

Assessing the impact of volunteering on the further education sector

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Foreword

I have great pleasure in introducing to you *Assessing the Impact of Volunteering on the FE Sector*.

In September 2005 we published *From Here to Sustainability*, our strategy for sustainable development. Our vision is that by 2010, the learning and skills sector will proactively commit and contribute to sustainable development through its management of resources, the learning opportunities it delivers and its engagement with employers and communities.

One of the key areas in the strategy is volunteering. We want to encourage more learners and providers to undertake volunteering activity as part of a community commitment to sustainable development.

With this aim in mind, we welcomed the opportunity to work with Volunteering England on this project. It provided a way to better understand the impact of volunteering in the further education sector, its benefits and the barriers that stand in the way of greater participation by both learners and providers.

This report sets out the key findings and recommendations from the research carried out by Volunteering England. There are some challenges but we think it provides an excellent basis for moving forward and for making volunteering a cornerstone of our approach to sustainable development. I hope you find it useful.

Our thanks go to Volunteering England for leading the work and to all organisations and individuals who contributed their views.

Rob Wye
National Director
Learning and Skills Council

Introduction

The further education sector educates the vast majority of learners in this country and is at the forefront for providing the qualifications, opportunities and experiences these learners need to fulfil their potential. To reflect the changing needs of the population a variety of developing initiatives are being designed to equip learners with the skills that make them valuable employees and candidates for further educational opportunities.

As the sector explores new and more flexible routes of learning the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in collaboration with Volunteering England (VE) decided to carry out this research to assess the impact volunteering has on the sector to ascertain what role, if any, volunteering can play in developing learners.

In 2007 the most common field of interest for volunteers was education – 18 per cent of the adult population and 31 per cent of current volunteers volunteered within schools, colleges and universities.

- Helping Out: a National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving (2007)¹

About the Organisations

The Learning and Skills Council

The Learning and Skills Council exists to make England better skilled and more competitive.

We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to ensure we have a workforce of world-class standard.

The LSC is a non-departmental public body which began work in 2001, taking over the roles of the former Further Education Funding Council and Training and Enterprise Councils.

The LSC are responsible for planning and funding high quality education and training for everyone in England other than those in universities. The national office is in Coventry with nine regional offices overseeing the work of local partnership teams throughout the county. Our annual budget for 2006-07 is £10.4 billion.

The LSC's major tasks are to:

- raise participation and achievement by young people
- increase adult demand for learning
- raise skills levels for national competitiveness
- improve the quality of education and training delivery
- equalise opportunities through better access to learning
- improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the sector

The LSC's vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce.

¹http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/helping_out_national_survey_2007.pdf

Volunteering England and the Student Volunteering Team

Volunteering England is an independent voluntary agency committed to supporting, enabling and celebrating volunteering in all its diversity. The work links research, policy innovation, good practice and grant making in the involvement of volunteers.

As a strategic partner of Government, VE works at the forefront of volunteering to advise and ensure best practice, advice, innovation and support continual development.

The Student Volunteering Team at Volunteering England has been working to support students to make a difference to their local and wider communities for over 25 years. We support the nationwide network of student volunteers and workers. The team runs National Student Volunteering Week, which provides a chance to profile and celebrate the achievements of student volunteers. We also organise conferences, training events and awards for exceptional student volunteers.

The work of the team had previously supported over 42,000 student volunteers, mainly from Higher Education.

Going Further

In January 2006 the Student Volunteering Team at Volunteering England launched the Going Further project funded by the Big Lottery Fund. This pilot initiative is designed to build a volunteering ethos in the further education sector by supporting six further education colleges to develop and establish volunteering projects for their learners, and then sharing the learning to enable other colleges to take part.

The project was developed in response to an increasing number of requests from colleges asking for support from the Student Volunteering Team to set up volunteering opportunities for their learners. This coincided with an emerging policy landscape that recognised the vital role volunteering plays in developing skills and enhancing employability. Traditionally the team had only worked with universities but the organisation saw the huge potential for FE volunteering and believed, like many of the current policy developments, that volunteering opportunities should be available to all.

Going Further Case Studies

The six Going Further Colleges represent a varied range of institutions, from their size to location to learner make up. As a result they have created a diverse range of projects but at the heart of each is a proven commitment and enthusiasm for volunteering.

A snapshot of the Going Further Colleges:

Bridgwater College

Bridgwater College has a well established volunteering history and has opportunities within the college which are open to all learners; the college also has an ongoing project which enables learners with learning disabilities to take full part in this volunteering programme. Most recently the college has introduced a new volunteering scheme called “Green Pioneers” which is an environmentally focused volunteering group, the idea for the project came from student suggestions.

The college is introducing the International Baccalaureate in September 2008 and as part of this the college’s volunteering provision will expand to ensure learners can access placements within the community and a member of staff has been recruited to support this process.

Harrogate College

Harrogate College demonstrate their belief in the power of volunteering by using volunteering opportunities to develop their learner’s leadership skills. The college has developed a leadership programme which includes engaging learners in volunteering opportunities therefore allowing them to practice what they have learnt in the classroom to the benefit of the local community. The students will then be building a portfolio of the skills and knowledge gained and their own reflections on what the volunteering experience has meant for them.

