TIME WELL SPENT
VOLUNTEERING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Research Report
January 2020

NCVO

FOREWORD

Volunteers want to give back and make a difference. Often, and for some causes in particular, the organisations that they support will be in the public sector. In this thematic report, which draws on NCVO's study *Time Well Spent* – perhaps the most significant survey of its kind for over a decade – we look at those giving their time in public services, rather than in charities or elsewhere.

Findings from *Time Well Spent* are already influencing practice among organisations that involve volunteers. This series of focused reports that follow look at areas which have raised questions for further exploration – the first was on employer-supported volunteering.

It's abundantly clear that volunteers have a lot to offer public service organisations. The benefits are to organisations, to volunteers and, most crucially, to all of society.

The scale and range of this volunteering is substantial, with volunteers active everywhere from hospitals to the police, from boardrooms to the day-to-day delivery of our public services. Almost all of the volunteering is local

and, in many instances, volunteers are managed by paid staff. But it is important to be clear that volunteering is not about delivering services cheaply. This is about improving the experience of people using services, improving the culture and quality of services, and strengthening the links between services and communities. It is not about replacing or substituting staff.

There are some key messages from the research. These include opportunities to make better use of volunteers' skills, encourage greater understanding among paid staff of the value volunteers can bring, facilitate the engagement of a more diverse group of volunteers, and seek to avoid the feeling that regular commitment equates to obligation.

Public sector leaders, charity leaders and organisations, and unions all have a role to play in supporting, encouraging and empowering staff to involve volunteers in a positive way – with a focus on opportunities as well as risks. Being clear why volunteers are being involved is a crucial first step. Public sector staff should see it as part of their role to empower communities and volunteers to take action.

We need to recognise the many challenges that public services, and those working and

volunteering in them, face in terms of finances, demand, and changing expectations. But we can see that volunteering programmes do need investment to make them work as well as they can, and to ensure that the volunteers get the best possible experience too.

I hope that this study will help to open a discussion about what more public sector volunteers can do and what more can be done for public sector volunteers, because one clear message from this research is that if organisations want to maximise the benefit of volunteer engagement, it is vital to think about the quality of the experience.

Anne Heal
Chair, NCVO

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1. AT A GLANCE

This section provides an overview of each of the main sections of this report, including a summary of key findings.

Introduction

Section 2 provides background to this report. It outlines the scope, key aims and approach to the research. It also includes a short note on definitions.

- This report on volunteering in the public sector is the second in a series of focused reports building on our *Time Well Spent* research, which looks at the volunteer experience.

- The report draws on further analysis of the *Time Well Spent* data, focus groups with volunteers who give time to public sector organisations carried out specifically for the report, and existing literature.

- It aims to shed more light on public sector volunteers (specifically those who are involved directly in public sector organisations) and focuses on particular aspects of their experience, including their motivations and relationship with

paid staff, with a view to informing practice and policy in this area.

What does participation look like?

Section 3 explores the context of volunteering in public services, levels of volunteering, who gets involved, and what participation looks like.

- For this research we have focused on volunteering within public sector organisations in receipt of government funding, but the landscape of public service delivery is more complex.

- While making up a smaller proportion of volunteer participation overall compared with civil society (17% public sector vs 67% civil society), the scale of public sector volunteering should not be underestimated.

- Increased need for, and reliance on volunteers has been a common experience for organisations in recent years. However, recruiting volunteers has been a challenge.

- Public sector volunteers have a younger age profile than civil society volunteers though this varies by sub-sector and role. Diversity is an issue among public sector volunteers as for the overall volunteer population.

- Public sector volunteers are involved in a wide range of activities and causes, though they are generally found to give time less frequently compared with civil society volunteers.

Why do public sector volunteers get involved?

Section 4 looks at the motivations of public sector volunteers. It explores why they get involved to start with, what influences motivations and whether their motivations differ from other volunteers.

- Wanting to make a difference is the most common reason for getting involved but there are a range of other motivations, including wanting to volunteer locally – whether that be for practical reasons or to respond to a need in their local community.

- Most do not look to volunteer specifically in the public sector, although they may have underlying perceptions of different sectors which may influence their decisions.

- Motivations among public sector and civil society volunteers are similar on the whole, but for public sector volunteers volunteering for a cause of personal importance is more common than a connection to a particular organisation. Additionally, volunteering to improve career prospects is more common, especially among younger volunteers and those from the health and police sub-sectors.

What is the volunteer experience like in public sector organisations?

Section 5 looks at the experience of public sector volunteers including overall measures and perceptions of different aspects of their volunteer journey.

- Public sector volunteers are largely positive about their experience overall, with the feeling of making a difference

and enjoyment contributing to their positive views. However, public sector volunteers report lower levels of satisfaction compared with civil society volunteers and have less positive views about specific parts of their volunteer journey. Key challenges vary but volunteers commonly felt the effect of funding cuts on their volunteer experience over time.

- Public sector volunteers tend to be managed by paid staff and through more formalised processes, and they are more likely to feel it is too formalised and structured. However, getting the right balance is not easy. Perceptions, in large part, reflect expectations and these can be challenging to manage alongside addressing the needs of organisations to deliver services effectively and safely.

- Feeling their contribution is of value is important to volunteers, but in turn a lack of resources or training can lead to frustration.

- For some, volunteering can feel similar to paid work. While this in itself is not always framed negatively, when volunteering begins to feel like an obligation this can feel *too much* like paid work, especially if there is a lack of appreciation.

- For the most part the distinction between paid and voluntary roles is clear but it can depend on sub-sector and role. Tensions tend to arise most where there is a significant overlap of roles or where volunteers are doing roles which used to be undertaken by paid staff.

- Relationships between volunteers and paid staff are shaped by a number of factors including the intensity of the interaction, organisational culture and nature of the role. Across these different features, however, there are a number of common factors which drive the quality of these relationships, namely: clear roles that complement each other, appreciation and value, respect, staff morale, support and understanding, and inclusion and camaraderie.

- Around three-quarters (76%) of volunteers say they are likely to continue in the next 12 months. Motivations to continue largely reflect motivations to start volunteering.

- Some continue to volunteer despite challenges, and a sense of duty is a driver for around a quarter of participants. Where volunteers are unlikely to continue, practical reasons are often cited but experience also matters for retention.

What is the impact of public sector volunteers?

Section 6 looks at impacts of public sector volunteers, including perceptions of impacts on volunteers as well as on organisations and service users

- Feeling they make a difference and enjoyment are the most commonly perceived positive impacts of volunteering among volunteers. Volunteering can also have less positive impacts on volunteers

also, including feeling out of pocket, and too much time being taken up.

- Volunteers feel they have a positive impact on others (individuals and organisations) which organisations themselves also recognise and value. Volunteers perceive their distinctive value to be their ability to speak up and go 'beyond the necessities' for service users.

- As well as benefits, volunteers can also present challenges for volunteer-involving organisations, for example, where roles are not clear.

- The findings indicate the value of volunteers could be enhanced further, especially in relation to making better use of their skills, further training and resource, and encouraging greater understanding among paid staff of the role and value of volunteers.

What do these findings mean for practitioners and decision-makers?

Section 7 provides concluding reflections and implications of the findings

- Making broad conclusions for an area like public sector volunteering which covers such a variety of volunteering roles and contexts is a challenge.

- The research suggests that the eight key features that make up a quality experience for volunteers – as suggested by our main *Time Well Spent* report – of

being inclusive, flexible, impactful, connected, balanced, enjoyable, voluntary and meaningful – can also be considered by volunteer-involving organisations, when looking at the challenges and opportunities of volunteering in relation to volunteering practice. In the particular public sector context, these features take on a particular focus or meaning.

- In the context of volunteering in the public sector organisations the additional feature of being valued emerged as being important, both for staff-volunteer relationships and overall volunteer satisfaction and retention.

- For decision-makers we pose four key questions that might be considered. Firstly, why the organisations want to involve volunteers: being clear about this and considering how their involvement fits with the organisation's purpose, values and wider culture.

- Secondly, how to get buy-in within the organisation: thinking about involving staff, service users and wider stakeholders (eg partner organisations) and managing communications and messaging to them.

- Thirdly, how to ensure the approach taken is fair, equitable and inclusive: investing time and resource, and promoting a culture which includes people of different backgrounds, identities and experiences.

- Finally, how to engage and support volunteers, including considering different approaches to volunteer management and ensuring their voices are heard.

2. INTRODUCTION

This section provides background to this report. It outlines the scope, key aims and approach to the research.

2.1. Background

In January 2019, we published our main report, _Time Well Spent_, which focused on the experience of volunteering, as well as motivations and barriers to involvement through groups, clubs and organisations. It was based on a survey of over 10,000 members of the British public.

Building on the original research, we are releasing a series of focused reports to further explore some of the key issues raised, in more depth. The first focused report (published in June 2019) looked at employer-supported volunteering (ESV).

This report on volunteering in the public sector is the second in this series. It draws on further analysis of the _Time Well Spent_ data, focus groups carried out specifically for the report with volunteers who give time to public sector organisations, and wider literature and evidence. It aims to shed more light on public sector volunteers, and focuses on their experience, including motivations and

relationship with paid staff, with a view to informing practice and policy in this area.

2.2. Scope of the research

We recognise that volunteering in the public sector opens up a number of different avenues. However, as this series of _Time Well Spent_ reports is designed to be focused and smaller in scale than the original report, this report does not look to cover all aspects of this complex area. A summary of what is in and out of scope is outlined below:

- The focus is primarily on exploring the volunteer perspective. Initial findings from the _Time Well Spent_ data have raised some interesting questions already. This additional research allows us to dig deeper into some of these issues.

- Within the broad subject of the volunteer experience, particular areas are explored based on findings from the original Time Well Spent research warranting further exploration and covered less extensively in other research evidence. These include: motivations of volunteers in public sector organisations, relationships of volunteers with paid staff, and boundaries between volunteering and paid work.

- To ensure a manageable scope, this research looks at solely where volunteers are involved directly in public sector organisations that are funded by government to provide services. This research does <u>not</u> include volunteering through charities where it intersects with public services, whether it be charities commissioned by public bodies to deliver services or charities organising volunteers to go into services and supporting them (eg Friends of Hospitals).

- We do, however, look at the wider context of volunteering in public services and situate our remit within this (section 3.1). We also draw on literature and evidence which may not make the same distinctions and look at volunteering in public services, in the wider sense.

- This research looks at the range of sub-sectors within the public sector but does not necessarily go into every sector in great depth. We generally draw out key similarities and differences to highlight nuances which findings from _Time Well Spent_ on volunteering in public sector organisations generally did not capture.

2.3. Overall aims

The primary aim of this report is to gain a better understanding of the experience of volunteers in public sector organisations. As described above in Section 2.2, we have a focused scope for this research within our exploration of this area.

Specifically, the research aims:
- To understand the context of volunteering in public services

- To explore the motivations among volunteers in public sector organisations, including differences by demographics, type of organisation and impact of wider environment

- To look at the experience of volunteers in public sector organisations, including a comparison with civil society volunteers, in particular: their overall satisfaction and perceptions of their volunteer journey, their role and boundaries between paid work and volunteering, relationship with paid staff, and perceived benefits of public sector volunteers.

As with all the _Time Well Spent_ programme of work, the research aims to inform practice and

policy and consider key opportunities for improving the experience and impacts of volunteering.

2.4. Our approach

The research draws on a number of different data sources, summarised below. More detail can be found in the appendix.

1. *Time Well Spent* - a national survey of 10,103 people on the volunteer experience: It draws both on the *Time Well Spent* research report published in 2019, as well as further analysis of the dataset focusing on recent public sector volunteers (who gave unpaid help to a public sector organisation as their main volunteering in the last 12 months). Comparison with recent civil society volunteers has also been undertaken (note, comparison with private sector volunteers has not been included in this report).

2. Primary qualitative research carried out specifically for this report: Four focus groups, lasting 90 minutes each, with a total of 36 volunteers who had given help to public sector organisations from a range of sub-sectors in the last 12 months.
Two of the focus groups took place in the south of England, and two in the north of England. Participants for these groups were recruited independently, by an external agency using a mixture of recruitment methods to ensure the independence of the research findings.

3. A range of research and literature on public sector volunteering: including research from specific sub-sectors within the public sector – in particular, health, police, libraries, and education, and others as relevant. See the appendix for list of literature cited throughout the report.

4. Round-table discussion with stakeholders: Primarily used to inform the implications for practice and policy (see sections 7.2 and 7.3).

Stakeholders were engaged throughout the project – from early on to define the scope and inform the focus of the research to later in informing implications. In particular, they contributed expertise of certain areas of public services.

2.5. A note on definitions

Throughout this report, as in the main *Time Well Spent* report, we use the term 'volunteering' to refer to formal volunteering through groups, clubs or organisations, which is the focus of the survey. More on the definition of volunteering can be found in the appendix.

3. CONTEXT

This section explores the wider context of volunteering in public services, levels of volunteering in public sector organisations, who gets involved, what participation looks like and how it is organised.

3.1. What is the policy context?

Volunteering in public services is longstanding – but has developed over time

Voluntary action has long played a role in the delivery of public services, but it has evolved over time. Before the creation of the welfare state, voluntary action was essential to deliver services, and a number of these services and organisations still exist today primarily funded by legacies and donations such as St John's Ambulance and RNLI. State services were initially developed to address the disparities in quality and availability, but even in the early stages of the welfare state roles were being created for volunteers. For example, independent monitoring boards: statutory bodies to monitor the welfare of people in prison.

Well established volunteering roles, such as magistrates and school governors, are still involved in public service organisations, but in recent years many new roles have been developed such as police support volunteers. Policy makers have given several reasons for supporting the involvement of volunteers; to make the most of their distinctive contribution, to democratise or open up services, and to be cost effective. Support for volunteering has cut across political lines from New Labour's concept of active citizenship[1], to the Big Society agenda[2]. More recently, the civil society strategy[3] puts forward a vision of a shared society. This has been framed as a society where state and citizen are equal partners, rather than a way of facilitating the shrinking of the state.

The wider policy environment is also supportive of volunteering in public services, as can be seen by a number of developments in recent years. For example, there was a clear commitment to volunteering in the NHS Long Term Plan (2019)[4]. The Police Transformation Fund allocated funding to the Institute for Public Safety Crime and Justice to pilot different forms of volunteering in the police, and in 2018 the Home Office were considering involving volunteers in the Border Force in a similar way.

Many areas of public services have seen a reduction in funding over the past decade, particularly at a local level. Between 2010 and 2020, councils will have lost almost 60p in every £1 of central government funding. According to the LGA, councils will face an overall funding gap of £3.1bn in 2019/20, which they estimate will rise to £8bn by 2024/25[5]. This means there is insufficient funding to manage rising demand, at a time when a number of public service areas have seen a fall in the number of paid staff. Between 2009 and 2016 there were over 1 million fewer people employed in the public sector, with particular declines in local government employment.[6]

Within this context, stakeholders across the public and voluntary sectors, but most notably the unions, have expressed concerns that the engagement of volunteers is used as a mechanism to cut costs and jobs.

