



## **Older volunteering: Literature review**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

**Definition** (Compact, Volunteering England October 2005)

Volunteering is defined as an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives.

Facts and figures about the 65 plus age group (HO Citizenship Survey, 2001 Atwood et al 2003):

- Twenty-seven per cent of people in this age group are involved in volunteering.
- The activities this age group are most likely to get involved in include services for older people, those connected to religion, and to local community and neighbourhood groups. They are less likely to get involved in schools and youth work, (and young people are least likely to volunteer helping older people so older and younger generations do not seem to mix much through volunteering).
- They were involved most significantly in raising or handling money and visiting or befriending people; (also Davis Smith, 1992).
- This age group is involved at the highest participation rate in keeping in 'keeping in touch with someone who has difficulty getting out and about', and 'doing shopping, collecting pensions or paying bills for someone'.
- Social and club activities are the most popular tasks for older volunteers – 'they like working in groups' (Davis Smith, 1992).
- Seventy-six per cent of 65-74 year olds, and 77 per cent of those aged 75 and over have been involved more than once a month in volunteering.
- There is an indication that this age group is the most active in informal volunteering as only 24 per cent of 65-74s and 23 per cent of over 75s responded that they were involved less frequently than once a month, but this figure was higher for other age groups.
- Yet, those who do volunteer during their early retirement years tend to do so more often than during their working years (also Harvard, 2004) suggesting if people can be introduced to the idea of volunteering just before or just after they retire there is an increased likelihood that they will volunteer.
- Having many social contacts increases the likelihood that a person will be invited to volunteer – for example being employed exposes an individual to many relationships and opens up possibilities for a variety of activities including volunteering (Fischer and Shaffer, 1993).
- Older volunteers are motivated by the significance of their work, and evidence of success and effectiveness – success can be measured through recognition ceremonies, certificates and so on (Fischer and Shaffer, 1993).

## **Retired Brits today**

A 2006 AXA survey, Retirement, a new life after work, revealed that in the UK people feel that old age starts when one reaches 71. In America it is 75. It also found that ideally Britons would want to retire at 55. Retirement is a happy time with 94 per cent

of retired people describing themselves as very happy or quite happy compared to 90 per cent of working people. Retired Brits are happier than their counterparts in most European countries and just as happy as Australians.

Ninety per cent of people believe over 65s are good at work, in fact around the world the UK is more convinced of the value of older workers than anyone, apart from Americans.

When questioned about how they saw retirement the highest response for both working and retired people 25 per cent and 32 per cent respectively, saw this as a 'time to devote to myself, freedom' – this is something voluntary organisations must factor in when thinking about attracting older volunteers.

In Britain, only three per cent of retired people and one per cent of working people saw retirement as a time to do voluntary work, and five per cent of working people and two per cent of retired people saw this as a time to devote to others. That said 14 per cent of retired people actually are involved in voluntary work compared to eight per cent of working people who plan to do voluntary work in retirement. This is lower than for Australia, Canada, USA, France and Germany showing that this is not so instilled in the psyche of the British people as it is for people living in those other countries.

Retired Brits travel the world more than any other nation, and are far more likely to travel abroad.

Seventy per cent confirm that their standard of living has increased or stayed the same since retiring, whilst 80 per cent confirm their quality of life has also increased or stayed the same.

Seventy-eight per cent of retired people feel rather or very healthy compared to 87 per cent of working people. The Brits see themselves as healthier than all the other European countries surveyed.

### **Older volunteers – first time volunteers?**

There is conflicting information about whether older people will have volunteered previously or whether this will be their first time. In Forster's research (1996) 50 per cent of volunteers had not volunteered before, however this refutes the information given in the 1992 report by Justin Davis-Smith, *Volunteering: Widening Horizons in the Third Age*, that stated that most volunteers in this age group were returning to volunteering.

People who have volunteered before are more likely to come forward as volunteers. They are 'joiners' and tend to be active in general belonging to other organisations, have high levels of altruism and empathy. It is easier to recruit these people. People who feel tied to their communities are also likely to have volunteered before. This is explained as 'community rootedness' and as an attachment to their community (Fischer and Shaffer, 1993).

