *Paid people are doing it because they're paid. (Volunteers 20-24)*

A: *They are very positive, people see them in a positive light.*

B: *It never seemed to me that my scout leader was a volunteer.*

C: *Maybe because they're very passionate.*

A: *They are usually very professional about it.*

B: *It's not like 'oh we're just volunteering so we've got an excuse if things go wrong'. (Non-volunteers 20-24)*

A: *If they care enough to volunteer, then they will be (as competent).*

B: *If they're willing to do it for free, without being paid, the hard work's there already, isn't it. (Volunteers 16-19)*

A: *They're not doing it for the money, but because they want to do it. So they're not forced to do anything they don't want to. Enthusiasm is more the incentive.*

B: *A lot of them get satisfaction from knowing they've helped people, don't they?*

C: *If it's something you believe in, if you feel strongly about something, you're going to want to do it properly, aren't you? But if you're just in it because that's my job, then you might not feel strongly about it, you're just doing it for the sake of it. (State school students)*

A few niggles came up:

A: *Sometimes you get them saying we're doing this voluntarily, you shouldn't take this for granted. We don't have to be here.*

B: *You get that a lot at youth clubs, I think. (State school students)*

All these adults get very stroppy if you don't win! (State school student on volunteers organising charity football tournaments)

4.3 The image problem

Young people show clear recognition of the benefits of voluntary work. It enables them to help people and causes and to follow interests derived from a personal connection or commitment to a particular issue. Combined with these benefits are instrumental advantages: getting work experience, training, a reference or a qualification; exploring career options; learning new skills; broadening their experience of life. All of these are highlighted by young people.

However, the legitimacy of voluntary work continues to be problematic from an image point of view. Ten of the sixteen subgroups prioritised the statement 'their friends don't think it's cool' as a reason for young people not volunteering. Also endorsed was the view that 'volunteering is for wimps and goody goodies'. In discussion, the participants felt that this peer pressure operates more strongly at a younger age and more so on boys and young men, though a few maintained that girls are equally pressured.

A: It's important at a younger age because you're trying to get in with the right groups and you're trying to impress your friends, aren't you?

B: There is a bit more pressure on boys. It seems alright for girls to do it, but if boys do it, it seems...

C: At a younger age there would be, yeh (more pressure on boys) but as you get older, not really. (State school students)

Their friends might see it as sad if they volunteer. (Non-volunteers 20-24)

Boys would get it worse, people would say: 'It's not cool - what are you doing...?' (Non-volunteers 16-19)

A: You shouldn't really think about what people think of you.

B: Yes, but I don't think we go to school or college bragging about what we do.
(Laughter)

C: A lot of people I know at college, they won't tell anybody because they're embarrassed that they do it. ... you don't go in and shout, guess what I did - a team shout the other day!

B: Just not the done thing, I think. (Volunteers 16-19)

A: It's like 'Do you want to come and do some voluntary work?' Leave off!

B: I've got a reputation to uphold. If my mates see me down there!

A: Peer pressure, definitely.

C: It is more for boys. If there's a group of jack the lad type of blokes, 17, 18, he's going to get it in the neck. Whereas girls can get away with it.

A: If my brother came home, he's 23, and said he was going to do charity work, I'd be hysterical. I'd take the mickey out of him. Even my mum would. They'd rib him. (Employees)

Their friends will say, nobody's paying you, you sucker. And they'll get ribbed for it. ... I work with youth, young girls about 18 years old, and you can see the pressure on them as teenagers to be cool, into the crowd. ... It's got to be the same for lads as well. (Volunteer 20-24)

People look at me and don't think I do voluntary work. You're not the obvious person – people who do voluntary work don't have piercings. It's 'nice' people who do things like that. I get a lot of that. (Female volunteer 20-24)

You tend to see a lot more women doing it than men. There's a lot of men that want to do it, but they don't feel they can. It's the image, not the right thing to do. (Volunteers 16-19)

Two of the young women volunteers described their embarrassment at being nominated for a school award for their outside community care volunteering: 'Me and Sarah were going - oh no don't write a letter', but in the end 'it was lovely really - really nice to have in your Records of Achievement'. They had feared the reaction from their peers, but it hadn't really materialised. Similarly, a male member of this group had started in the youth club with three other boys and said that they hadn't been given any 'flak' for doing so.

Some pointed out that the image for young men would be affected by the type of work:

It depends what the work is, because you could go into a charity shop, but you could help a sports club and that would be OK. (Volunteer 16-19)

The public school students all did the cadet corps (CCF) or community service (CS) in the first year of the sixth form. Of the community service option, one boy said:

A: It's definitely a girl thing.

B: Some blokes did it, but are more likely get called wimpy by other blokes.

(Male public school students)

These students reported pressure not just from peers but from teachers to follow gender-specific routes:

A: The Housemaster makes boys do CCF, there's no choice.

B: I think a lot of blokes would prefer to do CS, but a lot of the housemasters prefer them to do CCF. A: They think it shows more leadership skills. But CS does as well. (Public school students)

One boy would like the option and saw potential for a different peer influence:

*You might be swayed, if your best mates are into it, it's a good laugh.
(Male public school student)*

4.4 Improving the image

A number of the young people clearly wished for this real or imagined peer pressure to be lifted so that they could choose freely what they wanted to do. There was a genuine desire for greater legitimacy for voluntary work and a number of ways were suggested in which the profile and reputation of volunteering could be raised. Volunteering is not sufficiently visible, nor positive enough in its images. Young people do not grow up with a firm sense of the mass and variety of voluntary work in society and in their communities. A sustained programme of awareness-raising would help legitimise volunteering for young people, removing any stigma to their participation:

If a lot a people do it, then it looks normal, it's cool, because everyone's doing it. (Volunteer 16-19)

Strategies for increasing legitimacy are discussed in Section 11 which summarises young people's ideas on how better to 'market' volunteering to the younger generation.

Closely linked with legitimising volunteering through much wider publicity is the need to provide information and access routes for individuals to get involved. In common with previous studies, this research highlights the problem of finding a way in. 'Not knowing how to go about it' was highly prioritised by the groups among the reasons for not volunteering, particularly by those in their twenties. If it isn't easy, a number of participants pointed out, young people will be put off.

5.1 Finding information

Few young people knew how they would start to find out about voluntary opportunities. When pressed as to where they might go, they presented a limited range of sources of information, mainly telephone directory listings. Careers offices and advisors were, through experience, thought to be poor providers of information.

A: It's off-putting if it's not obvious. If you're interested, but you have to make a really big effort, start ringing around and things like that, then it's off-putting.

B: If it's more open and advertised, it's more of an incentive and an attraction, than if you've got an idea and you've got to seek it out.

C: Even if they have got careers libraries, the voluntary sections aren't up to date or don't exist. There isn't enough information available.

(Non-volunteers 20-24)

R: Where would you go to find out?

A: Look in the phone book.

R: What about the careers office? (Laughter)

B: He just repeats what you tell him.

C: He does try, but if you don't know what you want, he can't help you really.

(State school students)

For the volunteers, they agreed that in general they had just 'fallen into' volunteering, through pursuing an interest such as youth club or through a chance encounter:

I found out through a friend, before that I wanted to go into youth work, but I didn't know how to go about it, where to go. It just happened that I ran into a friend who knew. (Volunteer 20-24)

As a result of being a volunteer, some now had a much better idea of how to go about finding out about volunteering, mentioning church, the library and the local association of youth clubs to which they belonged:

A: I'd ask Association staff.

- B: It would be easy if it was an organisation.*
C: Go to youth clubs nearby, they would probably have the information to get you started.
D: The library, the phone book.
B: It would be nice to have a database of local opportunities in the library.
 (Volunteers 16-19)

Groups disagreed amongst themselves on the ease of finding information:

- A: I think it's quite easy. Ask the operator or something.*
B: Charity work is easy, but to do other voluntary work, it isn't.
C: It isn't advertised enough.
A: Their numbers are in the phone book.
C: But if you don't know the names of the organisation, where do you start?
 (Non-volunteers 16-19)

- A: Just go round to the church and find out.*
B: It's easy to find voluntary work, anyone can.
C: It depends how dedicated you are. (Public school students)

Young people would like to see 'special places or a person that people can go to to find out' (volunteer 20-24) and improved provision of information in careers offices, libraries, the employment office and youth clubs. A volunteer youth worker emphasised why information is so important:

I think there should be more information available because there's lots of options out there for people and they miss out on them because they don't know about them. Any chance to do anything that's even vaguely connected to what you want to do, I think it's great. (Volunteer 20-24)

5.2 Gaining access to organisations

As shown in previous research, young people are aware of barriers to their access to voluntary opportunities (Niyazi, 1995; Gaskin, Vlaeminke and Fenton, 1996). Part of this relates to lack of information and publicity about opportunities, but part is due to organisations' views and policies. Some mention was made of lower age limits, and of barriers to particular types of work because of levels of responsibility and confidentiality.

A lot of organisations put an age limit on what sort of volunteers they'll take. They won't take you unless you're 18 or over because you can't be trusted if you're not. So what's that saying to a person before they even go there? (Unemployed)

At this age, there's too many barriers in hospitals, like confidentiality. You're held back by things like that. If you wanted to get into a career, it would be too late to do that. (Volunteer 16-19)

There's less people working voluntary in hospitals for the simple reason that I believe they want more qualified people working in hospitals. (Volunteer 20-24)

A few participants recounted experiences in which they had been treated badly by voluntary organisations, largely because they were young. They had found things badly organised, they had been given menial work and had not been given adequate support.

When I was younger, I went to a local youth club to help out with the younger ones, and I was just told what to do all the time and treated like a skivvy, and I never went back. (Volunteer 16-19)

The view was widespread that young people have a bad reputation and that organisations are wary of involving them.

We do care. But when you go to help someone, say an old lady drops her shopping and you go to help and she thinks you're going to steal it and you're only going to help – it's just the way, I don't know, that people think about young people. But we're not all like that. (State school student)

People in the community look down on young people and see them as muggers and thugs, and they're not at all. (Volunteer 16-19)

Young people are deeply unhappy with this negative image and feel it underlies some of the resistance on the part of organisations to welcoming them to voluntary work.