Liverpool Community College

Liverpool Community College is able to expand its volunteering capacity by making links with external agencies that can help provide opportunities for the college’s learners. The college is taking part in Liverpool’s City of Culture year by accessing training for it’s learners to enable them to volunteer in associated events and activities. The staff at the college are supportive of learners volunteering ideas and support learners to see them through, as well as running a range of volunteering activities through the year that are becoming increasingly popular.

Newcastle College

Newcastle College

Newcastle College is one of the largest in the country and works hard to ensure enrichment activities for its’ many learners. Volunteering plays an integral part in the enrichment opportunities the college provides and there is a thriving Student’s Union with voluntary Executive Officer posts as well as a range of other opportunities for learners including peer support and advice roles.

Oxford and Cherwell Valley College

Oxford and Cherwell Valley College has developed a pioneering peer mentoring project in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council Social Services and Volunteering England. The project is designed to support vulnerable learners through their qualifications, with mentors supporting them to fulfil their potential at college. The project has received funding support from Oxfordshire County Council Social Services and Aim Higher and has achieved national media coverage due to its ground breaking work.

Tower Hamlets College (London)

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has a history of community action which is reflected in the volunteering carried out by the college. A great deal of informal volunteering is done by learners and the college works hard to offer a range of opportunities within the college and in the local community. The college has consulted with it's learners to find out the types of volunteering they would like to engage in, and they are able to offer ongoing opportunities at the many events the college puts on throughout the year, as well as opportunities in the immediate community, including local schools.

Association of College Managers

'The ACM believes the Further Education sector must be shaped by the needs of learners. Learners should be given every opportunity to develop and improve their skill base and we believe volunteering is integral to achieving this. We would endorse every FE student being given the opportunity to volunteer and FE providers having resources available to them to make this a reality'.

Key Findings

The Going Further project has enabled six colleges to focus on their volunteering activities and receive specialist support to help develop their opportunities. There seems to be a great enthusiasm for volunteering however in the sector generally it seems that volunteering provision is sporadic and there is a lack of clarity about what is actually taking place and the difference volunteering can and does make.

In collaboration with the Learning and Skills Council, Volunteering England decided to engage in this piece of research with the purpose of assessing the impact volunteering has while studying in Further Education on an FE learner's skill development and the wider impact on the College. The research is also being used a way to get a snapshot of what volunteering activities are currently taking place in the FE sector as well as highlighting best practice examples.

Methodology

Volunteering England has used a variety of methods to collect the data for the research:

All the surveys and interviews undertaken were based on the Institute for Volunteering Research, 'Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit.'

The surveys were circulated widely on a range of web mailbases used by workers in FE as well as learners.

Case study interviews were held with workers, learners, senior managers, other FE providers, FE sector representatives and former FE learners.

Examples of the survey and case study questions can be found in the appendix (p27).

Learner Survey results

100% of the students who were volunteering rated the experience as beneficial, citing reasons including that it was a fun way to spend time, improved their skills, help to guide career path.

The most popular reasons people volunteered was because it enabled them to give something back to their communities and that it allowed them to do something good for other people.

95.9% said they would definitely recommend volunteering to others

44.6% of students found their volunteering opportunity through their FE institution

The majority of the volunteering opportunities that the students were engaging in were:

Mentoring

Fundraising

Working with the elderly

Working in schools/after school clubs and with young people

Environmental projects

College based opportunities such as Course Representatives/College

Magazines/Student Unions

Learners who aren't volunteering

33% of the non volunteers felt that their courses meant they didn't have time to volunteer

0.8% of recipients said that they thought volunteering was boring and old fashioned

'Volunteering is a free education' Student Newcastle College

Survey results from FE staff with volunteering as part of their remit

48.3% were able to spend between two and four hours a week on volunteering

60.9 % received support from external volunteering organisations
Examples of the organisations that colleges received support from include, Millennium Volunteers, local Volunteer Centres and more recently vteams, whose workers are employed to increase volunteering opportunities for young people either within an organisation or for a geographical location, they are funded by the youth volunteering charity, v.

55.6% felt their work in volunteering is supported by their institution

52.2% supported students to come up with their own volunteering ideas.

27.8% strongly agreed that volunteering is high priority in their institution. This is in comparison with the Senior Managers in colleges who 100% believed that volunteering was a high priority, albeit with the caveat that it had to take second place compared to getting learners through their qualifications and courses.

83.3% agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to be able to offer more volunteering opportunities

Workers believed categorically that volunteering made a positive difference to their students. They believed volunteering boosted students confidence and self-esteem, that communication and inter-personal skills improved, that the students became more responsible and more focused on their future careers and education.

The two most popular types of volunteering opportunities offered were college based opportunities and one off events.

The three main barriers preventing more volunteering taking place were:

- lack of time,
- lack of staffing resources
- poor student participation.

If these barriers were removed workers visions for volunteering were to have students running and leading projects, more students taking part and greater community partnerships.

National Learner Panel

'The National Learner Panel represents what all FE providers should be striving for: students who are empowered to use their voice to influence and shape their education. FE providers need to ensure they have the provision to support learners to take part in these voluntary learner voice activities and that the learner voice is heard and taken seriously.

The National Learner Panel also fully believes in the importance of developing other volunteering opportunities for students enabling them to make the most of their education.