3.2. What does volunteering in public services look like?

The wider landscape of public service delivery is complex

For this research we have focused on volunteering within public sector organisations in receipt of government funding, but we know that the landscape of public service delivery is more complex.

Voluntary organisations can be funded by commissioners at a national and local level to deliver services on behalf of government. Often these organisations will engage volunteers, although research has shown that

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[1]NCVO (2005), Civil renewal and active citizenship: a guide to the debate
[2] Cabinet Office (2010), Building the Big Society

[3]Department for Digital, Culture, Media Sport, Office for Civil Society, Tracey Crouch MP and The Rt Hon Jeremy Wright MP (2018), Civil Society Strategy: building a future that works for everyone

[4] NHS (2019), The NHS Long Term Plan
[5] Local Government Association (2019), Local Government Association briefing: Debate on local government funding

[6] ONS (2016), Public sector employment, UK: March 2016

the professionalisation of organisations as a result of being contracted to deliver services has changed the role, position and experience of volunteers.[7]

'Hybrid' organisations blur the boundaries between the private, public and voluntary sectors. A good example of this trend are social enterprises – businesses with social objectives. Hybrid organisations, such as academies, housing associations, some museums and galleries, and mutuals or spinouts, are funded by government to deliver services. Some of these organisations engage volunteers.

A number of public sector organisations, such as hospitals, may have charitable arms with their own source of voluntary income. There are also voluntary organisations that may deliver some similar functions to a public service but are primarily supported by voluntary income.

Reflecting this complexity, the charter developed by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and what was Volunteering England in 2009[8] covers the relationship between paid staff and volunteers in any organisation.

3.3. What are the levels of participation?

Fewer people volunteer in the public sector than in civil society but the scale of involvement should not be underestimated

In our *Time Well Spent* survey, around one in six (17%) reported volunteering for public sector organisations in the last 12 months, compared with 67% volunteering for civil society.

However, it can be challenging to get an accurate picture of the scale of public sector volunteering overall. The figures cited above, which focus on volunteers' main organisation if they give time to multiple organisations, do not include those who may volunteer for public sector organisations as their 'secondary' volunteering. Additionally, as previously outlined, public sector volunteering is not always easily distinguished from volunteering in other sectors. Furthermore, it has been highlighted in national surveys[9] that respondents are not always able to correctly identify the sector of their volunteering organisation.

While it can be challenging to get an overall picture, data from specific sub-sectors gives us an indication of the numbers involved in

volunteering in the public sector. This also highlights that while less common than volunteering for civil society organisations, the scale of public sector volunteering should not be underestimated.

Examples include:

* The estimated number of school governors in England alone is 350,000, making it 'one of the largest groups of volunteers in the country[10]'– and these are just one group of volunteers giving unpaid help in an education setting.

* Approximately 39,000 people volunteer directly in police services, in roles such as special constables, police support volunteers, and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) volunteers.[11]

* At least 78,000 people volunteer regularly in acute hospitals across England. However, this does not take into account volunteering in a variety of other health settings.[12]

An increased need for volunteers is a common theme

Evidence from specific types of public sector organisations highlights a common theme when looking at participation over time, namely an increased need for volunteers within public sector organisations. This is largely attributed to reduced financial and human resources, within these organisations. These have been highlighted especially in the media, for example:

* Between 2010 and 2016, a quarter of all UK library jobs disappeared, balanced by recruitment of 15,500 volunteers in the same period, and closure of 343 libraries.[13]

* The NHS was reported to be looking to double its volunteer 'workforce' to 150,000 by the end of 2021 with a recruitment drive to enlist people with professional skills.[14]

In a research report on voluntary action in primary education, 70% of the schools taking part in the study reported that they felt pressured to seek additional volunteer support[15]. Another report highlighted that the involvement of unpaid staff in

[7] Ellis Paine, A., and Hill, M. (2016) , 'The engagement of volunteers in third sector organisations delivering public services'
[8] TUC (2009), A Charter for Strengthening Relationships between Paid Staff and Volunteers

[9] Such as Low, N., Butt, S., Ellis, P. and Davis Smith, J. (2007), Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving
[10] Balarin, M., Brammer, S., James, C and McCormack, M.: Business in the Community/ University of Bath (2014) The School Governance Study

[11] Britton, I. Knight, L. and Lugli, V.: Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice (2018), Citizens in Policing Benchmarking Report
[12] Ross, S., Fenney, D. et al: The Kings Fund (2018), The Role of volunteers in the NHS: views from the front line

[13] Wainwright, D. et al: BBC News (2016), 'Libraries close a quarter of staff as hundreds close'
[14] Hellen, N.: The Times (2019), 'The NHS wants you... to volunteer if you're a professional'
[15] Body, A. and Hogg, E (2016): A bridge too far: the increasing role of voluntary action in primary education

schools rose by 6% in the five years following the 2008 recession.[16]

Focus group participants who had volunteered within public sector organisations also recognised this growing demand for volunteers based on their own experiences. This is explored further in section 5, including the impacts this has had on the volunteer experience.

Increased need does not necessarily mean higher numbers of volunteers

Despite the increased need for volunteers being a common theme, there appears to be limited data at a national level to gauge whether the numbers of public sector volunteers overall have increased over time. In fact, the proportion of public sector volunteers from *Time Well Spent* is lower than that reported in a previous national survey (*Helping Out*[17]) from 2007 (23%). However, caution should be taken in comparing these figures due to the differences in the age groups covered and the methodology of the two surveys[18].

Evidence from sub-sectors presents a mixed picture of participation levels over time. Where lower numbers of volunteers have been reported, this has been attributed to a number of reasons, including challenges in recruitment of volunteers.

- Within volunteering in policing, across England and Wales trends differed depending on the type of role. The number of police support volunteers have remained broadly stable between 2016 and 2018, whereas the number of special constables nationally has fallen consistently since 2012. This fall in numbers reflects both lower than historical-trend levels of recruitment into the Special Constabulary and higher than historical trend levels of resignation from the specials.[19]

- A report highlighted a 36% reduction in the number of magistrates over a five-year period from 2012 to 2017. This was attributed to falling workload in the magistrates' courts due to increased use of out of court disposals, and downturn in recruitment, combined with relatively consistent annual levels of resignations and retirements[20].

- A shortage of school governors was recently reported, with new figures showing vacancies on governing boards rising by almost 40% in two years.[21]

3.4. Who is more likely to get involved in public sector volunteering?

Public sector volunteers have a younger age profile than civil society volunteers – but this varies by sub-sector and role

As shown in chart 1, on the whole public sector volunteers have a younger age profile when compared with civil society volunteers overall, despite the largest group is that of older volunteers (65+) (22%).

However, this is likely to depend on the role and sub-sector.

For example,

Within the police, special constables have a skew towards younger age groups, with a peak in numbers in the early twenties reflecting patterns of recruitment of Specials who are interested in volunteering as a pathway into paid careers as a regular officer. In contrast, police support volunteers and OPCC (Police and Crime Commissioners Office) volunteers engage a large number of people who are 50 and over.[22]

Chart 1: Age profile (% of recent public sector, civil society and all volunteers)
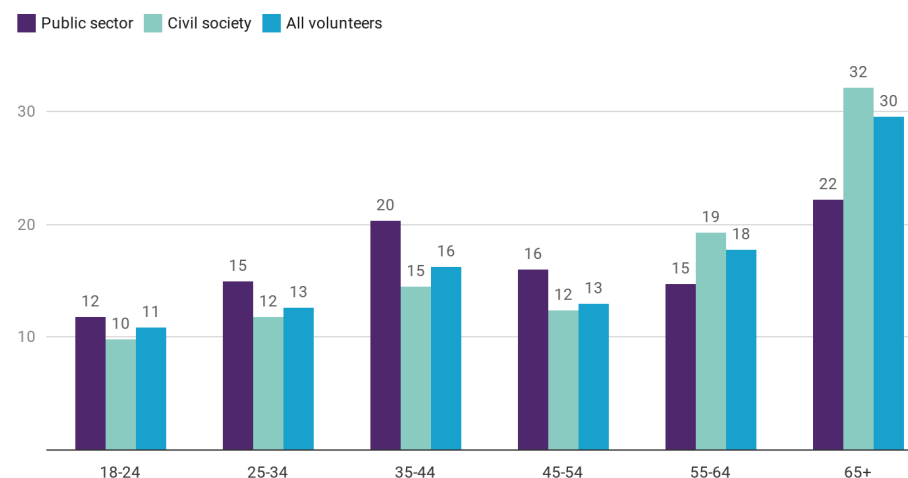
Source: Time Well Spent • Created with Datawrapper

[16] Staufenburg, J.: Schools Week (2018), 'Reception staff increasingly unpaid and underqualified' warns EPI'

[17] Low, N., Butt et al (2007)
[18] One of the surveys excludes 'don't know' responses
[19] Britton, I. Knight, L. and Lugli, V, 2018

[20] Ministry of Justice (2017): Judiciary Diversity Statistics 2017

[21] Diver, T.: Telegraph, (2019), 'School funding crisis due to lack of governors, says charity'
[22] Britton, I. Knight, L. and Lugli, V, 2018

- A recent report found that more than half of all magistrates are over the age of 60 and just 4% are under the age of 40. [23] A similar picture was found regarding school governors, with a total of 10% of those surveyed in an annual survey being under 40 (11% in 2016 and 12% in 2015).

- A survey of senior NHS staff within acute trusts highlighted that there was a perception of volunteers were getting younger, with two-thirds of respondents saying that new volunteers now tend to be younger. This was attributed to universities expecting students to have hospital experience and unemployed people wanting to gain skills. [24]

The same diversity issues are reflected in public sector volunteers as in the overall volunteer population

The wider findings from *Time Well Spent* highlighted diversity issues in relation to who is and is not participating in volunteering, in particular showing that those from a higher socio-economic status were more likely to be involved. This confirms previous evidence on the profile of volunteers.

When looking specifically at public sector volunteers within the *Time Well Spent* dataset, it is clear that similar issues are present there too. For example, almost two-thirds (64%) of recent public sector volunteers were from a higher socio-economic group compared with just over a third (36%) from a lower socio-economic background. A similar proportion was found overall (66% higher socio-economic group compared with 34% lower socio-economic group for volunteers overall).

3.5. How do volunteers participate?

Public sector volunteers give time less frequently compared with civil society volunteers

Frequent volunteering was common among public sector volunteers but less so when compared with civil society volunteers (59% vs 73%), with the biggest difference being among those volunteering at least once a week: 30% of public sector volunteers vs. 44% of civil society volunteers. It is likely that the frequency of volunteering is linked to the type of role, with some more formalised roles requiring set levels of commitment (eg specials in policing, or magistrates).
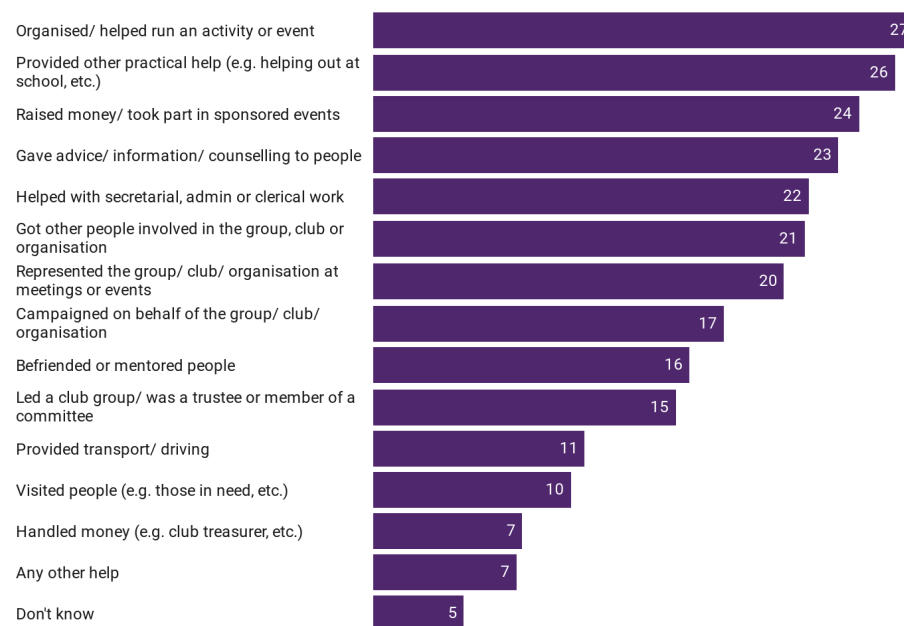
Volunteers are involved in a wide range of activities and causes

As seen in chart 2, the most common activities among public sector volunteers were organising or helping to run an activity or event (27%), providing practical help such as helping out at a school (26%) and raising money or taking part in sponsored events (24%). These activities mostly took place in volunteers' own neighbourhood (79%).

As with the range of activities undertaken, public sector volunteers support a variety of causes: 'children's education / schools' was the most common sub-sector or area (36%), followed by local community groups (17%) (such as parish councils and community councils), and health, disability and social care (16%).

While this data gives us a sense of some of the most common activities and areas or causes, the broad range of roles undertaken even with a particular setting or sub-sector shows that volunteer involvement is wide-ranging. For example, while being a single role, police support volunteers (PSVs) reflect a wide range of different activities, with 1,120 PSV role profiles across the 44 police forces, with

Chart 2: Volunteering activities (% of recent public sector volunteers)*

Activity	%
Organised/ helped run an activity or event	27
Provided other practical help (e.g. helping out at school, etc.)	26
Raised money/ took part in sponsored events	24
Gave advice/ information/ counselling to people	23
Helped with secretarial, admin or clerical work	22
Got other people involved in the group, club or organisation	21
Represented the group/ club/ organisation at meetings or events	20
Campaigned on behalf of the group/ club/ organisation	17
Befriended or mentored people	16
Led a club group/ was a trustee or member of a committee	15
Provided transport/ driving	11
Visited people (e.g. those in need, etc.)	10
Handled money (e.g. club treasurer, etc.)	7
Any other help	7
Don't know	5

*Respondents could select more than one answer
Source: Time Well Spent • Created with Datawrapper

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[23] Ministry of Justice (2018): Judiciary Diversity Statistics 2018

[24] Galea, A., Naylor, C et al: Kings Fund (2013), Volunteering in acute trusts in England: understanding the scale and impact

an average of 26 different PSV role profiles per force.[25] Similarly, volunteering roles within the NHS cover a variety of different activities, as shown in the examples of roles listed in the NHS guidance for volunteer managers which include administrative support, shop volunteers and signposting [26]. It is also likely that some volunteer roles have changed over time. This is explored further in section 5.