I don't think voluntary organisations make it easy for (young) people to join, they make it hard. (Employee)

5.3 Gatekeepers to volunteering

Most of the young people in the study had done some volunteering. They had got into it mainly through school, some through the church, and some by attending youth clubs. For the majority, they had started doing something they wanted to do and almost by accident found themselves as 'volunteers'. A number of the teenage volunteers had started through church youth clubs and commented of these religious origins:

It's easy access – you're more encouraged in that direction. (Volunteer 16-19).

Indeed they saw the decline in church-going as a factor in the general decline in volunteering:

A lot less people go to church these days. You'd be more likely to get involved.
(Volunteer 16-19)

School-supported volunteering was quite random, except for the public school students who did community service. A number of participants felt that schools and colleges could do more to organise and provide access to voluntary work.

I think they should make it compulsory in all schools, all your basic social services stuff done, get charities sorted out. (Public school student)

On college courses, they never say 'you could do a little bit of voluntary work'.
(Volunteer 20-24)

Experience of youth award schemes was fairly limited. Quite a few had taken part in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme, but there was a general perception that this was highly structured, requiring a lot of commitment, and a somewhat elitist programme:

A: You can't do things in less than six months or a year.

B: I came across Duke of Edinburgh, but it was too much commitment.

C: Too much time to take up. (Non-volunteers 20-24)

I think it's definitely in public schools like this. I went to a state school until last year, and there was no such thing. Definitely a generalisation, but largely public school. (Public school student)

At least those still in school or at youth clubs have some access to careers advisors, youth workers or mentors. The people in their twenties felt they had very little idea of how someone unattached to an institution would find gatekeepers to volunteering. None mentioned the use of volunteer bureaux, nor employee volunteering programmes. One non-volunteer at university had gone to the careers library and found no voluntary section; in fact:

The reason I came here actually is that I thought this was about how to get involved in voluntary work. That's why I originally came along. I would like to get involved in it, but I don't know how to go about it. (Non-volunteer 20-24)

Both the non-volunteers and employed people in their twenties asked for information about volunteering, and the researcher supplied details of contact organisations and helpline numbers.

In summary, young people feel that it is not made easy for them to gain access to the full range of volunteering opportunities. They want readily available information, clear routes in, more gatekeepers who can help them to get involved, and a greater willingness on the part of organisations and schemes to embrace equal opportunities for young people.

6 Experience

Experience is high on young people's wish-list for volunteering. They want relevant and interesting experiences which will stand them in good stead in their development, both personal and professional. Most want both challenging experiences that will help them discover what they are capable of and practical experience relevant to future employment.

6.1 Work-related experience

Young people's reasons for doing voluntary work give high priority to a raft of experience-related factors: to get work experience or a qualification; to learn new skills; to find out about career options; and to broaden their experience of life.

Most young people are doing voluntary work because they need it to pass a course, or because it looks good on job applications. They do it to get jobs. They say you need experience, so you do it to get the experience. (Unemployed)

A: A lot of young people do volunteer.

B: Because they can't get the jobs.

C: It's a way of getting a foot in the door. (Volunteers 20-24)

This strongly instrumental orientation echoes recent research findings, but young people's perception of these advantages appear to be increasingly quite rapidly.

A: I think it's because now everything is so competitive to get into. Like now, everyone is starting to fill in their UCAS forms and think 'what am I going to put down?' (Volunteer 16-19)

One employee who had been on a youth employment scheme described it as 'very enjoyable' and productive for him in that it led into a paid job:

It was very good, we done teamwork together, we went and done computer courses, we had all these good ideas, and it made you feel better, it was all there. I was a trainee, and I had this job within a year. We had some fun but we learned a lot. (Employee)

Others discussed the value of work experience and its impact on potential employers:

A: It gave me a chance to check it out. It's pretty important to learn a wide range of skills. It all does help on your CV, when you go for a job.

B: Your employer's going to look at you differently. (Employees)

A: It shows you make an effort.

B: It shows you do things, not to get something out of it.

C: It shows another dimension to you.

A: As an individual, that you're different, that you use your initiative.

(Volunteers 16-19)

There is some difference between the more 'privileged' young people who expect to go onto college and university and from there into jobs, and those without those prospects. While all emphasised the value of experience to help them in their careers, for the former group voluntary experience was another string to their bow, to help distinguish them in a competitive application situation. For the latter, the voluntary experience could be a lifeline. A currently unemployed woman who was going to university to study youth and community work, reflected on the huge benefits of her experience as a volunteer:

Voluntary work is good, it's got me far in what I wanted to do, it's got me job offers that I never thought it would do. I never intended going to university, but voluntary work got me there... I never knew what career I wanted to go into until I started voluntary work, and I felt comfortable in it, I like doing this. If you go into voluntary work and find this isn't what I really want to do, then you can change and go into a different career. (Unemployed)

6.2 Personal development

Volunteering has long been noted as a way of developing confidence, personal abilities and awareness. The experience of teamwork, decision-making, interpersonal skills, communication, and dealing with different kinds of people all enhance young people's personal development, quite apart from work-related gains. These benefits were discussed – and displayed – by the volunteers and recognised by those in other groups.

When you're young and you're volunteering, you get certain skills, certain parts of your personality, certain traits come out, and it makes a difference to how you grow and how you become an adult. It has for me, anyway. ... Having to help somebody else, it takes a lot. And if you never have to do that in your life, surely you'll grow up to be a different person? (Volunteer 20-24)

She added:

And thinking that other young people won't have that, they're missing out on something. (Volunteer 20-24)

A more privileged young person recognised the value of voluntary work in increasing awareness of the lives of other people:

A: I like going (on community service) but it's quite tiring.

B: It's quite worthwhile.

C: It's good that they make us do it, because people who come here are quite well off, they just think they don't care about other people. So it's good that they make us do it. (Public school students)

One current non-volunteer discovered his voluntary past and felt he had gained a great deal from 'just helping out':

Coming across it now, the way we've given so many examples of what voluntary work is, yeh, I think I could fit into some informal community work that I wouldn't have classed as voluntary work at all. I just thought I was helping out, cleaning up! Thinking about it, I enjoyed it, it was a good experience, I'd do it again. It was very satisfying, rewarding.

(Non-volunteer 20-24)

As noted, most of the young people had done some voluntary work. This included helping with young children in school, helping in primary schools, mentoring; school projects such as drama clubs and the school magazine; sponsored fundraising events; work experience and work-shadowing; Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme; youth work, church groups; community service, which included visiting elderly people and organising day trips and activity days for younger children, and CCF; helping with playschemes and creches, and at a centre for homeless people; environmental work for the National Trust, national parks and BTCV; helping with community activities or local campaigns.

The vast majority had enjoyed the experience, some still did it, and most said they expected to do voluntary work at a future point, as and when it fitted into their lives. However, a significant minority had had a bad experience in volunteering.

6.3 Bad experiences

Sometimes the volunteering experience is not a good one. School students doing community service had found it could be upsetting or frustrating:

A: Someone in my house was working with disabled children, and just couldn't handle that.

B: I can imagine that at my youth club. Some of the kids are right little shits, so to speak. And you just get fed up of handling kids that are too much trouble.

C: Sometimes I don't really feel it's worth it with the grannies, because you've been going there a year and they say 'who are you?' Some of them are quite demented, it's quite sad, but if they don't even know who you are after a year... (Public school students)

Not everyone had enjoyed doing the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and some had felt pressured into it:

It's horrible - but it was good to have done it. I was quite glad I'd done it.
(Public school student)

'Service' is part of it, it makes it look like a big challenge, I mean to do an expedition, that's massive. ... You should do it because you want to do it, not because someone said you must do this. I felt by the end of it I wanted to get out of it. You feel guilty for not finishing it, but I wanted to get out.
(Volunteer 16-19)

Work experience volunteering could also be negative. One employee had wanted to be a nurse and volunteered at school among elderly people in hospital. This had enabled her to check out the career and decide it was not for her:

It put me off. It was really upsetting, one day they were there and the next they were gone. (Employee)

There is the danger that ill-thought out voluntary placements can produce off-putting experiences. Two unemployed young men recalled that they had not found their work experience placements useful, largely because they were allocated to placements which didn't interest them. One commented that he 'had to work in the cold' and was used as a 'doormat' by the employer, adding:

It's a shame, because you're carrying that experience along with you, that you tried it and didn't like it, so you think I won't do it again. You are sent along to this place, it's not where you wanted to go. (Unemployed)

Placements were allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis and this had coloured his perception of voluntary work, because he had felt forced to do something that he didn't like. The off-putting effect of a bad volunteering experience points to the importance of making it as positive as possible. 'Tried it and didn't like it' was given quite high priority among reasons for young people not volunteering, and every group had tales of a friend, or a friend of a friend, to add to the mythology of 'bad news volunteering'.

Most of the young people in the research had found voluntary work to be a good experience. Their activities included helping with young children in school, helping in primary schools, mentoring; school projects such as drama clubs and the school magazine; sponsored fundraising events; work experience and work-shadowing; Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme; youth work, church groups; community service and CCF; helping with playschemes and creches, and at a centre for homeless people;

environmental work for the National Trust, national parks and BTCV; helping with community activities or local campaigns.

The vast majority had enjoyed the experience and gained from it. Most said they expected to do voluntary work at a future point, as and when it fitted into their lives, if they felt it would be sufficiently rewarding – and if they could find out about it!

A: There's no point in doing it if you don't get something out of it.

B: That would be really boring. (Public school students)

Voluntary work can provide valuable experience, satisfaction and enjoyment, but these may not be sufficient – or sufficiently well-publicised – to attract young people in large numbers. Volunteering needs to offer real incentives to compete with the other demands on their time and attention. Partly this may mean formalising the gains, such as validating their training and experience, and partly it may require more variety and better organisation of volunteering. Improved publicity of the benefits and opportunities that volunteering offers would also increase incentives to volunteer, and there is scope for small incentives to catch their attention and get them involved initially.

7.1 Work-related incentives

Most prominent is the incentive 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, or a reference or qualification' was prioritised by fourteen of the sixteen subgroups in the study and came second only to flexibility in their ideal volunteering conditions. One non-volunteer commented on getting a reference:

That's good, really good. If I worked for a charity, I'd hope to get a reference. I'd ask for one. It's worthwhile having. (Non-volunteer 16-19)

The importance of instrumental reasons for young people has been discussed at some length, but to maximise these benefits organisations and schemes need to provide a framework for certifying or accrediting their achievements.