This voluntary initiative [National Learner Panel] is mutually beneficial - the organisations who work with the panel have found it to be invaluable in shaping their thinking, but panel members themselves also benefit from the experience:

"It's a great opportunity to learn about things you wouldn't necessarily learn about. It's fun too. You meet lots of people, you travel to different parts of the country and so on. Professionally and personally you learn about others views too." (Yr 1 panel member)

The Policy Landscape

As the key findings demonstrate volunteering is seen as an important option for learners however, it has become apparent that colleges and providers need a flexible approach to volunteering and that one model doesn't suit all. It is also apparent that the sector moves very quickly and is often subject to new and changing initiatives. In this chapter we will be exploring how volunteering can help institutions to comply with both existing and developing FE policies and qualifications.

The following extracts from government reports and policies show the potential links student volunteering can make to the further education sector, helping the sector to improve opportunities and meet government targets.

Every Child Matters (2004)²

Background

The aim of Every Child Matters is to ensure every child and young person has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Every college is assessed by Ofsted on how they meet the requirements of Every Child Matters.

How volunteering can support the delivery of Every Child Matters

A volunteering presence can provide an essential quality measure and evidence for an FE provider. Below are extracts of 'The Common Inspection Framework for inspecting education and training' from Ofsted.

'The reviews will evaluate the extent to which for each area the following five outcomes for children and young people are being met:

1. Being healthy
2. Staying safe
3. Enjoying and achieving
- 4. Making a positive contribution**
5. Achieving economic wellbeing

How the inspectorates will judge the positive contribution

- a. Children & young people have opportunities to provide mentoring support to others
- b. Children & young people are encouraged to take part in and to initiate voluntary activities to support the community and environment

Association of Colleges

'The millions of students in our colleges are a very powerful source of volunteering activity and their contributions should be actively encouraged. It is important that each and every learner is given the opportunity to benefit from the new skills and new experiences that volunteering can offer'.

LSC Working Together Strategy: Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector (September 2004)³

Background

This strategy outlines how and why the FE sector and Voluntary and Community sector should work together to achieve common outcomes and serve both the community and workforce.

² www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

³ <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/pre2005/research/consultation/working-together-strategy-for-the-voluntary-and-community-sector-and-the-lsc.pdf>

How volunteering can support the delivery of the LSC Working Together Strategy

Voluntary and Community Sector organisations draw on some 3 million unpaid workers. Their work is estimated to be equivalent to another 1.3 million full-time jobs, with a financial value of over £15 billion). Volunteering is essential to the nature and functioning of the sector, and also helps people develop skills, find paid work and progress to further learning and training.

Volunteering is also an effective method for up-skilling people for working in the sector

Russell Commission (March 2005) ⁴

Background

A Government commissioned report on recommendations for a national framework for youth action and engagement.

How volunteering can support the delivery of the Russell Commission

“Recommendation 4:

It should be commonplace for **young people to volunteer whilst they are at school, college** or in higher education.

All FE colleges, sixth form colleges, and work-based training institutions should have links with local volunteer centres..... There is evidence of a gap in level of volunteering in FE institutions compared to HE institutions where there is a well developed student volunteering network.

Recommendation 11:

The opportunity to improve skills and employability is a powerful incentive for young people to volunteer.”

LSC Sustainable Development Strategy (September 2005) ⁵

Background

The Learning and Skills Council's (LSC's) strategy for sustainable development looks at how the LSC and the learning and skills sector can work together to contribute to sustainable development.

⁴ <http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/russellcommission/report/index.html>

⁵ <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/2005/ourbusiness/strategy/from-here-to-sustainability-lsc-strategy-for-sustainable-development.pdf>

How volunteering can support the delivery of the LSC Sustainable Development Strategy

There are recommendations for a series of key actions relating to: buildings and estates; the curriculum; community engagement, and positioning the sector.

A supporting document giving the background and details of this strategy is available on the LSC website (www.lsc.gov.uk)

- “Consultation: some respondents wanted more action on environmental management systems, procurement, volunteering and healthy colleges
- Key actions for the community: volunteering: encourage learners and providers to undertake volunteering activity as part of a community commitment to sustainable development.”

White Paper: Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances (March 2006) ⁶

Background

The Department for Education and Skills white paper addressed the need of the FE sector to be providing opportunities that upskill learners and increasing the future productivity of our nation.

How volunteering can support the delivery of the White Paper

“Opportunities to undertake volunteering activities can enrich the learning experience in FE and promote active citizenship. Volunteering can enable students to develop the soft skills required by employers, strengthen providers’ engagement with their local communities and help foster an inclusive ethos.”⁷

‘I wouldn’t be in the job I’m in now if it wasn’t for volunteering’. Lucy Downes, Head of Youth Work, North Yorkshire Youth and Former FE student volunteer

⁶ <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/furthereducation/docs/6514-FE%20White%20Paper.pdf>

⁷ DFES, Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances, p37, March 2006

National Improvement Strategy (September 2006) ⁸

Background:

In the White Paper, *Further education: raising skills, improving life chances* (March 2006), the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) was asked by the Government to lead the development of an integrated Improvement Strategy that would support the further education system. It aims to transform the further education system so that it offers the highest quality and value, and equips young people and adults for employability and personal fulfillment.

How volunteering can support the delivery of the National Improvement Strategy

The Improvement Strategy implementation plan sets out a comprehensive list of improvement actions. These actions refer to and impact upon several initiatives that have a link to volunteering like, the learner voice, the Skills for Life, Train to Gain programmes and the 14-19 diplomas.