Research suggests that older people want to be productive but they are not as active and productive as they would like to be. Older people are much more likely than younger people to agree strongly that retired people should contribute through community service and that “life isn’t worth living if you can’t contribute to the well-being of others (Herzog and House, 1991 quoted in Fischer and Shaffer, 1993).”

Chambre (1994,1997) has argued that volunteering is essentially a form of leisure activity most especially for older persons. Volunteering is their choice and is enjoyable and meaningful to them. Yet volunteering is different from other leisure activities as there is the element of doing it in order to ‘do something good’ and altruism in this way doesn’t normally feature in reasons why people participate in leisure activities (quoted in Fischer and Shaffer, 1993).

The nfpSynergy report *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Volunteer* (2005) reveals that older people are not more likely to volunteer after retirement. They are, however, likely to increase the hours they give if they are already involved with an organisation.

## **2. RECRUITING OLDER VOLUNTEERS**

### **What are the advantages for voluntary organisations of including older volunteers? (Rochester and Hutchinson, 2002)**

- Loyalty: older people spend more time on their volunteering and stay longer than younger people (also in Davis Smith 1992).
- Skills: older people have spent much longer perfecting their skills.
- Maturity: They have had experiences that enable them to understand the problems of others.
- Availability: those who have retired from paid work and are no longer responsible for child rearing can give significantly more time.
- Confidence and authority.
- Commitment and continuity: they were more altruistic than their younger counterparts.
- An ability to engage with other older people: they had more empathy for the issues experienced by older people than younger volunteers.
- They had social networks that allowed them to act as ambassadors for the organisation, thereby bringing other people in.
- Able to engage in a different way with children and young people. They are able to offer a ‘calming influence’ and more confidence to the children. (See also: *Changing the Lives of Children and Older People*. Beth Johnson Foundation, 2003).
- Older workers and older volunteers are less likely to quit than their younger counterparts (Fischer and Shaffer, 1993).

### **What influences older people to volunteer with a charity or cause?**

The influences on people’s volunteering patterns are complex. Davis Smith and Gay (2005) talk of a continuum ranging from self-interest to altruism. It has been consistently found that people usually cite more than one reason for volunteering.

They include the following reasons;

- the need to keep active
- helping others; this was often expressed in the context of being able 'to give something back'
- a feeling that it helped in the transition from paid employment
- people also felt there was the necessity to retain some kind of role in society, of still being able to make a positive contribution.

Ellis (2003) talks about;

- the feeling of making a difference
- enhanced physical and mental well being
- improved confidence and self esteem.

Rochester and Hutchinson (2002) add to the above;

- meeting new people
- personal development through gaining new skills
- dealing with the 'empty nest' syndrome or with the death of a spouse or partner.

Potentially volunteers are motivated by diverse emotional needs - wanting to avoid feelings of guilt, wanting approval, wanting to cope with anxiety, and so forth. Helping serves the volunteers psychological needs – volunteering gives me a sense of satisfaction – they do it for peace of mind. People are also more likely to volunteer their help under conditions of a strong helping situation – that is if there is a pressing need, no alternative source of help, and a likelihood that their help will have a direct and positive impact (Fischer and Shaffer, 1993).

In *Volunteering: Widening Horizons in the Third Age* (Davis-Smith 1992), Reach research is quoted stating that the best time to interest a retired person in volunteering was immediately prior to or immediately after the cessation of paid work. Not all other research concurs with these findings. 'Widening Horizons' also states that the more education one has the more likely one is to volunteer. This paper also challenges organisations to consider offering an alternative vision of volunteering - not as an alternative to work but an alternative to leisure.

The Reach report found that people came forward as volunteers for Reach (mostly people with a professional background) within a short time - two years or less - of them giving up paid work and retiring. Twenty-five per cent of people enquired up to three years before they expected to retire. This would suggest that targeting those still in work would be beneficial as many people in professional roles at least think carefully about their retirement before they do actually leave the work place.

People with more education, higher incomes, higher occupational status and better health are more likely to volunteer than other people (Fischer and Shaffer, 1993).

## **What influences older people to volunteer for a particular charity or cause?**

Forster (1997) in Potential of a Lifetime points out that commitment to a charity or its reputation can influence volunteers choice in volunteering with a particular charity.