If you knew you'd get good training and something that proved you'd done a good job, it would be a big plus. (State school student)

The training or qualification should be built into the voluntary work, providing recognition of what was done. It should not necessarily involve extra work, and there was some concern expressed about this.

It would be nice – except taking a qualification, it might mean extra work, that's the only thing. (Volunteer 16-19).

The full incentive of work-related experience and accreditation is only achieved if it is recognised by those who matter. The non-volunteers in their twenties argued for:

Raising its esteem amongst employers. Make voluntary work look more

impressive than a part-time job at Safeways. Which might mean skills development involved in voluntary work, that it'll make you more rounded, that you get a lot of different skills, rather than just putting tins on shelves.
(Non-volunteer 20-24)

Incentives might start with initial involvement. One non-volunteer suggested that after a talk in school assembly:

Say 'if you're interested, stay behind afterwards'. Give people some incentive too, say 'you'll miss the start of the first lesson'. Give them some sort of incentive. (Non-volunteer 20-24)

An employee thought working young people would need an incentive to volunteer:

You wouldn't get (young people) to give up their weekends. You might get them to do it if they get a day off work, but not otherwise! (Employee)

Many agreed that a modest inducement – missing a lesson or some work, free refreshments, a small free gift – might encourage young people to go along to an introductory session and take the first step into volunteering. Once there, offering interesting, exciting and challenging activities should take over as the main incentive.

7.2 Payment as an incentive

Perhaps surprisingly, the suggestion that voluntary work might be paid was not seized on by the young people. While they admitted that a strong deterrent to doing voluntary work was that they would rather do paid work, most recognised the inherent contradiction of payment for volunteering. Travel and other essential expenses were another matter, and they were firm that they should not be out of pocket. Their attitude towards payment was based largely on the view that voluntary work would or could not pay a full wage rate. The notion of being paid was greeted with 'Then it isn't voluntary work, is it?' by many participants.

It makes it more like a job, and people will turn round and say well, if they're going to pay me this much, I can go elsewhere and get paid twice as much.
(State school student)

Paying a wage defeats the object totally. There would be people who would refuse to take the money. But yes, they should cover your expenses, your costs, so you're not out of pocket. (Employee)

The non-volunteers in their twenties thought that a modest wage would make

volunteering 'more appealing', noting that 'some charity shops do pay £40 per week, to cover your basic costs'. The public school students felt that being offered a small wage would be welcome, but more as a tangible acknowledgement of the efforts they put in:

A: Any payment would make a difference.

B: It's, like, some feedback.

R: Recognising the value of what you're doing?

B: Yes, that's right. (Public school students)

Volunteers were concerned that payment would change volunteering:

It might pull in people for the wrong reasons. (General agreement) Just the thanks or, like, an award scheme, is just as important. (Volunteer 16-19)

As well as travel and out of pocket expenses, the young volunteers suggested that some money could be made available to volunteers:

A: If there was resourcing money, it would make it a lot better.

(General agreement)

B: Not like a wage, though.

A: Money that doesn't necessarily go to the volunteer, but gives funds to help them do what they are doing. That would be a different matter.

(Volunteers 16-19)

Schemes which give money-saving offers to young volunteers might also provide an incentive to young people 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.

A number of young people mentioned the disincentive of rules regarding volunteering while in receipt of state benefits. They claimed that benefit offices can stop payment because of the 'availability for work' rule and felt that this restricts young people in making a commitment to voluntary work. They would like to see these rules and practices changed so that the benefit system provides incentives to volunteer or at least removes the disincentives.

7.3 The 'altruistic' incentive

It is wrong to give the impression that young people are entirely self-seeking in their interest in volunteering. Idealistic and altruistic motivations were both recognised and owned by participants. Their characterisation of volunteers put the strongest emphasis on caring, helping motivations, and their own reasons for volunteering placed 'to help

people and causes' second in priority, with thirteen of sixteen subgroups nominating it as a top reason.

This inbuilt incentive is of importance to young people. They decided that 'helping change things in society' was perhaps too grand a phrase for volunteers, and that the scope should be reduced down to something more individual and local.

A: It does make a change.

B: Even if it's a slight change, it's a change.

A: It's more about changing people's lives than making a change in the whole society. (Employees)

A: They wouldn't be doing it if they didn't want to change things.

B: Yeh, but they're not thinking about society in general, are they? They're thinking about one particular cause.

C: A little bit of help will make a little bit of difference, though, because that's one less person that needs help. (State school students)

'Help change things in your community' is nearer the mark. If you help one person in the neighbourhood, that is in a way helping to change things in society. (Non-volunteer 16-19)

A: I think it can (change things in society), like if you're working with younger people in youth work.

B: Yes, like with youth work, we run a youth club, we had five kids coming in and now we have 58 kids. And it helps get them off the street. (Volunteers 16-19)

A: It makes a little impact but does it really change society?

B: I think a lot of people do it to try and make a change, whether they end up doing so or not, at least they try.

C: To help change things in society implies you're making a huge change, but you could interpret it as making a minor change. If it didn't say 'society' I would be tempted to move it higher up (in the priority list).

A: I think of society as being quite local.

C: If it said 'community' I'd put it higher up.

A: You can help change one aspect of society. (Non-volunteers 20-24)

A: If more people volunteered, the attitude 'what's in it for me?' would go away. People wouldn't be so self-centred.

B: It generates more of a community feeling - you help them, they help you. (Volunteer 20-24)

An unemployed volunteer in his early twenties summed up the combination of instrumental and altruistic motivations:

I'm doing this to help myself. It's a bonus to help others just now. But at the end of the day I'm Number One. (Volunteer 20-24)

Young people rejected strongly the view that they do not care and lack social responsibility. On the contrary, they believe strongly in causes and wish to make a difference. Those providing volunteering opportunities need to recognise this idealistic streak and provide plenty of scope for its fulfilment, probably without stressing its worthiness too much. Emphasising the potential difference to the local community or on important single issues is likely to find more resonance with young people than grand appeals to social conscience. Matching young people's interests and passions to opportunities for productive work and for self-advancement is the challenge for volunteering providers.

This unemployed participant perceptively reviewed young people's alleged indifference and the powerlessness they can feel:

It's not that young people don't care. They are put in that position in society. You've got no responsibility, no say in what happens, so there's this problem, they say 'you can't solve it, you're too young for that'. (Unemployed)

The construction of incentives needs to respond to the priorities that young people have in their lives. It should also acknowledge that many activities are laying claim to their attention, and that for volunteering to compete it should be prepared to offer some incentives in the form of inducements, rewards and empowerment.

Variety is a fairly obvious requirement for young people's volunteering. Each individual has his or her own combination of interests, goals, constraints and priorities.

Volunteering must offer opportunities across the spectrum of issues, types of work and structures to accommodate the huge range of individual preferences among the younger generation.

8.1 Form and structure

In terms of form and structure, flexibility has been identified as a major requirement for young people's volunteering. A much wider range of flexible and opportunistic volunteering needs to be offered, alongside more committed volunteering, and in conjunction with opportunities that enable the casual volunteer to consolidate his or her interest into something more long-term.

Volunteering needs to offer a spectrum of involvement: from one-off projects to longer-term work, from low-commitment opportunities to serious engagement, from individual opportunities to group activities, from structured placements to self-organising youth projects. Wider variety is more likely to tempt many young people into volunteering who fear commitment or who have difficulty organising their lives.

Volunteering providers may need to look at the times at which they offer volunteering and match this more appropriately with young people's availability. Evening or weekend volunteering may suit people at college or in employment, while late afternoon sessions may be more appealing to school students, avoiding the necessity of finding transport or being out alone in the evenings.

8.2 The field of work

Variety should also be available in the range of areas that young people can work in. They perceive many fields of work as cut off from them, because of suspicions about their temperament or character and mistrust of their sense of responsibility. Young people feel that the primary reason to do voluntary work is a personal connection with the cause. They describe this as something they have encountered in their family lives or among their friends, something they believe in or something which they want to do in their future jobs. This diversity generates a huge range of potential interests and it is essential that volunteering accommodates this.

This older volunteer pinpointed the link between people's lives and volunteering:

I think people are interested in themselves, what they can get out of it... And I think people aren't thinking about it because it's got nothing at all to do with them. They say they don't have the time, but if something happened to someone

in their family and they had to go to hospital and the hospital needed more money, then you'd see them, they'd be out on the streets collecting money. But it's not until it comes to their doorstep that they do something.
(Volunteer 20-24)

Others felt that everyone has family experiences and personal interests and if there were accessible voluntary channels through which to pursue these, they would not need such a dramatic stimulus to get involved.

Providers should recognise the expertise that even a young person can bring to volunteering because of personal experience:

If you know someone who suffers from mental illness, you'd know how to deal with it as a child, as a young adult, more than somebody who's a liberal-minded - again, that middle-class do-gooder - who hasn't got an idea and doesn't have the experience. I sometimes think the prejudice has shifted the other way, they look at your age, at your background and think 'what can you know at seventeen?' I don't think they make enough time to actually listen and hear the skills that you've got. (Employed)

While some young people want to do more 'traditional' volunteering with younger children or elderly people, others are more interested in hands-on environmental work, arts and media projects, outdoor pursuits, or sports. Young people 'go for the excitement of daring events which add to their experience and offer personal goals, such as mountaineering, trekking, bungee-jumping and fun-runs' (Ball, 1998). An older non-volunteer admitted almost shamefacedly that he had once volunteered for the personal challenge, and had to be reassured that this was perfectly acceptable:

I volunteered, but it was an ulterior motive. It was an expedition to Arctic Norway. So I did it, I volunteered, but I did it because I was getting something out of it. (Non-volunteer 20-24)

Volunteering must offer opportunities at the 'hard' end of the spectrum, particularly if it is to attract young men or those deterred by the 'soft' image of volunteers. The Prince's Trust, for example, finds individuals placements in football clubs, sports shops and vehicle mechanics, as well as the fire brigade, the police and the army, city farms and computers (Vincent, Gaskin and Unell, 1998). A concerted effort to expand these opportunities and make them more widely available would increase the potential appeal of voluntary work to a sizeable range of young people.

8.3 The type of work

Volunteering should offer a wide range of types of work, with varying levels of responsibility. There were significant differences among the participants in the amount of responsibility they wanted. Those with large amounts of responsibility and pressure, in terms of school work, exams, college courses, were less keen than those who wanted to prove their abilities and with fewer channels in which to do so, such as the older unemployed people. Some of the younger people were keener on being given responsibility, and people who were already volunteering also wanted opportunities to be responsible.