3.6. How is public sector volunteering organised?

While organisations vary, there are a number of features that seem to be more common to public sector organisations:

Public sector volunteers tend to be managed through more formalised processes

Data from *Time Well Spent* indicates that the management of volunteering in public sector organisations is more formalised than in civil society organisations. For example, public sector volunteers were more likely to have gone through formalised processes during the recruitment journey: 30% carried out a criminal or other background check compared with 20% of civil society volunteers, and similar differences were seen for the provision of a written role description (18% vs 13%).

This may reflect the fact that in certain sub-sectors, having more formalised processes is the 'norm', especially for roles which may involve interaction with vulnerable individuals. NHS guidance for volunteer managers indicates a formal journey including formal application, interview and for successful candidates background check (ID, visa, address, DBS, occupational health questionnaire)[27]. For school governors, enhanced DBS checks were made mandatory in 2016 in schools overseen by local authorities.

Public sector volunteers are more likely to be managed and coordinated by paid staff

Public sector volunteers who volunteered in the last 12 months were more likely to say that a paid member of staff managed and coordinated their volunteers compared with civil society volunteers (41% vs 26%). Again, this may relate to certain sub-sectors. For example, a survey of acute NHS trusts showed that 91% said that they employed a volunteer services manager.

Public sector organisations in recent years have operated in a difficult environment

Funding cuts in the public sector have been commonly reported over recent years. For example,

- In 2018, a report on the museum sector highlighted that local authority-funded museums in particular were facing financial difficulties with almost 4 in 10 (39%) museums stating that that their overall funds had decreased in the past year[28]

- In the same year, the National Audit Office found there had been a 19% drop in funding for the police since 2010, and officers were struggling to maintain an effective service[29]

- A report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (also 2018) stated that total school spending per pupil has fallen by 8% in real terms between the financial years 2009/10 and 2017/18. This was mainly driven by a 55% cut to local authority spending on school services and cuts of over 20% to school sixth-form funding.[30]

These features may not be unique to public sector organisations

While the features outlined above have been highlighted as being more common to public sector organisations, this does not mean they are unique to them. It is likely, for example, that the tendency for more structured and formalised processes relates in part to organisational size. Previous research has made a distinction between 'modern' and

'home-grown' approaches to organising and managing volunteers. The 'modern' approach to volunteer management, which will often apply the processes already used for employees to volunteers tends to be adopted by bigger organisations with hierarchical structures, which are more likely to be led by paid staff. The 'home-grown' approach is more informal and participatory, more likely to be volunteer led[31]. While public sector organisations may be more likely to follow a 'modern' approach, the same may apply also to bigger civil society organisations.

It may also relate to sub-sector. For example, our wider *Time Well Spent* findings show that paid coordinators are more commonly found in health, disability and social welfare, children's education or schools. While these are sub-sectors which commonly intersect with public services, it is likely that, for example, volunteers giving time to civil society organisations delivering similar services may also have similar set-ups.

The fact that these features are common – but not unique – to public sector organisations means that there may be wider learnings which organisations from all sectors can take away.

[25] Britton, I. Knight, L. and Lugli, V, 2018
[26] NHS England (2017) Recruiting and managing volunteers in NHS providers, a practical guide
27 NHS England, 2017

[28] Museums Association (2018), Museums in the UK 2018 Report
[29] National Audit Office (2018), Financial sustainability of police forces in England and Wales 2018

[30] Belfield, C., Farquharson, C. and Sibieta, L.: Institute for Fiscal Studies (2018), 2018 annual report on education spending in England

[31] Rochester, C., Paine, A.E., Howlett, S., Zimmeck, M. and Ellis Paine, A. (2010) Volunteering and Society in the 21st Century

4. MOTIVATIONS

This section looks at the motivations of public sector volunteers. It explores why they get involved to start with, factors influencing motivations and whether their motivations differ from other volunteers.

4.1. Why do volunteers get involved in the first place?

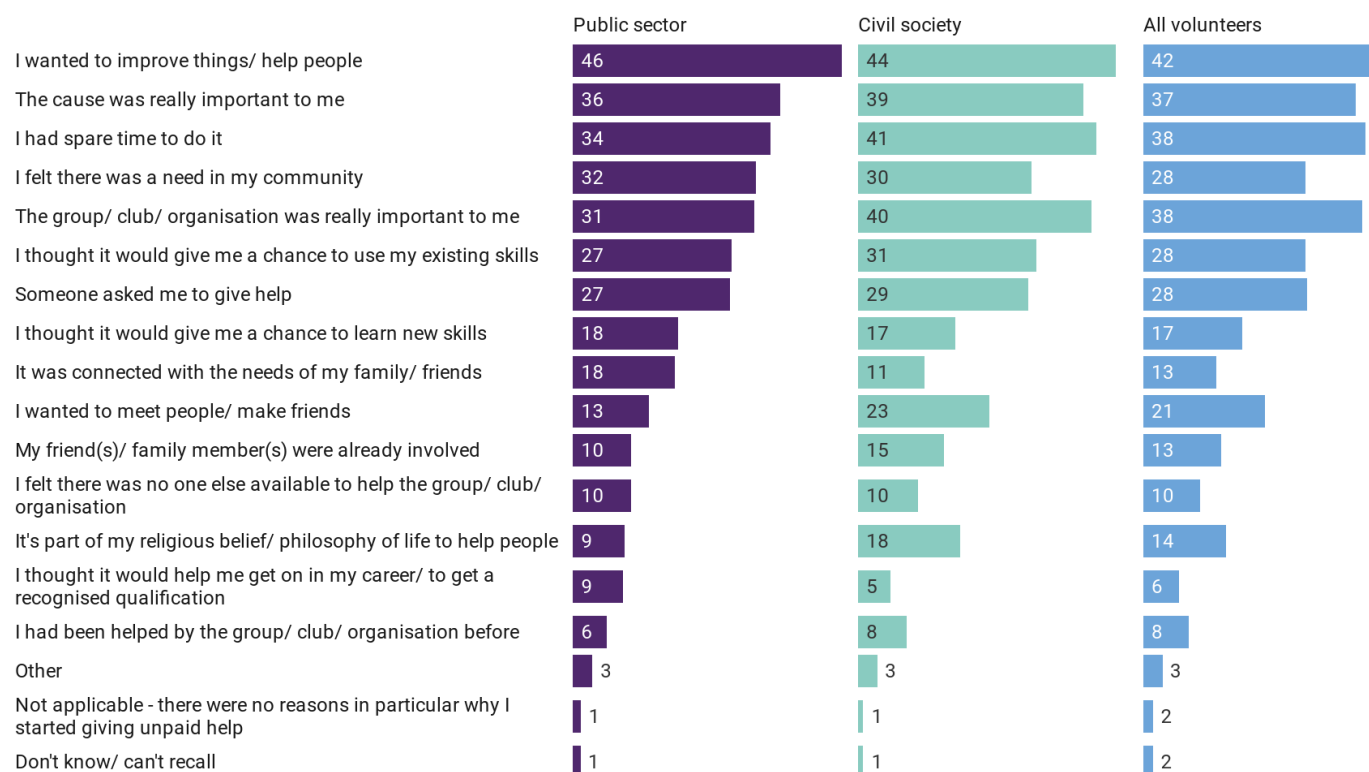**Wanting to make a difference is the most common reason for getting involved**

In our *Time Well Spent* survey, volunteers were asked for the most important reasons why they had first started volunteering. The most common motivation for public sector volunteers was wanting to improve things or help people (46%). This is the case across all sectors.

Wanting to give time to a cause of personal importance (36%) ranked next, followed by having spare time to do it (34%).

But motivations are wide-ranging

While these reflect the most common motivations, the reality is that people's reasons for getting involved are wide-ranging –

Chart 3: Motivations for volunteering (% of recent public sector, civil society and all volunteers)*

	Public sector	Civil society	All volunteers
I wanted to improve things/ help people	46	44	42
The cause was really important to me	36	39	37
I had spare time to do it	34	41	38
I felt there was a need in my community	32	30	28
The group/ club/ organisation was really important to me	31	40	38
I thought it would give me a chance to use my existing skills	27	31	28
Someone asked me to give help	27	29	28
I thought it would give me a chance to learn new skills	18	17	17
It was connected with the needs of my family/ friends	18	11	13
I wanted to meet people/ make friends	13	23	21
My friend(s)/ family member(s) were already involved	10	15	13
I felt there was no one else available to help the group/ club/ organisation	10	10	10
It's part of my religious belief/ philosophy of life to help people	9	18	14
I thought it would help me get on in my career/ to get a recognised qualification	9	5	6
I had been helped by the group/ club/ organisation before	6	8	8
Other	3	3	3
Not applicable - there were no reasons in particular why I started giving unpaid help	1	1	2
Don't know/ can't recall	1	1	2

*Respondents could select more than one answer

Source: Time Well Spent • Created with Datawrapper

reflecting their different values, priorities and interests. The range of motivations can be seen in chart 3. It was also present among our focus group participants, whose motivations varied from their volunteering being linked to an existing hobby or interest, to wanting to do something different from work.

Participants also often cited more than one reason for volunteering. Where multiple reasons were given, they were typically altruistic reasons, paired with more practical ones, or motivations of personal benefit. For example, one participant talked about having always wanted to do something to help others, but acting on it when they were made redundant. Another was a student who started volunteering in a hospital to help others but also saw it as a way to 'have a social life' as her friends were already volunteering there. These types of mixed motivations reflect wider evidence on this subject[32].

For many, the local nature of their volunteering is important

As seen in chart 3, among the most common reasons for volunteering was 'feeling there was a need in their local community', with a third of public sector volunteers choosing this. This reflects the local nature of activities which, as seen in section 3.5, was common: 79% of public sector volunteers' activities took place in their own neighbourhood.

The importance of being involved locally also emerged among focus group participants. In some cases, this was driven by wanting to address a local need, but for others it was more practical – they wanted their volunteering to be close to home or work for convenience, especially if they were in full-time work.

4.2. Are public sector volunteers' motivations different?

The primary reason for volunteering is common across all volunteers

As seen in chart 3 and highlighted previously, across all volunteers – whether public sector or not – the most common reason for getting involved was to make a difference. This was also reflected among focus group participants, including among those who volunteered for multiple organisations.

Most do not actively look to volunteer for a public sector organisation

Participants from the focus groups were asked about the extent to which being a public sector organisation was important in motivating them to volunteer. The majority did not specifically look to volunteer for a public sector organisation.

This seemed to relate to a number of factors. Many did not think of their volunteering in this way, as expressed by this focus group participant:

'I actually didn't think of it as public sector. To me it's a local primary school, it's not a big nontangible entity, I thought it was a local school in the local community and about making a difference.' (Volunteer, education, north)

We also know from our *Time Well Spent* research, and previous national surveys (such as the Helping Out survey[33]) that people can find it difficult to identify the sector of their volunteering organisation. This can be made harder because some civil society organisations are involved in the delivery of public services as mentioned earlier.

Finally, some volunteering in the public sector may be more a choice 'by default'. For example, among focus group participants, where volunteers were motivated by career reasons or by a particular role, such as a special constable, motivations were more about wanting to volunteer for a particular organisation or role which *happens to be* in the public sector, than choosing to volunteer for a public sector organisation specifically.

While not an active part of the decision making process, the focus groups also revealed that participants had different perceptions of the different sectors. Most

commonly, participants associated public sector volunteering with being more structured (and charities less so). Public sector organisations were also perceived by some as being more accountable, compared with other types of organisation – whether charities or private sector organisations – towards whom there was more scepticism about 'where your money goes'. These perceptions may be influencing their choices.

Among public sector volunteers, volunteering for a particular organisation seems to be less important than volunteering for a cause

While motivations for volunteering were generally similar across all sectors, one notable difference was that the importance of the organisation was perceived to be lower among public sector volunteers than civil society volunteers (31% public sector vs 40% civil society volunteers). Volunteering because a cause was personally important to them was ranked higher among public sector volunteers compared with civil society volunteers – and was the second most commonly selected motivation.

In the focus groups, the importance of volunteering for a cause was also highlighted by some, in a few cases going as far as wanting to save a local service (a local library for example).

32 Brodie, E. et al.: NCVO/IVR/Involve (2011); Pathways through Participation: What creates and sustains active citizenship?

33 Low, N., Butt, S., Ellis, P. and Davis Smith, J. (2007)

The prominence of cause as a motivator may link in part with the younger age profile of public sector volunteers. In the recent impact report of the #iwill campaign, they highlighted that although older people perceive a lack of participation in social action among young people, most young people want to make a difference, eg 81% agreed that they 'care about contributing to make the world a better place for everyone.'[34]

Where the organisation is of importance, reasons for choosing it varies

While cause seems to be of more importance than the organisation itself for public sector volunteers, this is not to say, that volunteering for a particular organisation was not important for some of them.

Focus group participants who actively chose the organisation they volunteered for did so for a variety of reasons. For example, one participant travelled to the other side of the city to volunteer specifically for a hospital which had a good reputation. This is reflected in other evidence from the health sector as well as in the education sector with some governors wanting to be associated with successful schools[35].

'It's the Premier League as against my local hospital which might be second division. Thinking about volunteering, you want to work with what's most attractive and the best.' (Volunteer, health, north)

On the other hand, others talked about wanting to volunteer for an organisation where they could make the most difference and actively looked for organisations where they could do this, for example a struggling school.

Volunteering to improve career prospects is more common among public sector volunteers

As seen in chart 3, our *Time Well Spent* data shows a relatively small proportion of volunteers getting involved because they thought it would help them 'get on in their career' (9%). However, this was more common than among civil society volunteers (5%). Those who cited this as a reason among the focus group participants tended to be younger (18-24) – typically in the police and health sectors. This confirms wider research findings both about the greater prominence of career-related reasons for young people and also evidence from police and health sectors:

- A national survey of special constables[36] found that those who have recently joined (within the past two years) and were aged under 25 were more likely to be motivated by ambitions to be a paid police officer. On the other hand, those who had a longer service indicated they were more motivated by making a difference to the community.

- Research into volunteering in acute hospitals showed that some of the perceived reasons for an increasingly younger age profile (see section 3.4) was that some universities now expect those aspiring to a health care professional to have volunteered in a hospital.[37]

This research into volunteers in acute hospitals cited above, suggests that career-related motivations may be driven in part by expectation of work experience among employers. This is likely not to be limited to the health sector or indeed public sector itself. The Museums Association (covering museums generally, not just local authority owned ones) highlighted that for most entry level jobs relevant job experience would be needed, which people usually get via volunteering.[38] A separate report on the heritage sector indicated a 'culture of unpaid work experience

as a prerequisite to getting a job in the sector.' [39]

Further differences include a higher proportion volunteering because it was connected to the needs of family or friends

A number of further differences between the motivations of public sector volunteers and civil society volunteers were observed:

- Public sector volunteers were more likely to volunteer because it was connected to the needs of their family or friends (18% vs 11%). Where this was raised among focus group participants it tended to be in the context of a school attended by their child or a hospital. Other evidence shows that parents' vested interest in schools leads to their increased participation.[40]

- Being motivated to make friends or to meet people was lower among public sector than civil society volunteers (13% vs 23%). In the focus groups, those who mentioned wanting to meet people were younger.