Leitch Review of Skills and Implementation Strategy (December 2006) ⁹

Background

The Leitch review of skills outlines the need for the UK to further develop the skills of the population to accommodate the changing economic climate by 2020. The report has outlined many recommendations and next steps for all stakeholders, which includes recommendations for the FE sector.

How volunteering can support the delivery of the Leitch Review of Skills

“Over 70% of employers would hire someone with voluntary experience over someone without.” TimeBank

Evidence has shown the value of volunteering for developing the skills and experiences sought after by employers. When curriculum such as Train to Gain for Volunteers is being developed, FE providers can include volunteering as an effective means of developing skills in their learners.

⁸ <http://www.qia.org.uk/pursuingexcellence>

⁹ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/leitch_review/review_leitch_index.cfm

Learner Involvement Strategy (February 2007) ¹⁰

Background

Every FE institution is expected to have a strategy for involving learners in the direction, delivery and monitoring of the learning in their FE Institution.

How volunteering can support the delivery of the Learner Involvement Strategy

Provider organisations will be expected to have:

- An independent learner committee or student council – who would be volunteers
- Learner representatives – including course representatives and student governors. All of which would be volunteers
- Student Committees
- Links to student-led activities such as Student Associations or Student Unions

The Ten Year Youth Strategy (July 2007) ¹¹

Background

This strategy looks at how the Government can help all young people, particularly those in deprived areas, to take part in enjoyable activities in their free time which can help them develop new skills and raise their aspirations.

“More young people are volunteering than any other age group and making a positive contribution in their communities – in 2005 around half of 16-19s were providing informal help within their communities, while a third were formal volunteers.”

How volunteering can support the delivery of the Ten Year Youth Strategy

‘Volunteering: making a difference to the community can alter young people’s aspirations and the way they see themselves’.

Evidence from the Young Volunteer Challenge (YVC) Pilot Programme¹², demonstrated the impact of volunteering on different groups of young people. After nine months, those with few or no qualifications experienced an increase in confidence and their ability to handle work situations; better qualified young people had higher aspirations about future education and employment.”

¹⁰ <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-developingalearnerinvolvementstrategy-pu-feb2007.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/tenyearyouthstrategy>

Further Education and Training Act (October 2007) ¹²

Background

The Bill takes forward many of the reforms announced in the White Paper *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances*.

How volunteering can support the delivery of the Further Education and Training Act

Volunteering plays an integrative role in the following areas of the act:

Young Persons Mentor:

“Where the young person is in training or employment, the mentor shall be nominated by the person who provides the training or employment for the young person.”

The mentor’s duties shall include—

- (a) Assisting the young person in preparation for undertaking post-16 full-time and part-time education qualifications;
- (b) Assisting the young person in preparation for post-16 training;
- (c) Advising on career development and employment opportunities; and
- (d) Advising on acquiring other skills and on other opportunities, including engaging in voluntary work.**

Community Leadership Programme:

‘The Secretary of State may provide or secure the provision of services to encourage, enable or assist (directly or indirectly) the creation of programmes for young persons to develop skills and qualifications.

The programmes shall in particular make provision for the development of leadership skills and skills for future employment. The Secretary of State may, in particular—

Consult voluntary bodies which provide youth and adult training, **training in skills**, management and enterprise, **community projects**, training and employment schemes and services, including those for young persons with special educational needs or those with disabilities;

¹² http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070025_en_1

Public Service Agreement Targets (October 2007) ¹³

Background

The aim of these targets is to help build a competitive economy and inclusive society.

How volunteering can support the delivery of the Public Service Agreement Targets

The targets promote creating opportunities for everyone to develop their learning; releasing potential in people to make the most of themselves; achieving excellence in standards of education and level of skill.

There is also an emphasis on community cohesion and providing opportunities for communities to come together which is often one of the outcomes of volunteering.

14-19 Reforms ¹⁴

Background

The White Paper sets out the detail of this reform programme, building Sir Mike Tomlinson and his Working Group on 14-19 Reform and from the work of the successful school and college partnerships we are already seeing in local communities.

How volunteering can support the delivery of the 14-19 Reforms

Links to improving the strategies set out in Tomlinson.

The London Student Pledge

The London Student Pledge aims to widen the experiences and aspirations of all young people in the capital. The local authority and schools in each borough are working with local organisations to provide opportunities to learn across 10 broad areas of activity, inside and outside school. These include:

- Experience of volunteering

Government has recognised the critical contribution that volunteering makes to building a strong and cohesive society. It has promoted volunteering as '*the essential act of citizenship*', a means for combating social exclusion and an important contributor to the delivery of high quality public services.

¹³ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_csr07/spend_csr07_index.cfm

¹⁴ <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19>

Education and Skills Bill ¹⁵

Background

The Bill contains measures to encourage more young people to participate in post-16 learning and to achieve higher levels of skill and qualifications, so that by 2015, all 18 year olds are participating in some form of education or training.

The current proposals realise the skills that young people can gain through volunteering, and have included this as a form of participation. This again demonstrates the need to build a volunteering ethos within further education.

Further information on these proposals will be available upon the publication of the bill.