For the non-volunteers in their twenties:

A: Responsibility is a bit off-putting if you're not getting paid for it.

B: I guess it [the cue card] does say 'some' responsibility. I saw 'responsibility' and just panicked!

C: It's pressure.

A: I think if you're doing something voluntary you want simple tasks that you can go and do. I think if it involves planning to do something and taking responsibility, I see that as not what you got into it for.

B: I think teenagers want it more, something to show off - 'I did this'. More incentive to do something. (Non-volunteers 20-24)

Public school students felt they would prefer not to be loaded with responsibility:

A: I'd want to be part of a team, but not run it.

B: I would rather not have responsibility if it's just as a volunteer.

C: We have lots of responsibility because we have to organise a dinner (for their community service project) and we have to do everything. It's good in some respects, but it gets a bit tiring. (Public school students)

A state school student thought the opportunity to show initiative 'would be nice - just to use your brain' but the group distinguished using their initiative from carrying lots of responsibility.

The young volunteers felt that instant responsibility would be daunting, and that volunteering needed to build in progression in that direction:

A: I think it develops in time, because with us it's only just started, that we're given complete responsibility, but two years ago, we didn't.

B: We've had to learn, haven't we?

C: Because you're holding other people's image and the organisation's reputation,

and that's quite a bit pressure to be honest. You understand that when you take it on. (Volunteers 16-19)

Young people vary in the amount of responsibility that they wish to bear as a volunteer. This is significantly related to the amount of support they receive, and is dealt with in the next section. They certainly do not want to be 'chucked in at the deep end' (state school student), but being given the chance to use their initiative and take on responsibility when they are ready would be major incentives. What they want above all, according to an unemployed person, is 'respect for our abilities'.

Young people have quite clear ideas on how they would like their volunteering to be organised. It is a well-quoted finding of successive National Surveys of Volunteering that a high percentage of young people think that 'things could be much better organised' in their volunteering. Just under nine in every ten 18-24 year olds in 1997 felt this way, an increase on the percentage in 1991 (Davis Smith, 1998). About half of the young people had problems with the mismatch between what they were asked to do and what they wanted to do or felt capable of doing, or simply got bored with the work they were given (ibid).

9.1 Young people-friendly

Young people placed high priority on an organisational setting which 'isn't too stuffy or bureaucratic', in which they could feel welcomed and appreciated, which is efficient but flexible, and which has people who give the right sort of advice and support. The majority also wanted organisations to provide them with plenty of information about what's available and what's expected of them 'so you know what to expect and what they expect from you' (unemployed). Those in their teens and older unemployed people place particular importance on a relaxed and friendly setting in which they feel welcome, appreciated and supported, with the majority of groups giving these conditions top priority.

You want to feel relaxed and welcome, and that no-one's looking down on you.
(Unemployed)

Appreciation would be nice, but you don't always expect it when it's voluntary.
A thank you would be nice. (Non-volunteers 20-24)

Many participants were quite interested in working with people from different backgrounds, although this was prioritised most highly by the teenage volunteers and the older unemployed people. Most of those under 20 were very keen on working alongside other young people, although public school students were the exception.

9.2 Support

An important issue for young people is the support they receive in their volunteering. The 1997 National Survey records that four in ten young people find the advice and support they receive to be 'very adequate', leaving the majority experiencing some deficiencies in this area. The groups found it hard to conceptualise the kind of support they wanted, but they knew what they didn't want.

Better to leave you alone until you've got a problem. (Public school student)

Not in an interfering way, no, but there when you want it. (Volunteer 20-24)

A: Sometimes you don't want constant supervision, you want some freedom.

B: I might interpret support as supervision. 'Leave me alone and I'll do it twice as quick!' (Non-volunteer 20-24)

You don't want to be oversupervised, no. (Unemployed)

The consensus was that support should be there to call upon, as and when it is needed. After discussing their progression into responsibility, the young volunteers noted that they wanted to work into it gradually, 'which is where the right sort of support comes in so that when you're ready... but you've still got the backup if you need it' (volunteer 16-19).

The younger people doing potentially difficult placements needed to know there was support in emergencies:

A: Once one of the grandads fell over, I couldn't get him up and I had to get someone. Sometimes I get the support when I need it.

B: You definitely need the support, you've got a room full of screaming kids and you don't know what to do. You need someone who can help.
(Public school students)

It's important if you're having trouble to have someone to fall back on.
(State school student)

If they (people in their teens) was doing something with sick people, they'd be a bit intimidated, and they'd need someone there. Especially terminally ill, like cancer. (Employee)

In general, there was a strong preference for sensitive and subtle support that was available when the volunteer felt the need:

A: You don't want people interfering. It depends on the work, like in a charity shop you don't want someone always watching you, on your case. You don't want a boss.

B: But a support worker who'd be there, to do some counselling, if you needed to shed some of the load on them...

C: Young people do need guidance, but aren't always willing to take it.
(Employees)

A: You need to know that the staff are going to support you – knowing somebody

is there, that you can talk to if you've had a bad day or need some training.

B: And that you know what to expect and what they expect from you.

(Unemployed)

In many ways, young people are not overly choosy about the setting in which they work. Yes, they would like a fairly relaxed environment but they will put up with less than ideal conditions if they feel they are getting something out of their volunteering.

We thought - it's important, but when all's said and done, it's not vital, as long as you know you're going to get something out of it. (Non-volunteer 20-24)

But they do not want to have supervisors breathing down their necks, and would prefer an organisation that is not too formal. However, it is very important that there are people within the organisation who are responsive and supportive, can give back-up when needed, and who help them progress at their own speed. The young volunteers described the value of the support they received:

A: It can be a bit daunting at times, but your enthusiasm and the help from those there just helps you carry on.

B: You have the help and encouragement from people behind you. We get a lot of help from (the Association) - 'do you want a hand getting those leaflets out, or do you want me to photocopy that?' Many volunteers don't have that.

(Volunteers 16-19)

It would be wrong to give the impression that young people's volunteering is deadly serious and without its lighter side. While they stress the instrumental gains from voluntary work, they are not averse to enjoying themselves at the same time. They are, after all, young – and since some of the competition for their time is from having a good time socially, it is a distinct bonus if volunteering is also fun.

10.1 A good time

Among their reasons for volunteering 'to have a good time' and 'to make friends and socialise' are given some importance, especially by people in their teens. These younger people's preference for volunteering alongside other young people also points to the desire for a lively, enjoyable experience. Most of the groups emphasised that making friends and having a good time are not primary motivations to volunteer, but important secondary ones. The non-volunteers in their teens thought that looking to make new friends and having a good time were more important to girls than to boys.

The volunteers enjoyed the social side of their volunteering, although the older ones pointed out that 'you can make friends and socialise by going night clubbing, you don't need to go and do voluntary work' (volunteer 20-24). For the younger volunteers:

A: We are all friends. We go out and have such laughs and times.

B: It's a plus, but we don't do it to enlarge our social life. (Volunteers 16-19)

Those in their early twenties who didn't currently volunteer thought that the social side was of some importance, particularly in encouraging people to continue volunteering:

A: We thought that would be something that was an added bonus.

B: It's not something that would make you do it in the first place, but it would make you continue.

C: If you want to make friends and socialise, you wouldn't choose something voluntary, unless your friends were already doing it, then that might be the reason you get into it. (Non-volunteers 20-24)

The best advert for volunteering is when 'if your friends are doing something, they say oh come on, I'm doing this at the weekend. You think, yes, let's join in' (employee). A recommendation by a friend was rated highly as a way into volunteering, particularly by people in their twenties.

10.2 Volunteering as 'punishment'

A more negative view of 'volunteering as punishment' emerged among a vocal minority of the employed people:

A: People don't expect to do voluntary work and enjoy it.

B: I think it's more of a burden than anything else.

A: Because they're not getting paid, they don't expect to enjoy it.

However, this was rejoined by reminders of the positive side of voluntary work, its 'satisfaction' and 'sense of achievement' (employees).

This perspective seems to relate to a particularly joyless view of volunteering. Volunteering as 'punishment' is also picked up as a theme in relation to community service sentencing and to New Deal, by some participants.

New Deal - it's community service, isn't it? If the government intervenes, it's not voluntary any more, it's imposed on you. (Non-volunteers 16-19)

There's a lot of people being forced to do it (volunteering) now - this New Deal thing. They say, get a really dead-end job or work for free. (Volunteer 20-24)

They have to do it under duress. But it's, like, sentencing people to community service, that makes it look like a punishment. (Non-volunteer 20-24)

Although the younger volunteers were prepared to be guardedly optimistic about New Deal [which is not, in fact, volunteering], acknowledging that 'bits of it seem good, but other bits...' and 'they've got the right idea, but...', in general people either disliked or didn't know about the programme. The view that it involved 'forced' volunteering appeared to have taken hold and there was strong concern that this would create an even more negative view among young people of so-called 'voluntary' work. There was the assumption that, as with earlier 'youth opportunity' programmes - or the mythology among the young - the scheme would be open to abuse and the exploitation of young people as cheap (free!) labour. A rumbling concern about taking the free will out of volunteering, and making it something to be endured rather than enjoyed emphasises the importance of volunteering as being fulfilling and pleasurable.

The younger volunteers summarised some complex issues when they said:

We always say 'we're not volunteers, we're just doing it because we want to do it'. (Volunteer 16-19)

11 Marketing volunteering

The groups were asked how they would market volunteering to young people to maximise its appeal and increase its legitimacy. They discussed the possible problems of the word itself, what messages and images they would get across, and their media of choice. To stimulate their ideas, posters, leaflets and a comic designed by young volunteers in *Make a Difference* Challenge projects were circulated. The groups discussed their design, messages and slogans such as 'Satisfaction!!', 'Use your skills', 'Help others - help yourself', 'Why not give it a go?', 'Cool projects with great opportunities!' and 'The V Files - volunteers are out there somewhere'.

11.1 The word 'volunteer'

The words 'volunteer' and 'volunteering' are not hugely popular with young people, but they could see few other viable alternatives.