34 Step Up to Serve / #iwill (2019): The Power of Youth Social Action:#iwill campaign Impact Report
35 Naylor, C., Mundle, C., Weaks, L., and Buck, D.: The Kings Fund: (2013), Volunteering in health and care, securing a sustainable future

36 Callender, M., Cahalin, K., Cole, S., Hubbard, L. and Britton, I.: Citizens in Policing and Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice (2018), Understanding the Motivations, Morale, and Retention of Special

Constables: Findings from a National Survey. Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice, pay058, pp. 1-16
37 Galea, A., Naylor, C et al: The Kings Fund (2013)
38 Museums Association, 'Getting a first job'

39 Creative and Cultural Skills (2008), The Cultural Heritage Blueprint: A workforce development plan for cultural heritage in the UK
40 Body, A., Holman, K. and Hogg, E (2016), To bridge the gap? Voluntary action in primary education

5. VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

This section looks at the experiences of public sector volunteers based on *Time Well Spent* and experiences cited by focus group participants. This includes overall measures, such as satisfaction and likelihood to recommend their volunteering, and more specifically, perceptions of volunteer management and support, role and relationships with others.

5.1. What's the overall experience of public sector volunteers like?

Overall, public sector volunteers are positive about their experience

Satisfaction among public sector volunteers is high, with 94% of those who gave time in the last 12 months (as their main organisation, if multiple) reporting they were very or fairly satisfied with their experience.

Around 7 in 10 (71%) said they either had already or would recommend it to a family or friend, and three-quarters (76%) said they were likely to continue volunteering with the organisation in the next 12 months.

The feeling of making a difference and enjoyment are central to these positive perceptions

These positive overall perceptions were also shared by focus group participants. When asked about their experiences of volunteering generally, spontaneous associations were mostly positive. They were most positive about: making a difference and enjoyment of the role, along with other factors relating to recognition, acquiring knowledge, skills and experiences and their relationship with others (see table 1).

However, public sector volunteers tend to be less positive than those giving time to civil society

Despite a generally positive perception of their volunteering experience, a comparison of public sector volunteers with civil society

Table 1: What focus group participants enjoy most and least about their volunteering	
ENJOY MOST ABOUT VOLUNTEERING	
Theme	**Words used to describe experience**
Making a difference	*Fulfilling, rewarding, enriching, satisfying, meaningful*
Enjoyment of the role	*interesting, fun, varied, busy, different from day to day, responsibility*
Recognition	*Being valued, being appreciated*
Acquiring knowledge, skills and experiences	*Skills, experience, educating*
Relationship with others	*Meeting new people, working with great people*
ENJOY LEAST ABOUT VOLUNTEERING / KEY CHALLENGES	
Theme	**Words used to describe experience**
Time	*Balancing time, slow hours, not being able to give more, increased pull on time, time pressure, frustration about time wasted*
Role	*Requiring knowledge, becoming more dangerous*
Recognition	*Taken advantage of, unappreciated*
Management and organisation	*Admin, bureaucracy, not organised, paperwork, role not clearly set out*
Resourcing	*Gaps in staffing, underfunding, lack of training, lack of IT, frustrating*
Relationships with others	*Lack of respect, lack of feedback*

volunteers highlights that public sector volunteers are less positive than civil society volunteers overall. This is seen in satisfaction levels, most notably in the difference for those who report being 'very satisfied' (47% reporting this compared vs 58% of civil society volunteers). They are also less likely to continue volunteering in the next 12 months (76% vs 83%).

Our main *Time Well Spent* data (of volunteers generally, not just public sector volunteers), found that those aged 18–34 and 35–44 were more likely to be less satisfied than those aged 55 and over. Given the age profile of public sector volunteers is generally younger than civil society volunteers and all volunteers as a whole (see section 3.4), satisfaction levels may relate in part to age (other research suggests, for example, that older volunteers perceive more positive changes from their volunteering than younger[41]) but it is likely that there are other factors at play, as discussed in the rest of this section.

Key challenges and aspects experienced less positively vary

When focus group participants were prompted to think about key challenges or areas of their volunteering they were less positive about, again, a number of common themes emerged.

As shown in table 1, some of these areas overlapped with those that came up for positive associations – for example, recognition, role and relationships with others. However, others were unique to these less positive perceptions. These included aspects of management or organisation of volunteering, resourcing and, most notably issues relating to time – specifically around balancing commitments, time pressure and frustrations about how time was taken up or used.

Some of these negative aspects were mirrored in *Time Well Spent* data which looked at negative impacts of volunteering. Among those who said they felt negative impacts, from a prompted list, the most common impacts were being left out of pocket, too much time being taken and feeling pressured to do more or to continue.

The biggest change over time was the impacts of funding cuts

When reflecting on changes in their experiences over time, focus group participants spontaneously raised the increased pressures on organisations as a result of reduced funding, and the impact of this on staff and volunteers.

Some focus group participants considered that organisations were trying to 'fill the gaps' with volunteers, and felt increased expectations and pressure on their time and commitments. At times, this led to some volunteers being made to feel guilty for not doing more, or taken advantage of.

'Over the years we're seeing the public sector cut back as much as they can to save money, volunteers are a wonderfully attractive prospect for them, people who will come and do the job, even if not quite to the extent as a full time member of staff was, for free… they definitely take advantage of that. If before you were part of a group, you are effectively doing the job of someone who did that job, you feel more put upon and it takes away the enjoyment' (Volunteer, police, south)

The impacts were wide-ranging and included both direct impacts as well as indirect (ie impacts on staff, that then impacted on

Table 2: Perceptions of volunteering organisation and management	Public sector	Civil society	All volunteers
(% agree of recent public sector, civil society and all volunteers)			
I expected the process of getting involved in the organisation to be quicker	20%	11%	14%
Things could be much better organised	38%	33%	35%
There's too much bureaucracy (i.e. too many administrative processes)	32%	21%	24%
The organisation of the help was too structured / formalised	20%	10%	13%
The organisation is too concerned about risk	22%	13%	16%
(% disagree of recent public sector, civil society and all volunteers)			
The organisation is flexible around the time I give	16%	9%	11%

[41] Van Willigen, M. (2000), Differential benefits of volunteering across the life course

volunteers). These are explored in more detail within the following sections.

5.2. Perceptions of volunteer management

Perceptions of volunteer management mirror overall satisfaction levels. Namely, most were positive about their volunteer experiences but public sector volunteers were less likely to be positive compared with civil society volunteers, and volunteers as a whole (see table 2).

Experiences at the start of the volunteer journey could be improved

As seen in table 2, while most were happy with the time taken to start their volunteering, one in five (20%) public sector volunteers expected the process to be quicker. Other research reflects this issue. For example, research on special constables and police support volunteers highlighted over a third of volunteers (36% special constables and 34% police support volunteers)[42] disagreed that the pace of recruitment was good and that the force had kept them updated. This was raised as an issue which may be leading to potential volunteers dropping out.

Volunteers are more likely to perceive their volunteering as being too structured and less flexible than civil society volunteers

Table 2 also shows that public sector volunteers were twice as likely to agree that

there volunteering 'was too structured or formalised' than civil society volunteers (20% vs 10%). They were also more likely to disagree that the organisation were flexible around the time they give (16% vs 9%).

Overall, focus group participants had mixed perceptions towards the organising and management of their volunteering, depending on type of volunteering role and setting, but generally, participants perceived public sector volunteering to be quite structured. For those who had also volunteered in civil society organisations, they tended to feel it was more structured than in those organisations.

Some found the level of structure and formalisation of their volunteering helpful because it allowed them to understand what was expected of them, which in turn enabled them to better plan their volunteering around work or home life. For others it was more negative. Among those who had experiences of volunteering in civil society, some reflected that the structured nature of volunteering meant that they felt less embedded in the (public sector) organisation, compared to their experiences in civil society organisations. Our *Time Well Spent* data highlights that 81% of public sector volunteers feel that they 'belong to the organisation' compared with 87% of civil society volunteers.

Volunteers in larger organisations can feel lost in 'layers' of bureaucracy

Public sector volunteers were also less positive about other aspects of the management and organisation of their volunteering. For example, almost a third (32%) of public sector volunteers felt there was too much bureaucracy compared with around one in five (21%) of civil society volunteers.

Focus group participants who volunteered in large public sector organisations were more likely to raise this issue. These participants felt that their organisation's size contributed to additional bureaucracy and at times to making volunteers like themselves feel like they were at the 'bottom' of the organisation. This also contributed to them feeling that volunteers' perspectives were not always heard and that sometimes others in the organisation did not know much about them.

'The issue with public sector – it's a huge organisation, no one really knows what volunteers do, not told – people above them. One day I got told a section was shutting down. I went into the room full of detectives and they were like who are you again, and wasn't sure how much responsibility I was allowed,

there's so many people above you' (Volunteer, police, north)

Well-organised volunteering can still leave volunteers feeling unsupported

At the same time as being more likely to feel volunteering was too structured, formalised and bureaucratic, it is interesting to note that a significant minority (38%) of public sector volunteers agreed that things could be much better organised (this was not, however, significantly different to civil society volunteers who agreed with this statement). Where focus group participants felt their volunteering was not organised well, this was generally driven by a sense of a lack of clarity and of 'time wasted':

'If it's properly organised, you know what to expect, but when it's chaotic, things feel fragmented and you feel it's a bit of a waste' (Volunteer, library, south)

Some focus group participants also highlighted a distinction between organisation and management of volunteering and feeling supported. One participant reflected that their volunteering was:

'... organised in the sense of there being a rota but no support for

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42 Callender, M., Cahalin, K., Britton, I. and Knight, L (2018) National Survey of Special Constables and National Survey of Police Support Volunteers

people in the role' (Volunteer, health, south)

Participants mentioned that reduced funding had resulted in reduced support in some cases, with staff having less time to dedicate to looking after volunteers because of increased pressure on their own roles, or because of volunteer manager roles being cut. Perceptions of support are explored further in section 5.5.

Public sector volunteers are less likely to say their expenses would be reimbursed

In terms of support, another issue that the *Time Well Spent* data highlights is that public sector volunteers were less likely to agree that they would be reimbursed if they wanted than civil society organisations volunteers (47% vs 59%). Just over one in ten (12%) of public sector volunteers reported being left out of pocket from their volunteering. While a minority, it was one of the most common negative experiences cited from a given list. Considering that public sector volunteers are more likely to be managed by a paid coordinator and their volunteering overall involves more formal processes, this difference is unexpected.

Perceptions, in large part, reflect expectations

Discussions from the focus groups in relation to volunteer management showed that expectations play a key role in volunteers'

perceptions of the organisation and management of their volunteering. This reflects what is known as the psychological contract[43]: the social exchange or relationship between a volunteer and an organisation. The psychological contract is based on a set of shared mutual expectations or promises. When these expectations are met, satisfaction increases. However, if these expectations are not met or are changed, volunteers may feel less positive about the relationship and withdraw altogether.

Expectations from the volunteer perspective are likely to be driven by a number of factors, including those that were personal or individual, and others that were societal. They were also driven by what volunteers perceived to be reasonable in the context of the role of organisation and its the size. For example, when talking about the recruitment process, those in certain roles (especially relating to vulnerable people and children) expected the organisation to have a rigorous process, that may (inevitably) take some time. One participant, for example, commenting on mandatory training as part of the recruitment process described it as:

'boring but it's what I expected, it's part and parcel' (Volunteer, health, north)

5.3. Perceptions of role and time

As seen in table 1, when spontaneously considering their role, focus group participants had a mix of different associations.

Being of value is important to volunteers

As highlighted in section 4.1, wanting to make a difference was the most common motivation for getting involved in the first place. This theme was also brought up by focus group participants when talking about their volunteering roles. For some, making a difference in a context that was very different from their day-to-day jobs was part of what they enjoyed about their volunteering. Others reflected that their roles could be challenging and even upsetting at times. However, providing help in this context also contributed to their sense of achievement and fulfilment.

The skills and experience volunteers were able to bring to their volunteering roles also impacted on how they felt about the value of their involvement. Our *Time Well Spent* data highlights that 49% use their professional skills and 46% use other (non-professional) skills. However, the data indicates that there is potential for more, with around one in five (21%) public sector volunteers saying they have skills they would like to use but are not currently using. This was higher than for civil society volunteers (14%) which may indicate

that public sector volunteers' skills may be more likely to be underused.

A lack of resources or training can lead to frustrations

While the motivation to make a difference remained, some felt that they were not always able to fulfil their role as much as they would have liked, leading to some frustrations. This related mostly to a lack of resources and training linked to reduced funding. Opinions were particularly strong among participants whose roles required specific knowledge, and may be expected to have this knowledge by others. As an example, a magistrate reported not receiving training for four years despite changes in legislation, forcing her to find information elsewhere.

Our *Time Well Spent* data found a desire for more training, with almost half (49%) of public sector volunteers who were already receiving some kind of training saying they would like or would have liked more training to help them carry out their volunteering. This was much higher when compared with civil society volunteers (38%).

Some had felt increasing pressure to manage and balance their time

A common theme that emerged in the focus groups was the challenge of balancing their time spent volunteering. Many perceived this had become increasingly difficult in the context of reduced funding. In some cases this

[43] Conway, N. and Briner, R. B. (2005) Understanding Psychological Contracts at Work: A critical evaluation of theory and research. Oxford: Oxford University Press;

Nichols, G. (2013) 'The psychological contract of volunteers: A new research agenda.' Voluntas:

International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 986–1005.

had led to reduced staff and more expectations being placed on volunteers. *Time Well Spent* data highlights that over one in five (22%) feel the organisation has unreasonable expectations of their time – higher than civil society volunteers (14%).

Among focus group participants, this was more prevalent among roles such as magistrates and special constables. The impact of these pressures for some was that they had to actively manage time and put boundaries around it. This at times took away some of the enjoyment of their volunteering.

Increased pressures do not just relate to time, but also the nature of the role

As well as increased expectation on their time, some volunteers perceived other pressures in relation to their role, which were largely attributed to the context of reduced funding.

Examples included:

• a special constable going out on their own

'It's a hell of a lot of pressure for someone who is a volunteer... taken on a huge amount given I'm a volunteer' (Volunteer, justice, south)

• an NHS volunteer having to deal with unhappy patients who are experiencing the impacts of a pressured service, such as long waiting times

'That confrontation, it doesn't ruin your day but you think I don't need that, it's my time and I'm trying to help. It's a bit rubbish' (Volunteer, health, north)

• a governor reflecting on the increased pressure on decision-making when working with tighter budgets.

'The pressure on the job now is forcing people out of it, I'm making some difficult decisions here, not just turning up and playing at being a school governor. Some people have dropped out because pressure's on' (Volunteer, education, north)

5.4. The boundaries between paid and voluntary roles

Volunteering can feel like paid work

Among focus group participants, increased expectations and pressures combined with the more structured nature of their volunteering made their involvement feel to differing degrees like paid work. This was more common among those with more formalised and time-intensive roles.
Being like paid work, however, was not always framed negatively. As noted before, some actively sought a more structured volunteering

opportunity, that was more like a paid job. For one student, the volunteering opportunity being more like a paid job was better for building career experience.