The Role of Further Education Providers in Promoting Community Cohesion, Fostering Shared Values and Preventing Violent Extremism (Consultation Document 2008) ¹⁶

Background

The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and the Association of Colleges are undertaking a consultation which looks at how FE can promote community cohesion and shared values to prevent violent extremism.

How volunteering can support the promotion of community cohesion

'Colleges should encourage students/learners to play an active role in their local communities which will enrich their whole college and educational experience and develop skills and knowledge that will be useful in their future careers.

Encouraging and facilitating volunteering opportunities will empower students/learners and enable them to develop new skills and valuable opportunities to meet with others from different backgrounds and cultures'¹⁷.

¹⁵ <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2007-08/educationandskills.html>

¹⁶ <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/conDetails.cfm?consultationId=1521>

¹⁷ <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/Community%20Cohesion%20PDF.pdf>

157 Group

'The 157 Group demonstrates its' belief in the power and potential of volunteering through the volunteering activities taking place in the member colleges. We believe that volunteering can enhance learners, equipping them with new skills and providing vital experiences that can lead onto employment or further educational opportunities'.

Curriculum frameworks

Echoing the key findings there are examples of institutions who have embedded volunteering in curriculum frameworks to enable them to offer volunteering opportunities rather than trying to set it up as a stand alone activity.

Embedding in the curriculum

International Baccalaureate

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme is a two-year curriculum, primarily aimed at students aged 16 to 19. It leads to a qualification that is widely recognized by the world's leading universities.

The three core requirements of the IB are:

- extended essay
- theory of knowledge
- **creativity, action, service (CAS)**

Participation in the school's CAS programme encourages students to be involved in artistic pursuits, sports and **community service work**, thus fostering students' awareness and appreciation of life outside the academic arena.

The English Baccalaureate

The AQA are currently developing an English equivalent of the International Baccalaureate. The new qualification will continue to have a strong focus on creativity, action and service.

'Learning shouldn't just be in the classroom, volunteering provides the opportunity to find future leaders'. Vereen Ryan, Director of Student Services, Tower Hamlets College

Opportunities on the horizon

Personal Best Programme (Olympics pre-volunteer programme)

The Personal Best is a unique opportunity, which uses the excitement of the prospect of volunteering in the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, to encourage workless and socially excluded individuals to gain new skills, engage in their communities, raise their aspirations and move nearer to the job market. Personal Best is a joint initiative between the London Development Agency and the Learning and Skills Council.

The programme has the potential to act as a catalyst, to engage individuals and communities that would not normally access volunteering opportunities or who lack the skills to volunteer. The aim is to deliver accredited training to beneficiaries who have low or no qualifications and provide them with the minimum skills requirement to access the Games-Time Volunteer programme.

The key target group are the unemployed and economically inactive and the programme's aim is to tackle the high levels of worklessness in London by using Olympic volunteering opportunities as a route into employment. The programme will comprise of formally accredited modules – such as health and safety, first aid, Olympic spirit, customer care, as well as some basic skills training and broader employability skills.

It will be crucial that graduates from the Personal Best programme are able to gain volunteering experience or work experience and therefore that appropriate volunteering opportunities are made available to them. This is also linked to broader national initiatives such as the Volunteering for All programme which aims to remove barriers to volunteering for groups at risk of exclusion and the Goldstar programme which aims to provide and disseminate good practice for volunteering opportunities. Work is underway to bring the PBP into the Qualifications and Credit Framework.

Qualification Reform

From August 2008 the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) will be open for business after a period of two years of testing and trialling. The QCF is part of the Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme and is the introduction of a unit based qualification framework with credit accumulation and transfer. It is intended that the QCF will be a more flexible and responsive framework than the current National Qualifications Framework (NQF), allowing a wider range of achievement to be recognised and learning to take place in 'bite size steps'.

Foundation Learning Tier

The LSC and QCA are working together to reform provision below Level 2. By 2010 a revised set of credit based unit and qualifications will be in place with clear progression routes through Entry and Level 1 to Level 2 in order to raise participation and achievement amongst learners and help them progress through work and life. This programme is known as the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT). A key outcome of the FLT reform is the development of Progression Pathways. These are frameworks for learning built from Entry and level 1 units and qualifications within the new Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF). Each Progression Pathways will contain three distinct components.

- Vocational knowledge, skills and understanding
- Functional Skills
- **Personal and social development**

Personal and social development will comprise interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills, and wider community development skills including amongst others, citizenship and rights and responsibilities.

These will be supported by a wrap around of information, advice and guidance, effective initial assessment, comprehensive ongoing review and provider collaboration. Progression Pathways are specifically designed to promote progression as well as helping learners to achieve nationally recognised qualifications at Entry Level and Level 1.

The Progression Pathways identified as priorities for development in 2007/08; are intended to provide progression to:

- A first full level 2
- To skills work (including an apprenticeship)
- To independent living or supported employment
- To a Foundation (level 1) Diploma or GCSEs

During 2007/2008 the LSC is modeling and developing Progression Pathways with phased implementation from August 2008 to 2010 with a range of providers.

Train to Gain for Volunteers

The Learning and Skills Council's Train to Gain service provides impartial, independent advice on training to businesses across England. It can help businesses improve their productivity and competitiveness by ensuring that employees have the right skills to do the best job.

In November 2007, the Government announced the extension of the Train to Gain scheme. The new scheme will see the service extended to volunteers and provide training to enhance the skills development and volunteer experience.