A: *It's the stereotype. The word 'volunteer' gives you that stereotype.*

B: *We've been conditioned to believe it's a certain type of thing, but it's not. But it's hard to change that. (Employees)*

A: *It is a little bit of a turn-off. Yeh.*

B: *'Helper'...*

A: *Helper sounds worse, helper sounds really sort of degrading. 'I'm a helper'.*

C: *Like in primary school. This is the woman who comes in and cleans the classroom, the woman who comes in and sharpens your pencils. (General agreement)*

A: *Changing the perception of the word 'volunteer' is more important than the word itself. (Non-volunteers 16-19)*

A: *'Helping other people'...*

B: *Reinvent the idea a bit.*

C: *Try and make it trendy, for the young people to get involved and do it. (Employees)*

A: *'Project worker' implies you're trying to achieve something*

B: *It's a more positive word. (Non-volunteers 20-24)*

A: *At Acorns we're called befrienders, it depends what you do.*

B: *I don't think any of us would say 'we are a volunteer', it's just not a word we use.*

C: *We say 'we help'. (Volunteers 16-19)*

There was vociferous dislike of the term 'unpaid work', which was used to introduce the subject in the discussions, to avoid use of the word 'volunteering'.

A: I think unpaid work sounds worse!

B: 'Unpaid work' stinks!

A: You'll work but you won't get paid! (Unemployed)

A: I don't think 'unpaid work' is any more appealing.

B: I'd rather it said voluntary

A: At least it makes you feel better - unpaid work sound like you're just not getting paid for working. It's like you're being exploited.

(Non-volunteers 20-24)

One participant objected to the unwieldy nature of the word 'volunteering', and touched on the close association of 'volunteer' with 'charity'.

It's too long. It is! I think the word 'charity' has got a bit more of a stigma to it. And volunteers are strongly associated with charities. (State school student)

Despite these reservations, the consensus was that we are stuck with the word 'volunteer'. What needs to be done is to broaden people's understanding of what it means and to refashion the image associated with 'volunteers'.

11.2 Education and awareness-raising

Volunteering is not visible enough in all its variety, nor positive enough in its images. Remedying this would help normalise volunteering as an activity for young people. Several of the young people in the study advocated a general consciousness-raising, which would embed volunteering in young people's overall knowledge of the world and give them more sense of their potential relationship with it. This is necessary because for many young people the fact that volunteering never occurs to them is a major reason why they don't volunteer. 'Never thought about it' and 'no-one's ever asked them to' figured strongly in their prioritising of reasons for not volunteering.

Getting the message to people at a young age was a popular strategy. Young people grow up with a high degree of ignorance about the wealth of voluntary work which goes on in society, and which they could be part of. Visiting speakers in schools, starting with primary schools, bring the personal touch to their information about volunteering:

A: In primary schools little children listen a lot more and learn things from it a lot more, and go home and say 'oh we did this today..'

B: And there won't be that image that they can't do it because of their friends, because all their friends hopefully think the same, that it's good and stuff. Because they've done it at primary school. (State school students)

A: I would get people to go to schools, get a lot of people at one time, where friends are together and go 'yeah'.

B: It's a lot easier to get involved if the lady comes to the school. It's the personal bit.

C: They come to you. If they leave a phone number and you have to phone them up, it's a lot of hassle! (Non-volunteers 16-19)

A: Someone to come into school and talk to them and explain to them.

B: Assemblies, where you get the whole school into the hall. (Volunteers 20-24)

A: There's no substitute for sending people into school in person.

B: Get things into schools where teachers can feed it out, or people going into schools to introduce the idea. (Non-volunteers 20-24)

A: Get the personal element across...

B: The fact that it was more personal, and they came in and spoke to us, would make you feel you wanted to do something. (State school students)

The initial push to get the message into young people's minds would then be taken over by word of mouth communication:

I think you'd have to really advertise it to the younger generation. Then it would be word of mouth, wouldn't it? (Employee)

The education drive could involve sixth-formers or young volunteers talking to younger children about their experience, and take creative forms. A young woman who was a volunteer arts teacher commented:

*It depends how you put it across. You don't have to bore them to tears. Put on a drama sketch of something... a comedy - something that will catch their attention, make them laugh, and then explain what it's about afterwards. Then they would want to listen because you've caught their attention.
(Volunteer 20-24)*

School is a natural place for a captive audience of young people. Other centres and forums where young people gather should be targeted, and existing structures more fully exploited, for example disseminating information through youth groups:

A: Workshops being held at community centres, someone going in and seeing someone face to face makes more of an impact.

B: Get the message there in person. (Unemployed)

A: Things like youth clubs, it (information) was never passed down, we never had anything passed down to us. It was just stuck on a wall and maybe you'd read it...

R: So some of the structure is already there, but it isn't being used to get the information across?

A: Yes, exactly. (Volunteers 16-19)

A young volunteer suggested a co-operative approach to advertising for volunteers, in an echo of previous findings on public attitudes to charities (Gaskin & Fenton, 1997):

Perhaps all voluntary organisations should come together and advertise, rather than competing for volunteers. (Volunteer 16-19)

11.3 Using other media

The personal touch in communicating about volunteering is likely to be most effective, but young people saw advantages to using other media. The medium of choice was television 'if they had the money', and local radio was also prominently mentioned. Television, suggested one employee, could have short slots on volunteering between programmes, kept at five minutes length 'to keep their attention'.

Youth magazines and comics could carry ads and short features, but 'it's better to hear it, not read it' (volunteer 16-19) and 'it's got to be incredibly catchy for people to read it' (unemployed). Some of the older people thought 'high profile' articles on volunteers in newspapers would help raise general awareness.

Posters and leaflets were not very popular, mainly because they are so easily ignored, although there was the suggestion of posters in pubs, clubs, Post Offices and on the London Underground.

A: You walk past things like that every day and you see so many of them, you don't pay attention any more.

B: Unless you're looking for something, you ain't going to see it. No matter how good it is. (Volunteers 20-24)

Leaflets just go in the bin or sit there unread. (Unemployed)

One non-volunteer pointed out that with posters 'you still have to write a letter, and young people don't do that', suggesting that telephone helplines would be more accessible.

In most young people's view, the Internet 'is not widely used, not at the minute, not yet' (state school student) although one participant suggested a volunteer bureau web page

listing local opportunities. Public school students felt that 'people don't look at voluntary work on the Internet' and an older volunteer suggested that 'young people prefer to look at pictures of Pamela Anderson'.

11.4 The message

Promoting volunteering should combine raising general awareness with more targeted advertising. Young people themselves should help design the message and the images 'so it's not just old people' (state school student). Many would emphasise the gains, particularly but not exclusively, of skills and experience:

- A: Stress they are getting something out of it.*
- B: Like work experience, job prospects, qualifications.*
- C: When I left school I wanted to be working and get a qualification at the same time, like an apprenticeship. But you have to be qualified. So you start off voluntary.*
- D: (slogan) It beats working!*
- C: Volunteers do it for free!! (Volunteers 20-24)*

- A: Show people who have achieved something through voluntary work.*
- B: Gained something out of it.*
- A: Both parts, what the volunteers and the people they're helping get out of it.*
- C: (slogan) Help others - help yourself.*
- A: You get something out of it and you benefit others.*
- B: You're not going to be treated like a doormat. This is for you as well.*
(Unemployed)

More like qualifications, instead of 'oh it's cool to do charity work' - that's never going to be the best thing to say. (State school student)

- A: It's interesting, you learn something.*
- B: Get something out of it.*
- C: Training.*
- B: It can be useful for a job.*
- D: You meet people. (Public school students)*

- A: Benefit yourself. Don't think of volunteering just for the sake of doing good. Society has changed in a way that you want something out of it.*
(Non-volunteer 20-24)

It is important to get across that volunteering can be fun and exciting. Some suggested highlighting the volunteer as eco-warrior to spice up the image. For some of the younger

participants it was important not to make voluntary work sound too heavy.

A: It's fun. You'll meet girls your age!

B: But there's no real pressure to change anything, no big weight on your shoulders. You can just help a little bit, but you've got no responsibilities if you don't want them. (Non-volunteers 16-19)

A volunteer in his twenties knew exactly how he would 'sell' volunteering:

Sex! Put an attractive woman in the ad! (volunteer 20-24)

The young volunteers wanted to lighten up the image and stress that everybody could do something. They were sure that if young people could be attracted in for a first bite, volunteering would stick:

A: Satisfaction!!

B: Emphasise that you enjoy yourself.

C: Give a different image of what a volunteer is, like we were discussing, it's not just tin-shaking.

B: Doom and gloom.

D: That Lottery thing - it might be you, it could be you, whatever. That sort of thing.

C: Like, you've all got something to give.

D: There's always someone who needs you.

C: What have you got to give? Everybody's got something to give, and they don't see it. There's something they can give, an hour a week makes a difference.

B: I think that goes alongside 'it sticks to you'. Like, have a go, and it'll stick. (Volunteers 16-19)

The question of whether celebrity endorsement would increase the impact of advertising divided opinion. For most, this was not a particularly potent way of marketing volunteering, but a number felt that it would have an impact on younger teenagers. The use of famous people on television fundraising marathons appeared to validate their impact - 'Look at things like Children in Need and Comic Relief, if famous people didn't make a difference they wouldn't have all these star-studded musicals on TV, would they?' (volunteer 20-24) - but for others this could be a turn-off.

You'll think, well loads of people do that, so I won't bother, I'll do something else. (Public school student)

If you couldn't stand the person, it would turn you against it. (Unemployed)

The volunteers in their twenties felt that famous people could help draw attention to

causes, and cited a U2 tour sponsored by Amnesty International, which more than doubled their membership, and Robbie Fowler's slogan of support for the Liverpool dockers revealed during a goal celebration. A pop star visiting a local youth project and getting press coverage would encourage people 'to come down and get involved'. According to the employed young people 'it is all to do with image – if you had a football tournament and some star turned up, you'd get teenage boys interested'. It was regrettable but true that:

A: If there's somebody on a council estate, then no-one will listen even if it's really important, but if a famous person says it's important, then people will listen.