This can become 'too much' where volunteering feels like an obligation, without recognition

While being like paid work was not always negatively framed by our focus group participants, our *Time Well Spent* research shows that volunteering can feel '*too much* like paid work' – around a quarter (24%) of public sector volunteers surveyed agreed with this statement. This was higher than among civil society volunteers (16%) and volunteers overall (19%).

Reflections among focus group participants on what being 'too much' like paid work means indicate that it is where there is a sense of obligation placed on volunteers by organisations or those they volunteer with, to the extent that it may feel like it is not voluntary anymore:

'I think it [feeling too much like paid work] is when you feel pressured or responsible to do something rather than this is me willing to do it. When people start expecting xyz and they get upset when you don't do it, that's when it doesn't feel like volunteering anymore' (Volunteer, health, south)

This feeling was exacerbated among participants who were in roles which were already formalised, when there was a lack of appreciation, especially where organisations or paid staff did not recognise and acknowledge that they were giving their time for free.

Perceptions of the boundaries between paid and voluntary roles varies by sub-sector and role

In addition to the discussion on whether their volunteering felt like paid work (or too much so), focus group participants also commented on the roles of paid staff and that of their own. On the whole, most felt there was a clear distinction between the two, but this varied by sub-sector and specific role.

Overall, a spectrum could be seen from these differences, broadly categorised into the following (as summarised in chart 4) :

a. **Where the nature of the volunteer roles are distinct from paid staff roles.** For example, magistrates' roles are distinct from others' in court, or governors' roles are distinct from teachers.

b. **Where volunteers and paid staff are working alongside each other but have been allocated different tasks.** For example, in a library, paid staff focus on more specialist enquiries while volunteers help out with ad hoc queries, eg using the computers.

c. **Where volunteers and paid staff are working alongside one another and doing similar roles**. Among focus group participants this was most common among special constables.

d. **Where volunteers were doing a role which would formerly have been done by paid employees but is now only carried out by volunteers (ie job substitution).** This was most common in libraries.

While some of the common sub-sectors are listed above, the division of roles was more likely to depend on the particular role itself, more than sub-sector. It should also be noted that boundaries between paid staff and volunteers have been influenced wider policy

Chart 4:
Spectrum of boundaries between volunteer and paid roles

a) Volunteer and paid roles distinct

b) Volunteer and paid staff working alongside each other – allocated different tasks

c)Volunteer and paid staff doing similar roles – working alongside each other

d)Volunteers doing roles which formerly were done by paid staff

changes such as the expansion of police powers to community support volunteers and police support volunteers[44].

Issues seem to arise most where there is an overlap of roles or where volunteers are doing roles formally done by paid staff

Across the spectrum, issues tended to be seen most where there was an overlap of roles, or where volunteers were doing a role formerly carried out by paid staff (ie categories c and d). One example cited in the focus groups was where paid staff were not happy when special constables were brought in for events as they were denied overtime pay as a result. Some also reported tensions where a role used to be carried out by paid staff.

This could feel awkward for volunteers, though in turn it also made them feel their role was important as it would not be done otherwise. Issues in this context are explored further in the sub-sector spotlight on libraries.

Sub-sector spotlight

Boundaries between paid and voluntary roles – library sub-sector

Boundaries around paid and voluntary roles have been a particular challenge in the context of libraries. The shift towards engaging more volunteers in libraries that began under New Labour and increased under the Conservative 'Big Society' agenda and more recent austerity-driven cuts to paid staff. This pattern has fed into perceptions of distrust by some paid staff towards volunteers, because they see volunteering as a replacement to paid employment. Feelings that paid staff are being undervalued can result in low morale which combined with a lack of trust in volunteers negatively impacts on staff-volunteer relationships. Library volunteers have sometimes been given professional-like titles, for example, 'marketing assistant' or 'library ambassador', which can suggest more responsibility and commitment for volunteers and reinforces paid staff perceptions of volunteers as a threat.

Feedback from library managers, paid staff and library representatives suggests a broad consensus that volunteers should not be primarily used to replace paid staff and, where volunteers are used, clearer boundaries between paid staff and volunteer roles is needed. Research with volunteers also shows that many volunteers themselves see their efforts as a stopgap and believe the library service should be staffed professionally again at some point in the future.

Sources: Baber, G.: UCL (2018), The Positive and Negative Impact of Using Volunteers in Public Libraries; Casselden, B.: University of Northumbria (2016) A delicate balancing act: an investigation of volunteer use and stakeholder perspectives in public libraries; Casselden, B, Pickard, A., Walton, G. and McLeod, J. (2019) Keeping the doors open in an age of austerity? Qualitative analysis of stakeholder views on volunteers in public libraries. Journal of Librarianship and Information Science, vol. 51, no. 4. pp. 869-883; CILIP (2017), Public libraries use of volunteers: full policy statement; Davies, S.: UNISON (2013) The public library service under attack how cuts are putting individuals and communities at risk and damaging local businesses and economies; Buddery, P.: The RSA (2015) Volunteering and public
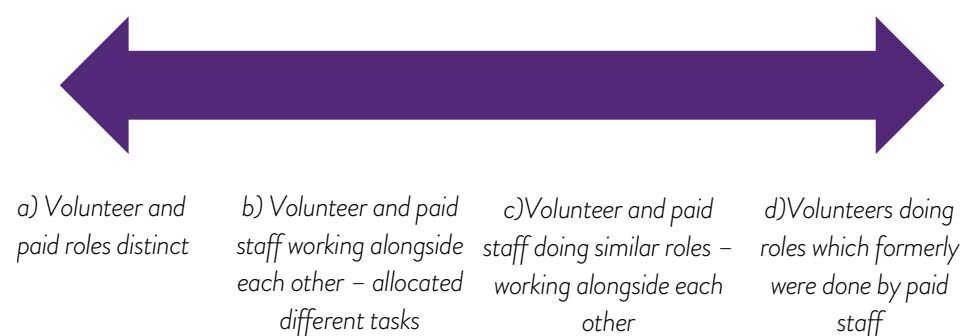
5.5. Relationships with organisations and with paid staff

Public sector volunteers feel less supported than civil society volunteers

Perceptions of how volunteers feel within their volunteering organisations and those they volunteer with, reflects overall satisfaction levels. For example, 87% agreed there was a culture of respect and trust. Across some aspects, however, as with overall satisfaction, perceptions are less positive than among civil society volunteers, such as feeling supported (79% public sector vs 85% civil society) and feeling that they belong to the organisation (81% public sector vs 87% civil society).

Relationships between volunteers and paid staff are shaped in different ways

The way in which volunteer and paid staff roles interact (as shown in section 5.4) is one of the factors shaping volunteer-paid staff relationships. However, a number of other factors were highlighted as impacting on the relationships between the two:

- Firstly, the intensity of the interactions. Some volunteers worked very closely alongside paid staff whereas others had interactions more 'at arms' length'. Those who had more interaction tended to have stronger views and relationships had more

impact on their experience (positive and negative).

- Secondly, organisational culture and the consequent 'standing' of volunteers within the organisation shaped relationships and dynamics between paid staff and volunteers. Those who tended to feel 'looked down on' described their organisations as more hierarchical whereas in some settings (examples being governors and magistrates) participants reported a culture where volunteers were respected and even 'put on a pedestal.'

- Thirdly, the nature of the role. Some volunteers were in positions where their role was to challenge and hold organisations to account. In these cases, the dynamics of roles and relationships are shaped by this.

- Lastly, the wider context of funding cuts. Where organisations are affected by funding cuts, this can put pressure on volunteer and staff relationships and the dynamics between them.

As well as being shaped by the factors outlined above, it should also be noted that, although organisations may at times use similar processes for paid staff and volunteers, the management of volunteers is different to the management of paid staff. This is driven by a variety of reasons, but, for example, recent

research has highlighted that without the framework of the conventional employment contract, management of volunteers (generally, not specifically in public sector organisations) can be emotionally complex and demanding, especially when managing volunteers who demonstrate a high degree of affective commitment.[45]

The quality of volunteer-staff relationships goes beyond role distinction

While there were variations in the nature of the relationships between volunteers and paid staff, when looking at the quality of the relationships a number of areas were identified. A summary of these are found in table 3, with detail on each below:

1. Roles are clear and complement each other

Where relationships between volunteers and paid staff worked well, roles were clear to both and complemented one another. For example, focus group participants in hospitals talked about volunteering being able to provide emotional support to patients in a way that was different to staff, complementing the work of the paid staff.
On the other hand, relationships worked less well where volunteers felt they were not able to be useful or even perceived to be creating extra work for staff – leaving them feeling like they were being more of a burden than a support to paid staff.

'At one point I felt like I was in the way, I felt like I wasn't doing anything and actually disturbing them.' (Volunteer, health, north)

As highlighted in section 54, tensions sometimes arose where there was an overlap of roles, and a sense of threat was felt among paid staff.

2. Appreciation and value

The theme of recognition and value was raised both in our survey and additional research. Our *Time Well Spent* data indicates that 42% actively say it is important to receive recognition. However, our research more widely also showed that recognition was one of the key factors strongly associated with satisfied volunteers which suggests it may be more important than people admit. Among the public sector volunteers surveyed, 83% agree they feel recognised enough, however there is still scope for more to be done.

Among focus group participants, where volunteers felt valued, staff were vocal in their appreciation and recognised that they may, for example, be giving a significant amount of time to the organisation. They also felt valued for the skills and experience that they brought to their volunteering role.

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[45] Green, A-M., Ward, J.: De Montfort University, Leicester (2016); Too much of a good thing? The emotional challenges of managing affectively committed volunteers

Where tensions arose, it tended to be where there was a lack of recognition not just for the help they were giving, but also specifically that they were doing it as a volunteer ie for free, in their spare time. Where there was a lack of appreciation and value, volunteers described feeling taken advantage of and taken for granted.

> 'Some of the paid staff don't appreciate you, they think it's your job to do it but I'm a volunteer' (Volunteer, police, south)

Table 3: Key factors determining quality of relationship between volunteers and paid staff (summary)	*Relationships work well when...*	*Relationships work less well when*
Roles clear and complement each other	Roles complement each other and bring unique benefits	Roles clash
Appreciation and value	Recognised and appreciated	Feel taken advantage of and taken for granted
Respect	Treated as equals, valued	Feel looked down on
Staff morale	High	Low / pressured leading to
Support and understanding	Provided support and feedback	No or little support and feedback
Inclusion and camaraderie	Made to feel part of team	Feel excluded

3. Respect

Another common theme raised in relation to volunteer-staff relationship was that of treating volunteers with respect. Where they had good relationships, volunteers felt they were seen as equals.
Where tensions arose, on the other hand, volunteers felt paid staff looked down on them as 'just a volunteer', and they felt they were not listened to. This often related to wider organisational culture, as highlighted previously. Some volunteers also reported being given tasks or roles which paid staff did not want to do.

> 'Volunteers often actually got the most skills – but culture is that they're just a volunteer, they're not given stature that they should be given' (Volunteer, health, north)

4. Staff morale

Another factor which volunteers perceived to have an impact on volunteer-staff relationship was how staff themselves were feeling. Positive staff morale was perceived to have a positive knock-on impact on their relationship with volunteers.

> ' It depends on how happy the employees are...the organisation I volunteer for, they're happy, they openly admit they love their job, that's why I don't experience resentment' (Volunteer, library, south)

On the other hand, tensions arose where they perceived staff to be unhappy or felt resentment towards volunteers. Furthermore, there could be a knock-on impact on volunteers if staff were feeling stressed or pressured by the wider context such as staff shortages and long working days.

> 'Days are long but if a volunteer has done the wrong thing, you can get a look and maybe sentence. That's the bit where you think screw you a bit, I'm here to help. I'm volunteering to make your life easier.' (Volunteer, health, north)

5. Support and understanding

As highlighted in section 5.2, volunteers perceived support to be different to the organising and coordinating of their volunteering and an important part of their relationship with paid staff, especially where they had close interaction. Our *Time Well Spent* data indicates that most feel supported (79%).

Where focus group participants talked about being supported, this often related to paid staff who were open to being asked for help and providing it where needed. Participants also talked about feedback being helpful.

On the other hand, where volunteers felt unsupported it tended to be where they perceived paid staff as not being able or willing to help. There was an understanding that this

was often because they were very busy themselves, but some were left feeling that it was difficult to even ask for support.

6.   Inclusion and camaraderie

Where volunteers felt included, this had a positive impact on their relationships. As highlighted previously, most felt a sense of belonging within their organisation but less so than civil society volunteers (81% public sector vs 87% civil society).

Where volunteers felt a sense of belonging, they perceived staff to be welcoming and inclusive. One volunteer, for example, described being invited to leaving parties for members of staff. On the other hand, some felt more at ease around other volunteers, who had more in common with them than paid staff.

 'Staff are amazing and treat me like one of their own.' (Volunteer, Health, South)

Sub-sector spotlight

Relationship between volunteers and paid staff – health sub-sector

Health sector research has raised interesting dynamics around the relationships between paid staff and volunteers.

Increased engagement of volunteers in the NHS has been driven by multiple reasons including austerity, an ageing population, rising mental health needs, social isolation and a more flexible workforce. There has been increased engagement of volunteers in the NHS to respond to changing demand, such rising mental health needs and increasing social isolation, as well as austerity. Volunteering has featured most prominently in interactive, patient-facing activities such as greeter and befriending roles. As a result, volunteers are more likely to be seen positively by staff like nurses and doctors working on wards as opposed to those who use volunteers less frequently like specialist departments. This is also borne out with staff commonly seeing the benefit of volunteers as complementary, especially in tasks involving personal time with patients, which allows staff to devote more time to specialist work or devote time to patients with higher needs.

Where tensions exist, these have been strongest on staff not feeling involved enough in what volunteers do and the extra work required to supervise volunteers who might leave after the effort put into training and support. Recommendations for improving relationships have mentioned and included improving staff knowledge about volunteering, more joined-up working and improved trust-wide volunteering strategies.