Provider case studies

There are many different ways that FE can engage and offer volunteering opportunities, below are two case studies of organisations providing volunteering opportunities in different ways.

Rathbone

Rathbone, works towards helping anyone whose needs have not been met by education, or who needs support to overcome their barriers to learning, training or employment.

The organisation currently educates and trains over 10,000 children, young people and adults every year from training centres and residential projects across England, Scotland and Wales.

Rathbone believe that every young person has the ability to learn, to make progress and to achieve. They believe that participation in learning and the experience of success through learning are fundamental to enabling young people to make an effective transition into adulthood and independence.

Rathbone's work is focused on four key target groups and programmes:

- Young people aged 14-16 who are either wholly or partially excluded from school - through our Youth Choices programmes.
- Young people aged 16-19 who are not yet ready for work or further study – through our Pre-Vocational Training programmes: Entry to Employment (e2e) in England, Skill Build in Wales and Get Ready for Work in Scotland.
- Young people aged 16-24 who are ready to embark on training for work – through our Apprenticeship programmes.

- Young people aged 14-19 who are not in education, training or employment – through our Youth Engagement programme and programmes for young people who have offended.

Rathbone has also gained considerable experience of involving young people in volunteering. Through Millennium Volunteers' (MV) projects, more than 600 young people have gained valuable skills and made a positive contribution to their work during 2005/2006.

Everyone gains by young people volunteering – young people benefit, the community benefits, and services and organisations benefit as young people are given the chance to participate and make a positive impact.

How volunteering has directly affected young people at Rathbone:

Tabbassum Bukhari

Tabbassum Bukhari started her voluntary programme 13th November 2007, wanting to gain confidence, while helping others. She was introduced to Rathbone MV by her cousin who was on an E2E programme at Rathbone at the time. Tabbassum found it difficult to communicate from the start as English was her second language. However with determination, guidance and support her voluntary commitment has been outstanding and been an integral part of her life progression.

At the beginning Tabbassum was nervous and refined, unaware of what to expect. However after initial support, guidance and reflection of her ambitions, and interests of gaining knowledge and skills in the Retail industry, a placement was quickly found at Oxfam.

While still acquiring personal support she has progressed to display fantastic conviction in her abilities to learn in a variety of retail skills from till training to customer service. Thankful of the support within Rathbone, she has quickly gained a positive working relationship within Oxfam - so much so that she is now in charge of her own department/floor, in Bridal Ware.

Her passion and determination to achieve, developed through volunteering, has given her enough confidence to enrol on to a college course at the Leicester Adult Education College, where she is studying English and Mathematics. Giving her the perfect opportunity to share skills learnt within her placement and her college course.

Tabbasum is the perfect example of how a young person, especially with English as a second language, can find time to increase her potential through volunteering and helping others.

Bella Evans

Volunteer of the Year 2007
Huddersfield Centre

Volunteering has made a huge difference to Bella's life. She had experienced problems at home and school where she was bullied. These negative experiences hampered her attempts to forge a career in the performing arts. Although she started a BTEC National Diploma, she was constantly being disciplined for her attitude. Bella then volunteered to join a cheerleading squad and her life changed totally. Whilst cheerleading, the squad learned about fitness, teamwork and responsibilities. Bella grew in confidence and quickly won the respect of her peers, becoming captain and helping to coach other team members.

Mature, reliable and diplomatic, she has thrived in these responsible roles and has organised showcase events that have raised money for local children's charities. Bella is living proof that volunteering can make a difference to others as well as the volunteers themselves.

"I have enjoyed learning new skills and having the chance to prove myself. I now have lots of confidence."

Bella Evans

The Learning and Skills Network

The Learning and Skills Network (LSN) is an independent not-for-profit organisation committed to making a difference to learning and skills.

One of the programmes the LSN delivers on behalf of the QIA (Quality Improvement Agency) is the Post-16 Citizenship Support Programme which works with school sixth forms, six form colleges, further education and tertiary colleges, training providers, employers, youth services, voluntary groups and offender educators.

The LSN believes that citizenship education is an important part of the development of young people. It enables them to learn about their rights and responsibilities, to understand how society works, and to develop knowledge and understanding of social and political issues. It prepares them for dealing with the challenges they face in work and life. Volunteering and community action are important aspects of citizenship. Through citizenship education, young people can take action on issues of concern to themselves and to play an active part in the democratic process, thereby becoming more effective members of society.

LSN's aim is to encourage providers of education and training, whatever their setting, to enable young learners to develop their citizenship knowledge, skills and understanding, and give them the opportunities to put this learning into practice.

The QIA Post-16 Citizenship Programme, both in its development and its support phases, has encouraged education and training providers in the post-16 sector to support young people in making a difference and bringing about a change within their own learning organisation or their local community.

Citizenship champion in the QIA Post-16 Citizenship Support Programme:

City College Norwich

The aim of the citizenship programme at City College Norwich is to develop students a skills set and knowledge base in order to enable them to participate in college life, contribute to the very active Student Union and to enact change where needed. Students at City College are involved in all levels of the decision making process through the voluntary structure of Course Representation and the Student Parliament. Students also sit on the Board of Governors, the Finance Committee, Health and Safety Committee and the Inclusive Learning Committee.