B: Sometimes you don't hear it until a famous person backs it.
(Volunteers 20-24)

Princess Diana and the landmines campaign was given as an example. Her name inevitably came up in a number of group discussions. For some of the employed group, she represented the ideal 'charity celebrity', bringing plenty of glamour to the cause; to others her background was not something many young people could identify with, but:

Someone like Ian Wright, kids can relate to, who came from a working class background and worked their way up. You get people who have achieved things from nothing. (Employee 20-24)

11.5 Summary

The main conclusion is that promotion and advertising need to be much more widespread, so that young people encounter images of volunteering in many different settings. Reinforced with personal talks and visits, this would familiarise them from an early age with the varied world of volunteering and highlight particular opportunities that they could try. The marketing of volunteering should concentrate on people's achievements and potential gains, as well as the fun side, to counter its traditional image of worthiness. If a sustained programme of awareness-raising were to be carried out, this would help legitimise volunteering for young people and remove or reduce the apparent stigma associated with it:

If a lot of people do it, then it looks normal, it's cool, because everyone's doing it. (Volunteer 16-19)

12.1 Vanishing volunteers?

This research was prompted by the apparent decline in volunteering among the younger generation. Are young people losing interest in volunteering? This report suggests that the answer is a qualified 'no'. Young people have not given up on volunteering, but there is a raft of factors that seems to affect their likelihood of becoming volunteers. It is evident that young people have not rejected the idea of voluntary work and hold generally positive views of its value to the individual and to society. They have a generally favourable image of volunteering and volunteers, and see positive benefits to themselves. But there are barriers and deterrents, like their level of knowledge, the availability of information and access routes, organisations' attitudes, and the range of pressures on them: time, money, education, employment, expectations, and other youth activities.

Most of the young people taking part in the research had a history of volunteering, but it was intermittent and episodic and frequently not conceptualised as 'volunteering'. Only a minority kept up sustained volunteering, primarily because they were getting something out of it: enjoyment, experience, training, qualifications. The overwhelming emphasis on flexibility in volunteering which was expressed by all types of young people suggests that organisations and government need to rethink volunteering in the light of the realities of young people's lives. Instead of presenting volunteering as a given into which young people should fit, we need to take the preferences and imperatives of young people's lives as the basis, and reshape volunteering to accommodate them.

12.2 Young people's wish-list

Young people's recipe for improving the youth volunteering situation involves both short term and longer term strategies and action at a number of levels. From young people's point of view, volunteering must become:

- Higher profile: better publicised and more present in young people's lives and consciousness in all its variety.
- More accessible: more information points and access routes, and a wider range of gatekeepers.
- More flexible: recognising the pressures on young people and accommodating their difficulty in making regular commitments.
- More appealing: covering a wide range of young people's interests and enthusiasms and offering valuable and enjoyable experiences.
- More varied in structure: particularly offering more casual, low-commitment opportunities and a variety of arrangements.
- More rewarding: combining intrinsic rewards with appreciation and tangible incentives related to skills and career development.

- More young people-friendly: providing a relaxed environment, paying expenses and respecting their abilities, needs and wishes.

12.3 Strategies for change

Young people's priorities point to a number of possible actions on the part of volunteering providers. Organisations – voluntary, and also statutory agencies and private companies – need to examine their practices and prejudices in relation to young people, and formulate and implement policies that encourage and support them as volunteers. They need to look at how young people can hear about them and gain access to volunteering opportunities, improving their information channels, outreach and publicity to take the message direct to their audience. They should examine what incentives they can offer, and how young people's experience and skills can be validated and accredited.

Perhaps the most challenging task will be to address the need for flexibility. Exploring options for 'introductory offers', casual and 'drop-in' volunteering, or recruiting a large pool of young people whose members can rotate their input flexibly, can help organisations to respond to this priority. Flexible volunteering may require more effort and resources to organise and support but if large numbers of young people become involved, then the advantages are obvious. Moreover, it is likely that a low-pressure, low-commitment 'toe in the water' start into volunteering will translate into more committed involvement over time.

The government can play a guiding role by setting the policy framework and overseeing broader strategies to develop infrastructure for youth volunteering and in developing educational policies. The 1997 Education White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*, pledged to 'strengthen education for citizenship' including principles, practices, responsibilities and rights, and 'the value to individuals and society of community activity' (Advisory Group, 1998). The Advisory Group set up to flesh out proposals concludes its first report by quoting the Lord Chancellor:

Since we learn by doing, the practical experience of citizenship is at least as important as formal education in its principles. One of the best ways of putting the theories of citizenship into practice is through voluntary work in the community. Young people often display a spiritual and material generosity towards others which can disappear by the time adulthood is reached. One of the challenges facing us is how to encourage children to retain that giving instinct and how to help them put it to best use. (Lord Chancellor, 1998)

It is significant and valuable that a strong impetus for raising young people's awareness of and participation in voluntary work is coming from education policy. It is only hoped

that in formulating programmes, the government and its advisors will take full account of the views of young people as expressed in this report and elsewhere, and avoid the pitfalls of a semi-coercive community service scheme that will further jaundice young people's view of volunteering.

Aside from national policy, there is scope for schools, colleges and universities to examine their own capacities to promote volunteering more fully. Providing more information, exploring the potential of careers advisors and teachers as gatekeepers, including the voluntary dimension in PSE and other subjects, linking up with volunteer-involving bodies or volunteer bureaux, arranging talks by guest speakers or young volunteers, all offer ways of bringing messages about volunteering to their captive audience of young people. With most schools involving students in some voluntary work - such as charity fundraising campaigns, mentoring or one-off community projects - there is scope for capitalising on this activity by underlining its place in the larger scheme of voluntary work and providing information about other kinds of opportunities.

In its recent promotion of youth volunteering schemes, the government has shown its willingness to finance targeted initiatives in this field. The Make a Difference Challenge projects produced many examples of good practice in increasing young people's volunteering (Gaskin, 1997). The current Youth Volunteer Development Programme has taken a major step forward by prioritising strategic development and infrastructure-building. In many areas, new links are being forged between youth bodies, volunteering providers, educational establishments, hospitals, the probation and employment services, local authority departments, benefits agencies, employers and others. County policies are being developed, good practice guides and training packages are in development, 'Investors in Young People' kitemarks, volunteer charters and reward cards are being investigated (Gaskin, 1998).

The programme has generated proposals to set up youth volunteering information points across the county, hold 'volunteers fairs', create a web page of local opportunities, establish databases, set up a young people-led Youth Volunteer Bureau, and launch high profile media campaigns. New opportunities are being identified, such as mentoring and buddying projects, taster sessions, peer-led recruitment, supported placements for young disabled people, a task force of young volunteers for one-off events and youth clubs' involvement in short-term challenges (ibid).

The piloting of these strategies through the Youth Volunteer Development Programme will provide a useful lead in the further development of youth volunteering and, hopefully, its successes will encourage further resources to be allocated to work in this area. The government can also play a role in its development of national youth volunteering schemes. The initial negative impressions of New Deal have been commented on, although further results and experiences may change young people's

views of it. The final form of Millennium Volunteers is awaited with interest, since the feedback prioritises key requirements identified in this report.

No-one in the groups had heard of Millennium Volunteers, though the name seemed to get a knee-jerk reaction from quite a few people, that 'anything to do with Millennium is just cashing in on the name' (volunteer 20-24) and 'there's a stigma to using the word Millennium' (non-volunteers 16-19). The mention of Millennium Volunteers produced this comment:

Help build the Millennium Dome - that's what it sounds like - oh, we've run a bit over budget, we'll get volunteers in! (Non-volunteer 16-19)

When the scheme was explained to the groups, a number thought it was 'a very good idea' as long as the element of choice could be maintained. Even the non-volunteers thought that 'a lot of people would be interested, if they could do something they liked'. The good will and good intentions are there in most young people, but the conditions need to be right for them to get involved.

12.4 The need for change

At some point in recent history, public and media opinion stopped viewing young people as a resource and started seeing them as a threat. This is clearly a road to nowhere. Young people must be included and we need them to be volunteers. It is evident that organisations and agencies concerned with volunteering must heed what young people say or voluntary activity will continue to decline among the young.

The reality of young people's lives is that they feel pressured, they feel over-organised, they feel judged. They recognise that voluntary work can provide a channel of development and discovery, but there are so many other things that they could or should be doing. In a world where their lives seem to belong to others and their futures are cause for anxiety, they demand scope for spontaneity and achievement in volunteering - or, frankly, they just won't bother. And then, as one volunteer saw it:

You're going to be left with a lot of older people and what's going to happen then? In every area of voluntary work you need young people. If young people aren't doing it, what's going to happen when the older generations leave?

References

- Advisory Group on Citizenship Education (1998) **Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools**, Initial Report, March. London: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.
- Ball D (1998) 'Uphill struggle'. **The Guardian**, 22 April/Society: 12-13.
- Barker D, Halman L and Vloet A (1992) **The European Values Study 1981-90: Summary Report**. London: European Values Group.
- Davis Smith J (1998) **The 1997 National Survey of Volunteering**. London: Institute for Volunteering Research.
- Department for Education and Employment (1998) **Millennium Volunteers: A summary of the responses to the consultation document**, London: DfEE.
- Foster J and Fernandes M (1996) **Young People and Volunteering: Research, Policy and Practice**. London: NCV.
- Fryer M (1997) **Speaking Their Minds: Tomorrow's Citizens Today** A Report for CSV. London: CSV.
- Gaskin K (1997) **Make a Difference Challenge Project Reports**. The Home Office, unpublished.
- Gaskin K (1998) **Youth Volunteer Development Programme: Evaluation Report I**. The Home Office, unpublished.
- Gaskin K and Fenton N (1997) **Blurred Vision: Public Trust in Charities**. Loughborough University and NCVO.
- Gaskin K, Vlaeminck M and Fenton N (1996) **Young People's Attitudes to the Voluntary Sector**. London: NCVO.
- Greenwood, S (1997) **Youth Volunteering**. London: Voluntary and Community Unit, Department of National Heritage.
- Lord Chancellor (1998), Address to the Citizenship Foundation, quoted in Advisory Group on Citizenship Education.
- Lynn P and Davis Smith J (1991) **The 1991 National Survey of Voluntary Activity in the UK**. London: The Volunteer Centre UK.
- The Volunteer Centre UK (1990) **On Volunteering**. London: VCUK.
- Niyazi F (1996) **A Route to Opportunity: Volunteering by Young People**. London: NCV.
- Oldfield C (1998) **Findings from the Young Volunteer Development Programme Mapping Studies**. National Youth Agency/Home Office, unpublished.
- Roker D and Player K (1997) 'A part of something bigger', **Youth Action** 60, Summer: 10-11.
- Sinclair R (1997) quoted in Watts J 'A future in the balance'. **The Guardian**, 25 June/Society: 2-3.
- Vincent J, Gaskin K and Unell J (1998) **Evaluation of Prince's Trust-Volunteers**. Loughborough: Centre for Research in Social Policy.
- Wilkinson H and Mulgan G (1995) **Freedom's Children: Work, Relationships and Politics for 18-34 year olds in Britain today**. London: Demos.