Sources: Galea et al, 2013; Ross, S., Fenney et al: The Kings Fund (2018), The Role of volunteers in the NHS: views from the front line

5.6. Why do volunteers continue or stop?

Around three-quarters of volunteers say they are likely to continue in the next 12 months
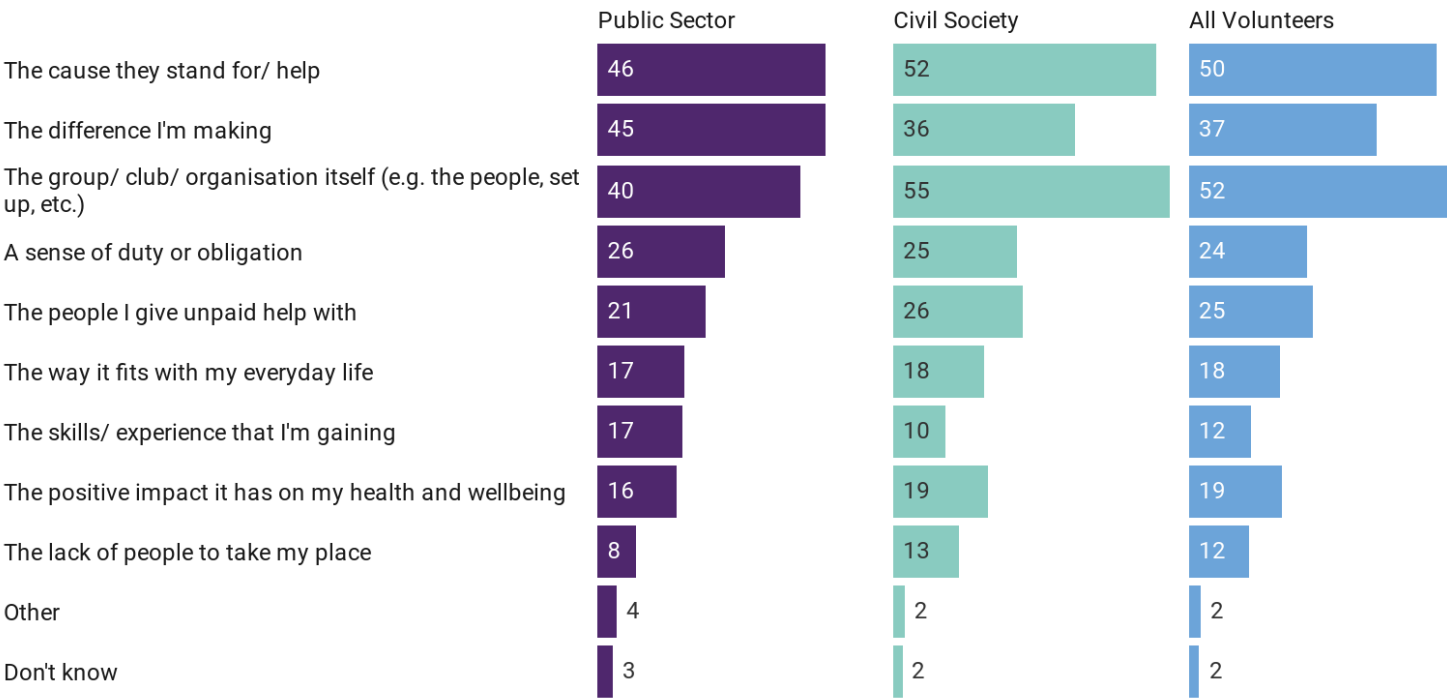
When recent public sector volunteers were asked about their likelihood to continue volunteering for the organisation over the next 12 months, the majority (76%) said they were likely to continue. However, this was significantly less than for civil society volunteers (83%).

Reasons for continuing largely reflect motivations for starting

Among those who said they were likely to continue, the most common reasons (as seen in chart 5) were the cause they were helping (46%) and the difference they were making (45%). As seen in chart 4, a higher proportion of public sector volunteers felt the difference they were making was a reason for continuing compared with civil society volunteers and volunteers as a whole (45% public sector vs 36% civil society and 37% all volunteers).

While not strictly comparable to motivations explored in Section 4, similar patterns can be seen such as the importance of the organisation being less prominent among public sector volunteers when compared with civil society volunteers. Volunteering for a cause and to make a difference continue to be the primary motivations.
As with initial motivations, while for civil society volunteers the organisation was the primary motivation for continuing (55%), it

Chart 5: Reasons to continue volunteering (% of recent public sector, civil society and all volunteers who said they were likely to continue volunteering with their organisation in the next 12 months)*

	Public Sector	Civil Society	All Volunteers
The cause they stand for/ help	46	52	50
The difference I'm making	45	36	37
The group/ club/ organisation itself (e.g. the people, set up, etc.)	40	55	52
A sense of duty or obligation	26	25	24
The people I give unpaid help with	21	26	25
The way it fits with my everyday life	17	18	18
The skills/ experience that I'm gaining	17	10	12
The positive impact it has on my health and wellbeing	16	19	19
The lack of people to take my place	8	13	12
Other	4	2	2
Don't know	3	2	2

*Respondents could select more than one answer
Source: Time Well Spent • Created with Datawrapper

was ranked third for public sector volunteers and a much lower proportion selected this as a reason (40%).

Also similar to motivations for starting, skills or experience acquired was more common among public sector volunteers as a reason for

continuing to volunteer than among civil society volunteers (17% vs 10%).

Focus groups participants largely felt that their motivations were similar to why they started but among those who had initially started out for practical reasons, for example to gain skills and experience, some said that over time,

other factors such as enjoyment had been more of a driver for continuing.

Some may continue despite the challenges they face in their volunteering

It should also be noted that some continued to volunteer even despite experiencing challenges or even negative experiences. Where this was the case among focus group

participants, this was often because such challenges were counteracted with the feeling that they were making a difference.

Another reason raised among focus group participants was a sense of duty, which was also ranked among the common reasons in the *Time Well Spent* survey (cited by over a quarter of public sector volunteers, 26%). Where this was perceived among focus group participants, it tended to be more common among older participants and linked to a perception that people 'should' volunteer. One participant who felt this way described his experience as follows:

'If you're fit and healthy and you live in this country, you have to give something back. I enjoy being a JP [Justice of the Peace ie magistrate] but that's the reason, the guilt. If I don't help, I feel guilty… it's one of the bigger drivers… If I'd have known [what it was going to be like] I wouldn't have done it but now feel as if I resign, I let everyone else down' (Volunteer, criminal justice, north)

Practical reasons are often cited for discontinuing volunteering but experience also matters

Among *Time Well Spent* respondents who said they were unlikely to continue volunteering with the public sector organisation in the next 12 months, the most common reasons given

were practical – namely, changing circumstances (eg home, work, study) and health reasons (both 26%). The next most common was that they 'felt they had done their bit' (18%).

Negative perceptions of the organisation's management and not feeling appreciated ranked lower (9% and 10% respectively). However, given the findings highlighted earlier about public sector volunteers being more likely to perceive their volunteering to be less flexible than civil society volunteers (see Section 5.2) it raises the question about whether the practical reasons cited most commonly (ie changing circumstances and health reasons) may be in part because volunteering opportunities are not able to easily accommodate these changes.

Our wider *Time Well Spent* findings highlights that while it may not always be cited as a primary reason, volunteers' experiences are associated with satisfaction and retention, and they matter too. This is supported by findings among police volunteers – see spotlight on this sub-sector.

Retaining existing volunteers has proven a significant issue for police volunteering roles such as special constables and police support volunteers.

Engagement of volunteers in police forces nationwide has been regularly associated with austerity. However, studies have shown a strong link between negative experiences of volunteering and how long someone intends to stay in their volunteer role. Research indicates that departures relate more to organisational rather than personal factors. In a nationwide special constable survey, the top three reasons for those intending to quit were underuse/under-involvement, not being supported and not feeling appreciated. Surveys of police volunteers reveal those planning to leave were likely to experience much lower morale than those wanting to stay.

Another important factor is the link between volunteer motivation and age. For example, younger special constables are more likely to be motivated to volunteer in order to join the regulars – a lower priority for older volunteers – so are more likely to leave to pursue this path.

Multiple studies indicate that meeting expectations is important, suggesting that positive experiences start from the beginning of the volunteering journey. Commonly raised problems indicate that changes could include smoother recruitment processes, higher-quality flexible training, better line management with support for ongoing skills development, better utilisation of existing skills, access to adequate resources and better appreciation of volunteer time.

Sources: Britton et al, 2016; Britton, I. Knight, L. and Lugli, V, 2018; Callender et al, 2018 (special constables); Callender et at, 2018 (police support volunteers)
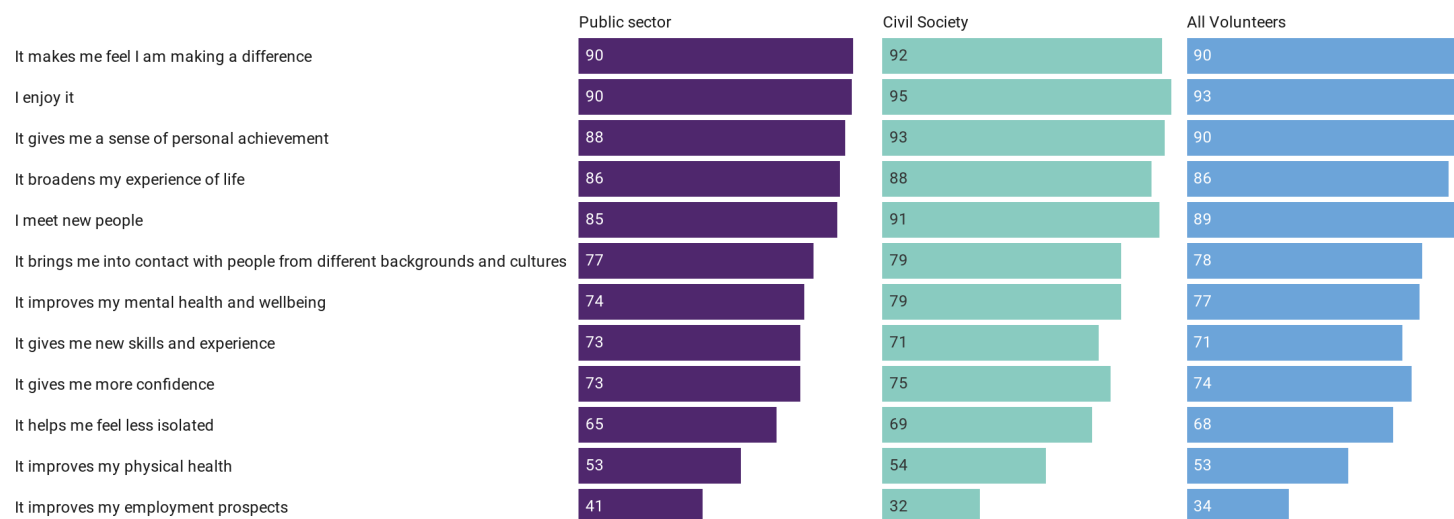
6. VOLUNTEER IMPACT

This section firstly looks at volunteers' own perceptions of the impacts of volunteering on themselves, and then explores more widely the perceived impacts of volunteers on organisations and service users – from different perspectives.

6.1. Impacts of volunteering on volunteers

Feeling they make a difference and enjoyment are the most commonly perceived positive impacts of volunteering

Those surveyed in *Time Well Spent* were asked to reflect on what they got out of volunteering, prompted by a list of different benefits and impacts. As shown in chart 6, among the benefits, the highest rated by public sector volunteers were that 'it makes me feel like I'm making a difference' and 'I enjoy it' (both 90%). Other common benefits included it 'gives me a sense of personal achievement' (88%), 'it broadens my experience of life' (86%) and 'I meet new people (85%).'

Chart 6: Perceived impact of volunteering on volunteers (% agree of recent public sector, civil society and all volunteers)

	Public sector	Civil Society	All Volunteers
It makes me feel I am making a difference	90	92	90
I enjoy it	90	95	93
It gives me a sense of personal achievement	88	93	90
It broadens my experience of life	86	88	86
I meet new people	85	91	89
It brings me into contact with people from different backgrounds and cultures	77	79	78
It improves my mental health and wellbeing	74	79	77
It gives me new skills and experience	73	71	71
It gives me more confidence	73	75	74
It helps me feel less isolated	65	69	68
It improves my physical health	53	54	53
It improves my employment prospects	41	32	34

Source: Time Well Spent • Created with Datawrapper

Public sector volunteers are more likely to perceive improved employment prospects

On the whole, perceived benefits were similar to those among civil society volunteers, however enjoyment and meeting new people were more highly rated among civil society volunteers. While 'improved employment prospects' was the lowest ranked for both, it was chosen by a higher proportion of public

sector volunteers compared with civil society volunteers (41% vs 32%). This mirrors earlier findings in relation to motivations, where public sector volunteers also saw this as being more important.

This may be specific to certain sub-sectors and roles. As highlighted earlier, within policing a significant proportion of volunteers become volunteers as a pathway to becoming regular

police officers. A survey with school governors highlighted that over half of the respondents say that being a governor has enabled them to develop their knowledge and skills and over a third of those in paid employment say it has

given them expertise that they have used in their paid employment[46].

Volunteering can also have less positive impacts on volunteers

As well as positive impacts, volunteers can experience more negative effects when volunteering. Among those who had had some kind of negative experience (from a prompted list), the most common were that they had been left out of pocket, they felt unappreciated, that too much of their time had been taken up, and that they felt pressured by the organisation to do more than they would like or pressured to continue their involvement. These are similar to those highlighted in section 5, where volunteers had less positive experiences.

6.2. Impacts of volunteers on organisations and service users

Volunteers feel they have a positive impact on individuals, community and physical places

As noted above, a key benefit perceived by volunteers was that they felt they made a difference through their volunteering. Among those who agreed with this statement, a further question was asked about where specifically they felt they made a difference.

As seen in chart 7, public sector volunteers most commonly felt they made a difference to an individual's life (43%) but perceiving they were making an impact on their local community, a particular group of people or issue in society and a physical place were also common (35%, 35% and 33% respectively). As seen in chart 7, some differences were seen across sectors. While impact on an individual or individuals' lives was mo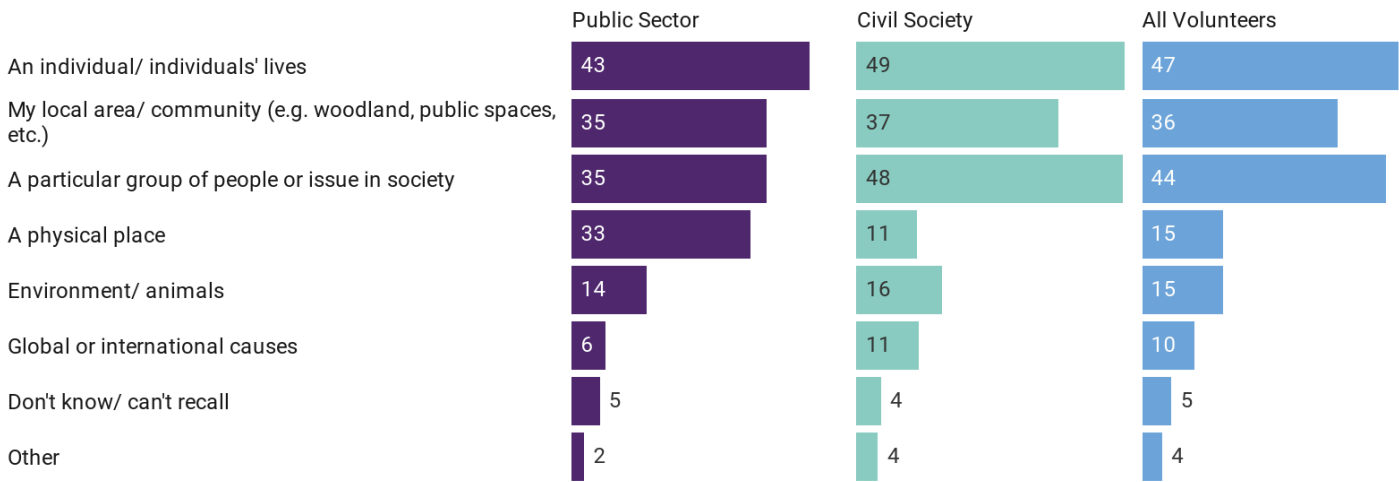st common across all sectors, civil society volunteers were much more likely to feel they had an impact on a particular group of people or issue in society (35% public sector vs. 48% civil society). In turn, public sector volunteers were much more likely to feel they have an impact on a physical place (33% vs 11%).