Citizenship is also incorporated into the wider Enrichment Programme. Student-led focus groups are used to identify students' needs and from this a range of opportunities are offered.

The events weeks and guest lectures form part of the College's commitment to promoting diversity and providing an insight in to other cultures with the overall aim of broadening our students' horizons. Peer mentoring and fundraising for charities promotes the sense of social and moral responsibility, while participating in college debates enhances students' awareness of controversial and political issues.

Activities with citizenship focus include:

- M8 ('mate') mentoring scheme; a volunteer peer mentoring scheme where learners identify issues to raise awareness with their fellow students.
- Debating Society: The College has monthly debates and also has a debating forum set up on-line.
- Citizenship events; during the academic year, educational events weeks with a citizenship theme are organised.
- The Student Union; There is a very active Student Union whose activities incorporate managing the 'Course Rep' scheme and Student Parliament.
- Fundraising; the Enrichment Programme is linking in with the charity the Norwich-Dedza Partnership which raises awareness of the differences and similarities in the ways or life in Norwich and the Dedza district in Malawi.

Conclusions

Engaging learners in volunteering can lead to a number of positive outcomes, both for the learners and the institutions, and indeed for the wider communities. The result of this is that learners are increasingly being encouraged to engage in a wide range of volunteering activities. This has been further developed as a result of the implicit shift in emphasis within 'Every Child Matters' away from 'attainment' towards 'enjoying and achieving' and 'making a positive contribution'. The sector is aware of these benefits of volunteering however, ensuring all learners have access to volunteering opportunities is a greater challenge.

Based on our findings and the policy landscape we have developed the following recommendations which we believe will enable the sector to integrate volunteering in such a way as to compliment what already exists rather than having to necessarily to develop a whole new volunteering initiative. Responsibility for these recommendations lies at different levels and requires cross sector thinking.

Recommendations

Volunteer Co-ordinators and Funding

The sources of funding that FE can access are limited and we believe that there should be dedicated funding streams for FE volunteering that institutions and learners can access for staffing and project costs.

Embedding Volunteering in Existing Provisions

Volunteering runs through so many aspects of FE life: the Learner Voice, Citizenship education, qualifications like the International Baccalaureate, Foundation Learning Tier, it's a way to engage the Not in Education Employment or Training category (NEET) with programmes like Personal Best. We believe the sector should be thinking about how volunteering can fit into existing work, spending time to map potential areas that could incorporate volunteering to enhance what provisions already exists.

The Third Sector and Beyond, Working Together

Volunteering agencies, voluntary sector groups, student organisations, membership groups should be coming together to map what work they are doing to explore potential work that organisations could do together or at least to be aware of what is happening. This would enable more coordinated action which would hopefully mean that colleges and providers aren't being pulled in too many conflicting directions.

Organisations working in the same field need to come together so share multiple messages on one platform, so workers aren't bombarded with meetings to attend and emails to respond to, but still have the opportunity to network with fellow institutions.

Sector Wide Volunteering Strategy

Encouraging institutions and organisations with a vested interest in volunteering in FE to work together and map their activities will allow the development of a sector wide volunteering strategy, embedding volunteering into FE life. The strategy would provide the FE sector with a platform to demonstrate their belief in the importance of volunteering opportunities for all and set out tangible goals for organisations to achieve and work towards. This work will include establishing steering groups of FE organisations, colleges and providers who will guide a sector wide conference to begin the process for drafting the strategy which will enhance learners abilities to access quality volunteering opportunities.

Employer Involvement

Volunteering has a significant impact on the development of skills amongst those that take part and makes an important contribution to improving an individual's employability.

Employers are worried about the skill set of the emerging workforce and one way we could tackle this is to engage in dialogue with employers to ensure they know the benefit of employing those learners who have volunteered and what skills they are likely to have.

The Importance of Reflection and Recognition

It is important that the value of volunteering is recognised by both those taking part and in the wider community. We believe learners should have the time to reflect back on what they have learnt from their opportunity and supported in logging the skills they have developed. We believe FE providers should explore the existing volunteering accreditation models available to see if they are relevant for their learners.

Quality Opportunities

It is vital that the volunteering activities available to learners are quality opportunities which means working with community groups and anyone else providing opportunities to ensure that both parties are aware of what roles will entail, the level of responsibility and the commitment necessary from the learner.

Agency Support

We believe the FE sector needs volunteering agency support, who would provide advice, training, information, signposting to relevant organisations, access to resources and to raise awareness of volunteering within the sector.

Appendix

Bibliography

- Aiming High for Young People: a ten year strategy for positive activities:
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/tenyearyouthstrategy>
- Comprehensive Spending Review: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_csr07/spend_csr07_index.cfm
- Every Child Matters, Change for Children www.everychildmatters.gov.uk
- 14-19 reforms <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19>
- Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/furthereducation/docs/6514-FE%20White%20Paper.pdf>
- Leitch review of skills: Skills in the UK: The long term challenges
http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/leitch_review/review_leitch_index.cfm
- Russell Commission: A National Framework for Youth Action and Engagement
<http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/russellcommission/report/index.html>