Eight focus groups were held, representing a range of young people's characteristics. The groups were:

| Age 16-19 | Age 20-24 |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| independent (private) school students | employed people |
| state school students | unemployed people |
| youth group members/volunteers | volunteers |
| non-volunteers | non-volunteers |

This composition aimed to capture variation by age, socio-economic status and experience of volunteering. The groups were held in March and April 1998 in three regions: London, the East Midlands and West Midlands, with one group in a rural area of Rutland. Each participant was paid £10.

The groups contained six to ten people, with a total of 65 participants in all. All the groups were mixed, with more women taking part over all. A number of groups contained young people of African-Caribbean, Asian and other ethnicities. The sessions lasted between one and a half and two hours. They were tape-recorded to enable analysis and use of verbatim quotes, but confidentiality and anonymity for participants were guaranteed.

A topic guide of questions was used in conjunction with five sets of 'cue cards'. Each index-sized card showed a statement or description, and the groups were asked to sort each set into three piles: most important, least important and anything in between. The groups were divided into two subgroups for this exercise, which was followed by discussion of their choices with the introduction of relevant issues, as shown in the topic guide. The cue cards are listed in Appendix B, with the ranking of statements by each subgroup and an average 'score' per statement.

The cue cards were devised to stimulate discussion and to concentrate participants' thinking on key issues while varying the pace of the sessions. This followed previous focus group discussions with young people in which it was evident that sitting still in unvaried talking mode for up to two hours tended to produce boredom and diminishing returns in the quality of the contributions. The cards proved popular and achieved their goal of maintaining participants' interest and attention. They were also found to encourage contributions by less confident or verbal group members, who through participating in the sorting process and reading out statements in each pile, felt involved and included and were more likely to speak within the whole group discussion.

Topic Guide (using cue cards)

The topic guide is used in conjunction with sets of cue cards on five topics. Groups will be asked to lay out the cards in piles (or a diamond shape) with most important at the top and least important at the bottom. Discussion will then proceed on their choices, allowing clarification and elaboration.

The term 'volunteer' or 'volunteering' will not be introduced by the facilitator. The term 'unpaid work and activities' will be used, with the expectation that the groups may bring up the term 'volunteering' or 'volunteer'. When it is, this should be discussed, with attention focused on the word and its associations. If the group does not bring up the term, the facilitator will introduce it at an appropriate point (Section 6 or before) to get their reactions to the word itself.

Specific attention will be directed by the researcher/facilitator to particular issues raised within the topic area; these are indicated below. As in all focus groups, the facilitation will be flexible, so that if an issue has already come up and been discussed, it will not be repeated. It is felt that this 'workshop' approach will suit young people, varying the pace of the discussion and encouraging active participation, while ensuring that all relevant issues are covered.

Introduction

Thank you for coming. I want to ask for your opinions today. There are no right or wrong answers – just what you think, so please speak freely. I will lead the session with some activities and questions, but please feel free to bring up any points which you think are important as we go along.

I'd like to stress that everything you say will be confidential, and anonymous. The session will be taped because I won't be able to remember everything you say, so please try not to talk over each other. There will be a report which summarises your views and those of other young people I am talking to, but it will not identify by name anyone taking part.

Can we just go round and everyone say your name and one thing about you. That's so I can tell who's saying what on the tape.

1. What unpaid workers do

You are probably aware that people work for pay, but there are also many people who do different types of activities and work, unpaid, in their spare time. Now these cards show the types of things that people do unpaid. I'd like you to divide into two groups and I'll give each of you a set of cards. Can you go through them quite quickly and put them in piles. The top pile is for the types of unpaid work that you think are most important or common. Then have a bottom pile for the work that is least important or common. And a middle pile for those that are in between. Right, I'll give you five minutes to do a quick sort of the cards.

Groups arrange cards in hierarchy – most important to least important (watch the time, allowing some flexibility; listen to their discussions)

Good. Can someone in each of the groups read out your top pile, your middle pile and your bottom pile.

→ Discuss and elaborate on their decisions

Topics to be covered:

- ✓ Knowledge of unpaid work
- ✓ The wide range of activities that come under 'unpaid work'
- ✓ Being on the receiving end of unpaid work and satisfaction with it
- ✓ ??Youth award schemes/school and college projects

2. Identification and image of unpaid workers (volunteers)

These cards show some of the images of people who do these kinds of unpaid activities or work. What do you think?

Groups arrange cards in hierarchy – most important to least important

→ Discuss decisions and the image of unpaid workers (volunteers)

Topics to be covered:

- ✓ Image of volunteers and volunteering
- ✓ Amateurism vs professionalism/competence of volunteers

3. Involvement in unpaid work (volunteering)

Has any of you ever done unpaid work (been a volunteer)? What did/do you do? (*Refer back to cards of what volunteers do and prompt, as necessary*) Did/do you enjoy it?

These cards show some of the reasons that people do unpaid work. Arrange them in order of importance to you.

Groups arrange cards in hierarchy – most important to least important

→ Discuss and elaborate

Topics to be covered:

- ✓ Most important/least important reasons
- ✓ Instrumental vs altruistic reasons
- ✓ Personal vs political reasons

These cards show some of the reasons people don't do unpaid work. Arrange them in order of importance to you.

Groups arrange cards in hierarchy – most important to least important

→ Discuss and elaborate

Topics to be covered:

- ✓ Most important/least important reasons
- ✓ Relative value of giving time and giving money
- ✓ Payment for volunteering
- ✓ Government role vs voluntary role
- ✓ Those who tried volunteering and didn't like it – reasons
- ✓ Peer views – class, ethnicity and gender issues
- ✓ ??Problems of information/access etc. for young people

4. Opportunities and access points for young people

What opportunities to do unpaid work are open to young people? *(Prompt and probe, as needed)*

How would you find out about unpaid work (volunteering) opportunities? *(Probe: availability of information, sources, locations, key players)*

How would you go about getting involved in unpaid work (volunteering)? *(Probe: access points and routes into volunteering)*

5. What people look for in unpaid work

There are a number of things that people might look for when doing unpaid work (volunteering). Arrange these cards in order of importance to you.

Groups arrange cards in hierarchy – most important to least important

→ Discuss and elaborate

Topics to be covered:

- ✓ Ideal circumstances and conditions in volunteering
- ✓ Preferred type of support and advice
- ✓ Preferred culture and style of organisation/setting
- ✓ Rewards
- ✓ Taking responsibility – organised vs self-organising youth volunteering

Let's talk for a moment about the various special schemes for young people. Have you come across any of them? *(Prompt: Duke of Edinburgh Awards, Prince's Trust-Volunteers,*

Changemakers, St John Ambulance, etc.) What do you think of them? What sort of young people get involved in them?

There is going to be a new scheme called Millennium Volunteers. Have you heard anything about it? *(Outline briefly, if necessary)* So, these (as identified above) would be the kinds of things that would make such a scheme attractive to you and to other young people? What would be the most important thing(s) you want to get out of it?

6. Marketing volunteering to young people

We've identified many of the pros and cons of unpaid work (volunteering) and the kinds of things that you think are important. Suppose you had to design an advertising campaign to get young people to think about doing unpaid work (becoming a volunteer), what would it look like?

(Prompt with examples of posters, leaflets, comic designed by young people, or possible slogans)

How would you ensure that the message reached young people? *(Prompt: different media/targeting, including electronic media, use of popular stars to spearhead campaign)*

Are the words 'volunteer' and 'volunteering' a turn-off? Is there a better word you can come up with?

What images or slogan would you use? *(Prompt: content, emphasis, visual images)*

7. Overview of decline in volunteering

A recent survey found that young people are not doing as much unpaid work (volunteering as much) as they used to. Do you think that's true? If it's true, why do you think that is? *(Probe: not enough time, too many other things to do, the negative image of volunteers, rather work for pay, changing attitudes – lack of faith in society, declining sense of social responsibility)*

What can be done to increase the numbers of young people in unpaid work (volunteering)? What would you do?

Do you think it matters if the numbers of people doing unpaid work (volunteering) continue to go down?

What might be the consequences of this happening? *(Probe: who might suffer? what wouldn't happen that does now?)*

Do you think society is better off, in general, when a lot of people do unpaid work (volunteer)?

Any other points you want to raise about unpaid work (volunteering)?

Thank you.