Volunteers perceive themselves to be an invaluable resource to organisations

When it came to the value volunteers feel they have to volunteer-involving organisations, focus group participants highlighted in particular the extra resource they brought, which in many cases included their skills. This led to a perception that organisations would not be able to do what they do without volunteers like themselves. They also believed that the resource they brought to organisations meant that they freed up paid staff to focus on more specialised tasks. This was especially the case where volunteers worked alongside paid staff but were undertaking different types of tasks (see b in chart 4, in section 5.4).

Chart 7: What volunteers feel they make a difference to (% of recent public sector, civil society and all volunteers who said they feel they make a difference through their volunteering)*

	Public Sector	Civil Society	All Volunteers
An individual/ individuals' lives	43	49	47
My local area/ community (e.g. woodland, public spaces, etc.)	35	37	36
A particular group of people or issue in society	35	48	44
A physical place	33	11	15
Environment/ animals	14	16	15
Global or international causes	6	11	10
Don't know/ can't recall	5	4	5
Other	2	4	4

*Respondents could select more than one answer
Source: Time Well Spent • Created with Datawrapper

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46 James, C. Goodall, J., Howarth, E. and Knights E. (2014), The state of school governing in England 2014

Volunteers perceive their distinctive value is their freedom to 'speak up'

When the focus group participants were prompted about what they felt the distinctive value of volunteers was, a common response was that volunteers were able to 'speak their mind' and speak out about things which they thought paid staff may not be able to do. This could be in relation to issues or problems that could be raised without fear of job security. In other contexts, volunteers could specifically play the role of being someone who was more independent, as a school governor for instance, and was therefore able to represent the views of others in this capacity.

Volunteers feel they can go 'beyond the necessities' for service users

In addition to being able to speak up, volunteers thought they could make a valuable contribution by going beyond the necessities and performing duties that staff may have less time to do. For example, in a hospital, volunteers could take additional time to reassure patients with their anxieties, especially as some felt that service users were able to be more open with them than with staff.

Organisations also perceive the positive impacts of volunteers, such as supporting staff and connecting with the local community

Evidence from different sub-sectors shows that the positive impacts volunteers believe they have on their organisations and those within it are also valued by organisations themselves. Examples include:

- a survey of staff in the NHS which showed that the vast majority perceived that volunteers added a lot of value to staff, volunteers themselves and patients. Of these, the highest proportion felt they added value to patients (90%), in particular in providing 'emotional and social support that might not otherwise be available'. However, they also noted the practical support that volunteers provided to frontline staff, easing their workload by providing an extra pair of hands. Those most positive about the value of volunteers were from infrastructure support roles.[47]

- research looking at the strengths and skills of the judiciary in the magistrates courts which highlighted that across all respondent groups, a particular benefit of magistrates was their perceived closeness to the local community. By having specific knowledge of the area and being aware of local needs, magistrates were seen, in some instances, to be better placed to make judgments as well as having a vested interest in ensuring that 'local justice' was delivered. Many also stressed that lay involvement within the criminal justice system was crucial.[48]

- research on volunteering in libraries which highlighted that the key benefits to a library service from involving volunteers were service enhancement and extension, in addition to enabling the service to more fully engage with the local community. These kinds of initiatives were also viewed as potentially a way to get new types of library users such as young people in reading challenge initiatives. Volunteers were also seen to help support staff in their work, allowing them to focus on the tasks that required more skills and expertise. [49]

However, involving volunteers can present challenges for volunteer-involving organisations

While organisations see the value of involving volunteers, evidence from sub-sectors also highlights that there are challenges in involving them. The sub-sector spotlight looking at volunteering in education outlines some of this mixed picture of volunteer impact.

A survey of NHS staff cited a lack of clarity about job roles (47%), too much variation in how volunteers do things (22%) and volunteers changing too often (18%) as the key issues relating to volunteer involvement.[50] Additionally, where paid front line staff are managing and coordinating volunteers, this can put pressure on their roles, in addition to their day-to-day roles.

The value of volunteers could be enhanced further

While there are both benefits and challenges in relation to volunteer involvement, there are some indications that the value of volunteers could be strengthened through:

- using the skills and experiences volunteers have to offer

As cited previously, around one in five (21%) public sector volunteers saying they have skills they would like to use but are not currently using. This was higher than for civil society volunteers (14%) which may indicate that public sector volunteers' skills may be more likely to be underutilised. This is reflected in a national survey of police support volunteers which found that around 4 in 10 (38%) Police Support Volunteers disagreed that the force used volunteers to their full potential. Britton and Callender (2018), on this issue within the police force concluding that rather than viewing volunteer officers as individuals with diverse skill sets and experience, they are

[47] Ross, S., Fenney, D. et al, 2018
[48] Ames, A., Szyndler, R., Burston, Phillips, R., Keith, J., Gaunt, R., Davies, S. and Mottram, C.: Ipsos MORI/ Ministry of Justice (2011) The strengths and skills of the Judiciary in the Magistrates' Courts.

[49] Casselden, B., Pickard, A. and McLeod, J: (2015) The challenges facing public libraries in the Big Society: The role of volunteers, and the issues that surround their use in England
[50] Ross, S., Fenney, D. et al, 2018

moulded 'uniformly into a single, narrow and traditional interpretation of the job'.

- investing more in training

As highlighted in section 5.3, a lack of training was a point of frustration for volunteers that made them feel less able to fulfil their volunteer roles and ambitions to be of value and make a difference to organisations and service users. Our *Time Well Spent* data found that almost half (49%) of public sector

volunteers who were already receiving some kind of training would like or would have liked more training to help them carry out their volunteering. This was much higher when compared with civil society volunteers (38%).
Again, a national survey with this policy volunteers found that special constables gain valuable skills in the role, but a third (33%) did not feel that they are given sufficient ongoing training to remain effective in their role.

- greater understanding among staff of volunteers and what they do.

Finally, a third factor which has been highlighted previously, and may help to maximise the contribution of volunteers, is a better understanding among staff of the role of volunteers. In a survey of NHS staff when asked about what would strengthen the impact of volunteers in hospitals, the most common response (by 76% of survey respondents) was 'better knowledge

amongst staff about the role of volunteers'. Findings from section 5.5 highlight that a number of different factors can contribute to the quality of the relationships between paid staff and volunteers, including showing appreciation, respect, support, and inclusion.

Sub-sector spotlight

Impacts of volunteers on organisations – education sub-sector

For education, an emerging issue is the impact of volunteering especially during times of financial pressure.

In the last decade schools have experienced funding cuts, with many turning to voluntary action, from classroom support to fundraising, in order to deliver core services. In this environment, volunteering can have multiple benefits. In classrooms, volunteers supporting classroom activities and delivering one to one support can help free up teacher capacity to deliver core work. Volunteers can act as role models and support for children, particularly vulnerable ones. They can provide a connection to the wider community through promoting school as a community hub and as a point of engagement to increase local support.

However, volunteering in this context presents a number of challenges. For schools, recruiting and managing volunteers can be time consuming. Volunteers themselves are limited by time constraints, consistency of regular support on offer and potential conflicts of interest, especially for parent volunteers. In the wider context, schools in more disadvantaged areas find it harder to recruit volunteers, compared with schools in wealthier areas.

Source: Body et al, 2016

7. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This section summarises some of our key learning from across the research and looks at what the findings might mean for practice and for decision-makers.

7.1. Concluding reflections

These concluding comments are designed to capture some of our key reflections that have struck us overall. Making broad conclusions when looking at an area like public sector volunteering which covers such a variety of volunteering roles and contexts is not easy. While we have focused on public sector volunteering in this report, we know that some of the features we have highlighted are also present in other contexts, including in volunteering in civil society.

Key motivations for volunteering are making a difference and cause – most do not look to volunteer specifically for a public sector organisation

Most public sector volunteers do not actively look to volunteer for a public sector organisation, although they may have views of the different types of organisations and

sectors which might influence their decisions about who they volunteer for.

Other factors matter more. The primary reason public sector volunteers cite for getting involved is to make a difference – which they share in common with other volunteers. Volunteering for a cause that is of personal importance to them is also a key driver, and appears to be more of a motivation than a personal attachment to the organisation itself. Often these causes which volunteers want to support are local – and volunteering locally also appeals to volunteers on a practical level too, allowing them to fit their volunteering more easily around their day-to-day lives.

As well as being major motivations to start volunteering in the first place, among those who intend to carry on giving time in the next twelve months, wanting to make a difference and the cause are the main reasons for these volunteers give for wanting to continue.

The majority are positive about their experience but less so than civil society volunteers

Overall satisfaction levels are high among public sector volunteers (94% very or fairly satisfied), however they report lower levels of

satisfaction compared with civil society volunteers, particularly for being 'very' satisfied (47% public sector vs 58% civil society). They are also less likely to continue volunteering in the next 12 months. This may relate to age profile (as younger volunteers overall are less likely to be satisfied and public sector volunteers have a younger age profile overall). However, it is likely there are a variety of factors at play.

As well as these overall measures, when asked about different aspects of their volunteer journey – such as how their volunteering is organised, feeling supported, and a sense of belonging – we see a similar story, with public sector volunteers mostly feeling happy with their experience, but less than civil society volunteers.

Getting the balance right when it comes to managing and organising volunteers can be particularly challenging

Organisation and management of volunteers is highlighted as a particular challenge. Public sector volunteering is more likely than volunteering in civil society to involve more formalised processes and paid staff managing volunteers. Unsurprisingly, these volunteers are more likely to perceive their volunteering

to be structured and formal in nature. This is not always a negative thing: in some instances, public sector volunteers expect and may even want this kind of volunteering setting.

However, getting the right balance can be challenging. Our *Time Well Spent* research tells us that public sector volunteers are more likely to feel their volunteering is *too* structured and formalised, less flexible, as well as *too* bureaucratic compared with civil society volunteers. At the same time, they are also more likely to say their volunteering is not organised enough.

These perceptions, which can sometimes feel contradictory are likely to reflect the nature of public sector organisations (typically larger in size, more formalised processes etc – which are not unique to them but are common features of these organisations) and the fact that volunteers' perceptions are driven partly by their expectations. These expectations can be based on various factors from the type of volunteering role to wider environmental factors.

Moreover, organisations have a further balance to strike, between managing the expectations of volunteers and addressing

their own organisational needs to deliver services and activities effectively and safely.

There is a tipping point where volunteering starts to feel too much like paid work

The boundary between volunteering and paid work was a key area of interest for this research. The findings highlight that in a public sector volunteering context, the potential for boundaries between the two to be blurred is greater where roles are structured in ways that resemble paid work, eg fixed number of hours that needed to be fulfilled, and are time-intensive. Among the focus group participants this was cited among those who were magistrates, governors or special constables, for example.

Where this can become negative to volunteers, ie '*too much* like paid work' is where volunteering begins to feel like an obligation, and particularly where volunteers did not feel they were appreciated for their time or recognised as a volunteer.

Funding cuts have a number of direct and indirect impacts on volunteers' experiences

The boundary between volunteering and paid work tended to become more blurred in services facing funding cuts. While not unique to public sector organisations, many of these organisations have had funding cuts in recent years. Our findings highlight that the impact on volunteers' experiences is wide-ranging, from feeling 'put upon' to commit more time, to feeling frustrated that they are not able to fulfil their role as well because of reduced

training, and feeling unsupported by those managing them. These impacts underlie many of the challenges raised by volunteers and for some, have resulted in negative experiences, and even ceasing their volunteering entirely.

Relationships between volunteers and paid staff relate to, but go beyond, distinctive roles

The relationships between volunteers and paid staff are shaped by a variety of factors.

Public sector volunteers are more likely to be managed by paid staff, compared with civil society volunteers, therefore the relationship between paid staff and volunteers plays a key role in the volunteer experience in this context.

The nature of paid and volunteering roles also impact on these relationships. Our findings highlight that in most cases, the distinction between paid and volunteering roles is clear but tensions are most likely to occur where there is overlap or where volunteers were undertaking roles formerly done by paid staff.

While the distinction of roles can play a part in the quality of volunteer and paid staff relationships, focus group participants identified a number of other factors as important: for example, having mutual respect, feeling valued and feeling included. These seem to be of particular importance where volunteers and paid staff are working closely alongside one another.

Public sector volunteers contribute in a number of positive ways – but their impact can be further enhanced

As with motivations, the main benefits public sector volunteers perceive are similar to other volunteers – primarily the feeling of making a difference and enjoying themselves. As well as the personal impacts which volunteering has, volunteers and organisations themselves also recognise the positive impacts their contributions have on organisations, service users and on staff. They felt in particular that as volunteers they can 'speak up' and go beyond the necessities in ways which time-pressed paid staff may find it more challenging to do.

However, our findings indicate they have potential to increase their impact more. Many feel that they could (and want to) use their skills and experiences further within their volunteering. Furthermore, while most are happy with the way impact is communicated by organisations, they are more likely to feel there is too little rather than too much communication – indicating more could be done by organisations to show volunteers how they are making a difference.

7.2. Implications for practice

In our main *Time Well Spent* report, while recognising that volunteers go through a variety of different journeys, we suggested a number of key features that make a quality experience for volunteers.