Useful Links

- Association of Colleges <http://www.aoc.co.uk>
- Association of College Managers <http://www.acm.uk.com>
- International Baccalaureate <http://www.ibo.org>
- Learning and Skills Council (LSC) <http://www.lsc.gov.uk>
- Learning and Skills Network <http://www.lseducation.org.uk>
- National Learner Panel
http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/AdultLearning/DG_068290
- Quality and Improvement Agency <http://www.qia.org.uk>
- Personal Best Programme
<http://www.london2012.com/news/archive/2007-10/londoners-achieve-personal-best.php>
- Rathbone <http://www.rathboneuk.org/default.aspx>
- Train to Gain <http://www.traintogain.gov.uk>
- Volunteering England www.volunteeringengland.org
- v: Youth Volunteering Charity www.wearev.com
- 157 Group <http://www.157group.co.uk>

- Volunteering for All Programme
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/volunteering/volunteering_for_all.aspx
- Goldstar
<http://www.goldstar.org.uk/>

Breakdown of Participants

Learners

No of Participants	Age Ranges	Gender	Ethnicity:	Registered Disability
143	16 years old, 29%	Male 42.6%	White British 71.6%	Yes, 2%
	17yrs, 34%	Female 57.4%	White Irish 2%	
	18yrs, 19%		White and Black Caribbean 1%	
	19yrs, 3%		White and Asian 1%	
	Over 20yrs, 15%		Other mixed background 1%	
			Indian 4.9%	
			Pakistani 2%	
			Bangladeshi 3.9%	
			Black Caribbean 2%	
			Black African 3.9%	
			Any other Black background 1%	
			Chinese 1%	
			Other 4.7%	

Staff: Number of Participants: 48

Surveys Used

Learners

1. What course are you on?

2. In your opinion what is volunteering?

Please tick all that apply

- A chance to give something back to the community
- Something you should be paid to do
- A chance to gain new skills
- A way to meet new people
- Something other people do
- Giving up your time to do something good for other people
- Boring and old fashioned
- Something I have tried
- Something I would like to try
- Other (please specify)

If you do not volunteer please move to question 8

3. What volunteering do you do?

4. How did you find out about your volunteering opportunity?

Please choose one

- Through the College Student's Union
- Through the College Enrichment Programme
- Through a Volunteer Centre
- From a charity or community group
- From a friend or family member
- Other (please specify)

5. Would you recommend volunteering to other people?

Yes No

6. What qualities have you gained from volunteering?
Please tick all that apply

- Increased confidence
- Better team working skills
- Improved communication skills
- Improved self-esteem
- Other (please specify)

7. What else would you like to say about your volunteering experiences?

Please now go to question 10.

Please answer these questions if you do not currently volunteer

8. If you have volunteered in the past, what made you stop?

9. What would inspire you to volunteer?

Please tick all that apply

- If I could create my own project
- If my friends were doing it
- If it meant I could get a qualification
- If it meant I would get some kind of financial reward
- Nothing!
- If I could find a project that interests me
- If college encouraged me to volunteer/offered opportunities
- If I had the time to do it
- Other (please specify)

10. How old are you?

11. Are you registered disabled?

- Yes
- No

12. Are you....

- Male
- Female

4. How would you describe your ethnicity?
Please choose one

- White British
- White Irish
- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed background
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Any other Asian Background
- Black Caribbean
- Black African
- Any other Black background
- Chinese
- Other (please specify)

Workers

What is your job title?

2. How long have you been in this post?

- Less than a year
- Between one to two years
- Two to three years
- Over three years

3. Which college department does your job sit in?

4. On average how many hours a week are you able to spend on volunteering?

- Less than two hours
- Between two and four hours

- Between five and eight hours
- Over eight hours

5. Who supports you in providing volunteering opportunities?
Please tick all that apply

- Other college staff
- Student Union
- Local Community Groups
- External Volunteering Organisations
- Other (please specify)

6. What type of volunteering do you offer?
Please tick all that apply

- Brokerage - placing volunteers with community organisations
- Student led - supporting students ideas
- College based - opportunities based within the college
- College led - opportunities designed by the college
- One off - events or taster sessions
- Other (please specify)

7. How do students find out about your volunteering opportunities?

8. How many students engaged in volunteering in the last academic year, 2006- 2007?

9. Your experiences

Please circle the statement you agree with

Do you agree....

- a) Volunteering is a high priority for the college

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree or Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

b) I am well supported in your volunteering work

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

c) I would like to offer more volunteering opportunities

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. How would you like volunteering to develop in your college?

11. If there are barriers preventing more volunteering taking place what are they?

12. What difference do you see in students who volunteer? (Any examples given will be kept anonymous)

13. What is your vision for student volunteering in your college?

14. What would you need to make this vision happen?

Senior Managers

1. When did you start offering volunteering activities/opportunities?
2. Why does the college offer volunteering opportunities?
3. How highly does the college prioritise volunteering?
4. What does the college regard as the key benefits of volunteering for its students and for the college?
5. What resources are the colleges able to dedicate to volunteering?
6. Do you see volunteering to be in the college's long term future? How does it fit in?

7. Does volunteering help the college comply with any LSC/Gov't initiatives? If so which ones?
8. How can the sector have a more uniformed approach to volunteering?
9. Do you think volunteering is an appropriate activity for all students?
10. Does the college have existing partnerships that could help take volunteering forward?
11. Does the college have a cross department approach to volunteering or does it sit within one area?
12. Would the college consider introducing volunteering as part of academic courses/does this happen already?
13. What is your vision for student volunteering and what would you need to make it happen?

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