Appendix B

Cue Cards and Ranking by Groups¹

| | Ave | Age 16-19 | | | | Age 20-24 | | | |
|--|------|-----------|----------|---------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----|--------|
| | | Vols | Non vols | Pub sch | State sch | Vols | Non vols | Emp | Un emp |
| What volunteers do | | | | | | | | | |
| Help in the community ² | 1.10 | 2 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | - | - | - | 1 1 | 1 1 |
| Work for voluntary orgs/charities | 1.31 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 2 2 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 1 1 | 2 1 |
| Raise money for causes | 1.31 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 2 1 | 1 2 | 2 2 | 1 1 | 2 1 |
| Help people in their neighbourhood | 1.43 | 2 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 3 2 | 1 2 | 3 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 |
| Are active in community groups | 1.56 | 2 1 | 1 2 | 1 3 | 2 1 | 1 1 | 3 1 | 2 2 | 1 1 |
| Take part in youth clubs/youth groups | 1.63 | 1 1 | 2 1 | 2 3 | 3 2 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 2 2 | 1 1 |
| School or college projects | 1.69 | 1 2 | 2 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 2 3 |
| Environmental action | 1.75 | 2 1 | 2 1 | 1 2 | 3 2 | 2 2 | 3 2 | 1 1 | 1 2 |
| Help run religious activities ² | 1.80 | 1 1 | 2 3 | 2 1 | - | - | - | 3 2 | 1 2 |
| Help run sports and leisure clubs | 2.00 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 2 3 | 2 1 | 3 1 | 3 3 | 2 2 | 1 1 |
| Youth award schemes | 2.00 | 1 1 | 2 2 | 3 2 | 3 2 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 3 1 |
| Take part in informal groups/activities | 2.06 | 2 2 | 3 2 | 3 3 | 1 1 | 2 1 | 1 2 | 3 3 | 1 3 |
| Campaigns | 2.25 | 3 2 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 3 2 | 2 3 | 2 2 | 2 3 | 2 2 |
| Help in hospitals or social services | 2.25 | 2 3 | 2 3 | 1 1 | 3 3 | 3 1 | 3 2 | 1 2 | 3 3 |
| Sit on management committees | 2.63 | 3 3 | 3 3 | 3 2 | 2 3 | 3 3 | 2 3 | 3 3 | 1 2 |
| As employees in company schemes | 2.81 | 3 3 | 2 3 | 3 3 | 1 3 | 3 3 | 3 3 | 3 3 | 3 3 |
| Who volunteers | | | | | | | | | |
| People who like to help others | 1.06 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 1 1 |
| People who want to help the community ² | 1.20 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | - | - | - | 2 2 | 1 1 |
| Committed and trustworthy people | 1.25 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 1 1 | 2 1 | 1 1 | 2 1 | 2 1 | 1 1 |
| Want to improve things in society | 1.38 | 3 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 3 1 | 2 1 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 1 1 |
| All kinds of people | 1.50 | 1 2 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 1 3 | 2 1 | 1 1 | 3 2 |
| Care about animals/the environment | 1.56 | 2 1 | 1 2 | 2 1 | 1 3 | 2 1 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 2 1 |
| Middle-aged and older people | 1.56 | 2 1 | 1 2 | 3 1 | 1 1 | 2 1 | 2 2 | 1 2 | 2 1 |
| Religious people ² | 1.60 | 1 1 | 2 3 | 2 1 | - | - | - | 3 1 | 1 1 |
| People like me | 1.81 | 1 1 | 2 3 | 2 3 | 2 2 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 2 2 | 1 3 |
| Women | 2.00 | 3 1 | 2 3 | 2 2 | 2 1 | 3 3 | 3 1 | 2 1 | 1 2 |
| With too much time on their hands | 2.19 | 2 3 | 2 2 | 3 3 | 3 1 | 2 1 | 1 3 | 3 2 | 2 2 |
| Do-gooders or busybodies | 2.25 | 2 2 | 3 2 | 3 3 | 2 1 | 2 3 | 1 3 | 3 3 | 1 2 |
| Young people | 2.44 | 3 2 | 3 2 | 2 2 | 3 3 | 2 1 | 2 2 | 3 3 | 3 3 |
| White people | 2.56 | 3 2 | 3 3 | 2 3 | 2 2 | 3 3 | 3 3 | 2 1 | 3 3 |
| Middle-class or well-off people | 2.63 | 2 2 | 3 2 | 3 2 | 3 3 | 3 3 | 3 3 | 3 1 | 3 3 |
| Incompetent amateurs | 2.81 | 3 3 | 3 3 | 3 3 | 3 1 | 3 3 | 3 3 | 3 3 | 2 3 |

| | Ave | Age 16-19 | | | | Age 20-24 | | | |
|---|------|-----------|----------|---------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----|--------|
| | | Vols | Non vols | Pub sch | State sch | Vols | Non vols | Emp | Un emp |
| Why young people volunteer | | | | | | | | | |
| A personal connection with the cause | 1.24 | 2 2 | 2 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 2 1 |
| To help people and causes | 1.31 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 3 1 | 1 3 | 1 1 |
| To get work experience or a qualification | 1.38 | 1 2 | 2 2 | 1 2 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 3 1 | 1 1 |
| To find out about career options | 1.63 | 1 2 | 2 1 | 2 2 | 2 3 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 2 1 | 2 1 |
| To broaden their experience of life | 1.63 | 2 1 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 3 1 | 2 1 | 2 1 | 2 2 | 1 2 |
| To learn new skills | 1.69 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 2 1 | 1 1 |
| Because of their own needs | 1.88 | 3 1 | 2 1 | 3 3 | 3 2 | 1 1 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 1 1 |
| To make friends and socialise | 2.06 | 1 2 | 1 3 | 3 3 | 2 1 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 2 3 |
| To help change things in society | 2.13 | 3 2 | 1 3 | 2 1 | 2 3 | 2 1 | 2 2 | 3 3 | 2 2 |
| To have a good time | 2.25 | 1 2 | 1 3 | 3 3 | 2 2 | 1 3 | 2 3 | 1 3 | 3 3 |
| Because their friends or family do | 2.25 | 1 1 | 2 1 | 3 3 | 3 2 | 3 3 | 2 2 | 3 2 | 3 2 |
| To fill the time | 2.50 | 3 3 | 3 2 | 3 2 | 3 2 | 2 2 | 3 3 | 3 2 | 2 2 |
| Because they feel they ought to | 2.75 | 3 2 | 3 3 | 3 3 | 3 2 | 3 3 | 2 2 | 3 2 | 3 2 |
| To feel important | 2.88 | 3 3 | 2 3 | 3 3 | 3 3 | 3 3 | 3 3 | 3 3 | 3 3 |
| Why young people don't volunteer | | | | | | | | | |
| Not enough time | 1.00 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 |
| Don't want to work for free | 1.19 | 1 1 | 2 1 | 1 2 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 2 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 |
| Never thought about it | 1.44 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 2 2 | 2 1 |
| Their friends don't think it's cool | 1.56 | 1 3 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 2 1 | 3 3 | 1 1 | 2 1 |
| Don't know how to go about it | 1.56 | 1 1 | 3 2 | 2 1 | 2 2 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 1 3 |
| Don't want to make a commitment | 1.56 | 2 1 | 1 2 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 2 2 | 2 3 | 2 2 |
| Can't afford to | 1.63 | 2 3 | 2 3 | 1 3 | 2 2 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 |
| They give money instead of time | 1.63 | 3 1 | 1 2 | 2 2 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 2 2 | 2 1 | 1 3 |
| No-one's ever asked them to | 1.75 | 1 3 | 2 1 | 2 1 | 2 3 | 1 2 | 2 3 | 1 1 | 1 2 |
| Volunteering is for wimps/goody goodies | 1.88 | 1 2 | 2 1 | 2 2 | 3 2 | 2 2 | 3 3 | 1 1 | 2 1 |
| Tried it and didn't like it | 1.94 | 3 1 | 3 1 | 1 1 | 3 3 | 2 2 | 2 3 | 2 1 | 1 2 |
| People like me don't volunteer | 2.06 | 2 2 | 2 1 | 1 2 | 2 3 | 2 1 | 3 3 | 3 1 | 3 2 |
| Don't have anything to offer | 2.13 | 2 1 | 2 3 | 3 3 | 3 1 | 1 1 | 3 2 | 3 3 | 1 2 |
| Don't believe in it | 2.13 | 3 3 | 1 1 | 3 2 | 3 1 | 2 2 | 3 3 | 2 1 | 3 3 |
| Government should take care of things | 2.13 | 3 3 | 2 1 | 1 2 | 3 1 | 1 2 | 2 3 | 2 3 | 2 3 |
| Family/cultural reasons ² | 2.50 | 2 1 | 3 2 | 3 3 | - | - | - | 3 2 | 3 3 |
| Fear of being rejected ² | 2.70 | 2 2 | 3 3 | 3 3 | - | - | - | 2 3 | 3 3 |

| | Ave | Age 16-19 | | | | Age 20-24 | | | |
|---|------|-----------|-------------|------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----|-----------|
| | | VoIs | Non vols | Pub sch | State sch | VoIs | Non vols | Emp | Un emp |
| What young people look for in volunteering | | | | | | | | | |
| Flexible work and working times | 1.06 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 2 1 |
| Training and a reference, or qualification | 1.13 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 2 1 | 1 1 |
| The chance to help people or a cause | 1.31 | 1 2 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 2 3 | 2 1 | 1 3 | 1 1 |
| Try things without making a commitment | 1.44 | 1 1 | 3 1 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 1 1 | 2 1 | 1 1 | 3 2 |
| A setting that isn't too stuffy/bureaucratic | 1.44 | 1 1 | 2 1 | 2 1 | 1 1 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 3 1 | 1 2 |
| Plenty of information | 1.50 | 2 2 | 2 1 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 2 3 | 1 2 |
| Transport provided or transport costs paid | 1.63 | 1 1 | 3 1 | 2 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 1 1 | 2 3 |
| Take some responsibility/use your initiative | 1.63 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 1 1 | 2 2 | 3 2 | 1 1 |
| A feeling that you are appreciated | 1.69 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 3 1 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 3 2 | 1 3 |
| A recommendation by a friend | 1.69 | 2 2 | 2 1 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 1 1 | 2 2 | 2 1 | 2 1 |
| A feeling the org welcomes young people | 1.75 | 1 2 | 1 2 | 3 1 | 1 1 | 3 2 | 2 2 | 3 2 | 1 1 |
| Working alongside other young people | 1.81 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 3 3 | 1 1 | 2 2 | 2 3 | 2 2 | 1 3 |
| People to give support/advice when needed | 2.00 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 2 3 | 2 2 | 2 3 | 2 3 | 2 3 | 1 1 |
| People from different backgrounds | 2.00 | 1 1 | 2 2 | 2 3 | 2 3 | 2 3 | 2 2 | 3 2 | 1 1 |
| Able to start right away without waiting | 2.13 | 2 2 | 3 1 | 2 1 | 3 3 | 2 2 | 2 3 | 3 3 | 2 1 |
| A famous person backing the idea | 2.31 | 2 2 | 3 2 | 3 3 | 2 3 | 3 2 | 3 3 | 1 1 | 3 1 |

¹ Each group was split into two subgroups, which sorted the sets of card into three piles in order of importance. The allocation to piles 1, 2 or 3 are listed here, with an average score calculated across all subgroups.

² These cards were added to the sets after three groups had been carried out, as a result of consultation with a parallel project on young people from ethnic minorities.

The Institute for Volunteering Research aims to develop knowledge and understanding of volunteering and the context in which it operates, with particular relevance to policy and practice. Its activities include:

- Strategic Research
- Action Research
- Organisational Consultancy
- Programme Evaluation
- Research Reviews
- Seminars and Publications

Institute for Volunteering Research

Regent's Wharf, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL, United Kingdom
T: +44 (0)171 520 8900 F: +44 (0)171 520 8910 E-mail: instvoires@aol.com

An initiative of



in association with



Supported by the Lloyd's
TSB Foundation for
England and Wales

£10.00
June 1998