Chart 8: Features of a quality volunteer experience (from main *Time Well Spent* report)
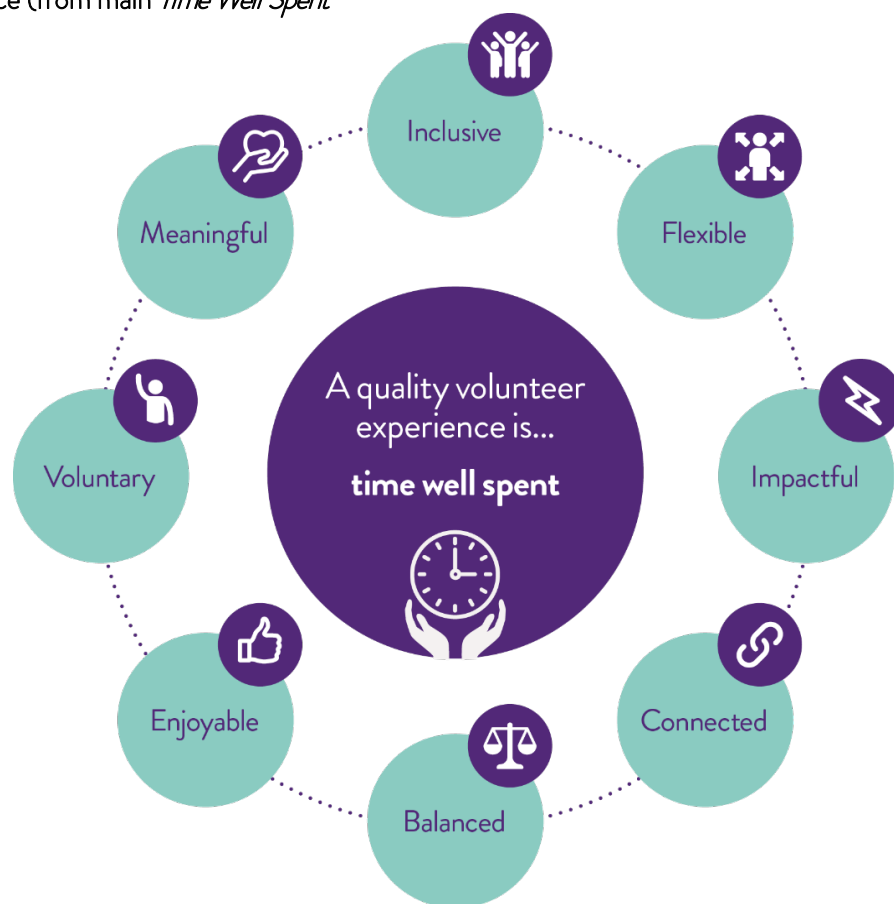
Having looked in more depth at the experience of public sector volunteers, we can see that these features (see chart 8) of being inclusive, flexible, impactful, connected, balanced, enjoyable, voluntary and meaningful, are just as applicable in this context. However, at times they may take on a particular meaning or focus.

In the rest of this section, we explore what in each of these areas, volunteer-involving organisations in the public sector might consider when it comes to practice. The feature of being 'valued' is explored as an additional aspect of the volunteer experience that has emerged from this focused piece of research.

As highlighted previously, as some of the aspects of public sector volunteering overlap with other sectors, wider learnings can be taken across all types of organisation.

1. Inclusive

The same diversity issues exist among public sector volunteers as among volunteers as a whole, especially in relation to socio-economic status. The research findings also highlight that public sector volunteers are less likely to feel like a sense of belonging to the organisation compared with civil society volunteers – focus group participants reflected that this may relate to the structured nature of volunteering which may be a barrier to feeling embedded in the organisation.

Public sector organisations might consider:
- how to make it easy for people to get involved and use different recruitment methods to reach out to different potential volunteers, including through service users
- how to promote an organisational culture that actively encourages equity, diversity and inclusion at all levels
- how to ensure volunteers do not feel excluded, encouraging paid staff to

support volunteers feel 'part of the team', but also recognising the pressures staff may be under. This could mean promoting a wider culture within the organisation that welcomes volunteers and supports staff and volunteers to work well together.
- how to offer a range of roles and opportunities, both formal and informal
- how to ensure volunteers are not out of pocket.

2. Flexible

Public sector volunteers are more likely to feel their volunteering is more formalised and more structured compared with civil society volunteers. They also felt public sector organisations were less flexible around the time they give. Focus group discussions highlighted that this can depend on the type of role, with some being more like paid roles, with set times and commitments.

Public sector organisations might consider:
- how to take on board to what volunteers and potential volunteers are looking for and want to offer, being clear what roles require to enable potential volunteers to choose whether it might work for them and offering a range of options
- not adopting a 'one size fits all' approach in managing volunteers – being able to adapt
- how to support volunteers to shape their volunteer journey taking into account life changes that might influence the way they can get involved

3.   Impactful

Cause is a bigger motivation than the actual organisation itself for public sector volunteers – both as a motivation to start volunteering and as a motivation to continue. Most public sector volunteers feel they make a difference through their volunteering. However, our findings highlight that the impact of volunteers can be increased even more.

Public sector organisations might consider:
- focusing on the impact the organisation wants to create through the service they provide, and the role volunteers play in helping them to achieve this
- understanding the main motivations that volunteers get involved – especially around cause and impact, and thinking about what that means for different types of volunteers
- how they present to volunteers the impact that they can have on the cause, and managing expectations and being clear about that impact – as well as communicating more about the impact they've had (eg giving feedback from a service user)
- how to support volunteers to use the skills and experiences they have within their volunteering and enable them to develop existing ones through training so that they can make the difference in the way they want.

4.   Connected

Public sector volunteers are more likely to be managed by paid staff than civil society

volunteers, and this relationship can be one of the factors shaping volunteers' experiences. Where it works well, relationships between public sector volunteers, paid staff and the organisation itself can enhance the volunteer experience, but there are examples of volunteers feeling that they are just there to 'fill gaps', and paid staff not understanding the role of volunteers, especially where there is more overlap of roles.

Public sector organisations might consider:
- being clear about why they are involving volunteers in the first place and ensuring all those within the organisation (both paid staff and volunteers) understand this
- ensuring staff and volunteers have a common understanding of the purpose of the organisation and can come together around shared values
- how to involve staff, service users and volunteers in the design of volunteer roles and opportunities
- how to involve volunteers in activities and events that bring people together (social events, team meetings etc.).
- how frontline staff are prepared, supported and trained in managing volunteers

5.   Balanced

Getting the balance right is arguably even more challenging in a public sector volunteering context, as the nature of these organisations can make it difficult to meet volunteers' expectations of how they want to be managed and organised.

Public sector organisations might consider:
- being aware of volunteers' expectations and how to manage them – from the start of their interactions (eg in how opportunities are framed) to how they manage their processes (eg being transparent and accountable about how they spend money)
- ensuring they are proportionate in how they manage and organise volunteers and not reliant on existing HR practice
- how to balance what volunteers want with what the organisation needs to do to deliver its services and activities effectively and safely.

6.   Enjoyable

Enjoyment is the most highly ranked benefit – but too much pressure on volunteers to commit more than they feel they are able to, can take that feeling away. Our wider *Time Well Spent* findings show that enjoyment is associated both with satisfaction and likelihood to volunteer. Our findings, however, show that public sector volunteers are less likely to continue with their volunteering compared with civil society.

Public sector organisations might consider:
- recognising the importance of enjoyment to the volunteer experience (and acknowledging it can mean different things to different people such as having fun and feeling a sense of fulfilment or purpose)
- making sure volunteering is an enjoyable experience over time, checking in with volunteers to see how they are feeling.

7.   Voluntary

Public sector volunteers are more likely to feel their volunteering is becoming 'too much like paid work' – where this is the case, driven by a feeling of obligation, along with a lack of appreciation.

Public sector organisations might consider:
- how to inspire rather than require commitment from volunteers, to ensure that it feels driven by their own motivation, rather than organisations' need for them
- how to ensure volunteers do not feel too pressured by the organisation (to the point they feel obliged to participate) or taken advantage of
- how to make sure boundaries are maintained between paid and unpaid roles, especially when the organisation is under pressure
- investing in volunteer management with training and induction for staff managing volunteers, to make sure volunteers are well supported
- avoiding the use of terms such as 'workforce' when involving volunteers, and designing roles based on the value they bring to the organisation.

8.   Meaningful

Volunteers want to make a difference in ways that align with their priorities and personal values.

Public sector organisations might consider:
- how to make roles meaningful, linking them to causes that resonate with volunteers
- how to enable volunteers to have a voice (for example, through volunteer forums) – and make sure they're listened to
- taking the time to understand volunteers and their experiences by engaging directly with volunteers in the organisation and wider evidence on volunteering
- how to bring together the shared values – of volunteers, staff and the organisational aims and goals.

9. Valued

In addition to the features outlined above, appreciation is an area which this focused research highlights as being important. Where it is missing, it not only contributes to a feeling that volunteering is becoming too much like paid work but also can have a negative impact on staff-volunteer relationships and on overall volunteer satisfaction and retention.

Public sector organisations might consider:
- how to make volunteers feel appreciated and valued, even with a simple 'thank you'
- how to ensure volunteers are visible within the organisation and knows why volunteers are involved and what their distinctive value is
- how to promote a wider culture of appreciation within the organisation embedded at different levels – from staff to volunteers.

7.3. Implications for decision-makers

Below we draw attention to four key questions decision-makers might consider when approaching volunteer involvement from a strategic level within public sector organisations.

1. Why do you want to involve volunteers?

From the outset, be clear as to *why* you are involving volunteers in your organisation and consider how their involvement fits with the organisation's purpose, values and wider culture. Volunteer involvement should not be an end in itself, or a purely cost-saving measure.

- Think about how you will achieve your objectives, and when designing your long-term strategy think about volunteering as a part of this rather than an add on.

- Consider developing a theory of change for volunteer involvement, making sure you engage with key stakeholders from across the organisation. This can form the basis for implementation and wider communication with staff.

- Focus on the impact on people you work with. What will be gained or lost by making a particular role voluntary? How does the voluntary nature of this role improve the service offered? These questions should form the basis of role design to consider whether volunteers

could, for example, help you reach new communities, or add a new level of impartiality.

- Take into consideration where strategic responsibility for volunteering sits in your organisation. Be aware of how the positioning of volunteering in an organisational structure influences how volunteering is developed. Volunteering strategies often see the best results when they are directly connected to senior strategic decision making.

2. How will you get buy-in across the organisation?

Involving staff, people who use services, and wider stakeholders (eg partner organisations and existing volunteers) will help you to design roles which align with the needs and priorities of these groups. This will also help to reduce tensions between staff, service users and volunteers in the long term.

- Consider developing a business case for volunteer involvement, including funding for volunteer management. Make sure the leaders in your organisation have an understanding of volunteer engagement and are involved in the process.

- Work with staff, service users and wider stakeholders from the beginning, rather than consulting with them once you have developed the plans. While working with these groups, focus on the question of 'what do we want to achieve' rather than

simply looking for ways for volunteers to do what staff already do.

- Think about making use of existing forums and groups that represent service users or staff. You may also want to consider having 'champions' for volunteering at different levels of your organisation.

- Consider your messaging and the audiences you're communicating with. Does your messaging help you to create the type of service you want to deliver? For example, if you recruit volunteers as 'heroes' to 'save' your service, what impression will that give to service users? Does that give an unrealistic impression of what volunteers will actually be doing? You may want to test your messaging on different audiences, and make sure your messaging is informed by research on why people want to volunteer.

- Make sure you communicate your rationale for engaging volunteers to staff well before you bring volunteers into your organisation.

3. How will you ensure your approach is fair, equitable and inclusive?

Fostering an organisational culture which actively promotes equality, diversity and inclusion at all levels across the organisation is important for attracting and involving volunteers from diverse backgrounds.

- Invest time and resource into making volunteering inclusive of people of different backgrounds, identities and experiences, including people who use services. This is especially important as volunteers within the public sector are more likely to be from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. By involving volunteers from diverse backgrounds, you are bringing an invaluable range of lived experiences, skills and values into your organisation. It will also help you to create a service which more accurately reflects the makeup of the community it serves.

- Ensure that volunteering doesn't become the only route into employment in your organisation. We know that younger volunteers engage in volunteering as a route into employment but it is important to make sure opportunities are open to all.

- Consider including volunteering in your organisations' equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy and highlight that there is a strong business case for diversity. Ensure you apply the Public Sector Equality Duty when considering volunteer engagement.

4. How will you engage and support volunteers?

Investment in volunteer management and development is crucial for ensuring volunteer managers are well resourced, trained and supported. A well supported volunteer management set-up is likely to have a positive knock-on effect to volunteers' experiences, as well as be more efficient and more effective in meeting your aims.

- Consider the different approaches to volunteer management as there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Think about how these approaches fit with the reason for involving volunteers and the organisation's wider purpose and mission. It may also be beneficial to look to civil society organisations to understand the full diversity of volunteer management approaches and how these could benefit your organisation.

- Make sure your messaging aligns with the reality of the volunteering opportunity. Managing expectations is vital for involving volunteers effectively. Building feedback loops into volunteer management can help you take early action if expectations change.

- Take into consideration the level of risk you are willing to accept. Many organisational processes are designed to manage risk. However often, the opportunities of volunteering can be dramatically increased by ceding a little control to volunteers.

- Think about how to make sure volunteers' voices are heard, alongside those of staff and people using services, to improve both volunteer engagement and service delivery. This can be done by fostering a culture where volunteers feel able to give feedback on their experiences. You could also consider setting up a feedback loop to hear and act on volunteer feedback, either through direct engagement with volunteers or through a management structure.

8. APPENDIX

This appendix provides further details of the survey methodology and other details about the approach to this research.

8.1. Research approach

As outlined in section 2.4, this research draws on a number of different sources. More detail can be found below:

1. Main research findings and further analysis *Time Well Spent – a national survey of 10,103 people on the volunteer experience.*

- This survey was completed by adults aged 18 and over in Great Britain through YouGov's panel, via an online self-completion questionnaire between 4 and 15 May 2018. The total sample achieved was 10,103 respondents. The data was weighted to reflect the national population by key demographics: age, gender, education level and social grade. The survey focuses on volunteering through groups, clubs and organisations, known as formal volunteering. More technical details can be found in section 10 of the main *Time Well Spent* report.

- Further analysis was carried out by analysing the subset of public sector volunteers: those who reported giving unpaid help to a public sector organisation in the last 12 months as their main organisation, if multiple (n=649). We also compared with civil society volunteers (n=2637).

2. Primary research carried out specifically for this report: four focus groups, lasting 90 minutes, were carried out with volunteers who had given time to public sector organisations. Participants were recruited through an external agency. In each group, participants were recruited according to the following criteria:

- All aged 18 and over
- Each group to reflect a demographic mix of age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and working status
- All must have volunteered in public sector organisations within the last 12 months
- Within each group, primarily those who either have interaction with/work alongside paid staff
- Mix of length of time volunteering in public sector organisation

3. A range of research and literature on volunteering in the public sector, focusing on key subsectors. See section 8.3 for full list of literature and evidence cited in this report.

4. Finally, a round table discussion, led by the volunteering development team at NCVO included practice and policymakers and academics with interest in this area. During this round table, research findings were represented, followed by a discussion on practice and policy implications.

8.2. Definitions

As outlined in section 2.5, throughout this report, as in the main *Time Well Spent* report, we use the term 'volunteering' to refer to formal volunteering through groups, clubs or organisations, which is the focus of this survey. Furthermore, in the survey, the term volunteering was not used. Instead, they were asked whether they had been involved with any groups, clubs or organisation and then whether they had provided unpaid help to any groups, clubs or organisations, prompted by a list of activities as in the Community Life Survey. This method was used to encompass the full range of volunteering activities, some of which may not otherwise be recognised by respondents as volunteering.

8.3. Literature and evidence

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