Commitment can take the form of;

- if they have volunteered for the charity in the past; or have some connection to the organisation
- commitment to the organisation is the driving force, replacing the commitment to work or family
- the image an organisation has amongst the general public is a powerful tool for involving people
- volunteers will mobilise around a cause and will do far more than they necessarily did in their paid lives
- sometimes the actual 'task' is the driving force.

## **Which recruitment methods work best?**

Word of mouth is the most successful method for recruiting new older volunteers (National Trust, 2005, Davis Smith and Gay 2005). However, pre-retirement courses were regarded as a bit of a waste of time as the volunteering information gets lost with all the other leaflets. It is less relevant until further into their retirement (Davis Smith and Gay 2005).

Speaking at WI events, church groups etc is described as a lot of effort for little return (Davis Smith and Gay 2005)

Certain studies suggest talking to community groups within a two mile radius of the project and going to talk to them and ask for support works effectively (National Trust, Davis Smith and Gay 2005). Working in partnership is also regarded as a successful method, as are try it and see days (National Trust).

The above information is backed up by Hutchinson and Rochester (2002). They state that personal contact with the potential volunteer was the most successful way of recruiting. Therefore the ambassadorial skills of existing staff and volunteers were highly influential in the recruitment of new volunteers.

The same study found that there was far more success in recruitment if instead of trying to fit potential volunteers into the needs of the organisation they looked firstly at the skills and interests of the person.

Bowgett, Dickie and Restall (2002) point out that clarity of role is important as the potential volunteer needs to be able to imagine themselves doing the role for which you are recruiting them.

In her research, Jane Forster (1997) finds that only six per cent of the control group were recruited through the Volunteer Bureau, and this concurs with Davis Smith (1992), in which a 1990 MORI survey is quoted which found that older people were more likely to get into volunteering through a volunteer bureau than volunteers of

other ages, although this only accounted for five per cent of older volunteers. Advertising and publicity accounted for 28 per cent of the volunteers (Forster, 1997), yet another report found only six per cent of volunteers found out about volunteering opportunities through advertisements (Fischer and Shaffer 1993).

Other sources have stated that if an individual has lived in an area for a long time they are more likely to volunteer because they have good social networks - they know where volunteers are needed and people know them so can ask them to volunteer (Davis Smith and Gay 2005).

There are practical recruitment issues that apply to all volunteer recruitment. These range from developing task descriptions through advertising; dealing with the response for further information, interviewing, references, screening and dealing with those who do not for what ever reason fit the profile for which the organisation is looking. The NCV Good Practice Guide (Bowgett, Dickie and Restall, 2002) is an excellent resource for the nuts and bolts of volunteer recruitment;

- be informative without being too detailed
- describe choices available
- use bold print
- make it easy for people to contact the organisation to find out more
- be non-ethnocentric
- show pictures/images that give an idea of what volunteering is about.

Reach has had success with adverts featuring just text and no images so that everyone can identify with them.

### **3. INVOLVING OLDER VOLUNTEERS**

#### **What do charities need to bear in mind that is specific to older people**

- The image of volunteering is an issue (Davis Smith and Gay, 2005).
- Volunteers are likely to choose a new activity for a complete change especially if they have not had a particularly rewarding life before retirement (Niyazi, 1996).
- People might feel they are giving something for nothing – need to stress what they get out of it, that they will benefit too, not just the recipient (Davis Smith and Gay 2005).
- Volunteers are more likely to continue volunteering if they find the job interesting and feel competent and successful in the volunteer efforts (Forster 1997).
- Need to highlight it is more than just ‘doing your duty’, but there is a fun element too (Niyazi, 1996), - there are personal rewards.
- Older people are willing learners – it is worth giving them training offered in many different formats but organisations may have to avoid using the word ‘training’ as this could be off-putting for some – ‘information exchange’ or ‘coffee morning discussion’ maybe more successful ways of describing what you want volunteers to attend (Niyazi, 1996).

- Some older people are recruited through the media, in particular local newspapers, radio and parish magazines (Davis Smith and Gay, 2005).
- Radio and television can be an effective way to reach older people about volunteering as they tend to spend more time than other groups participating in these kinds of leisure activities (Chambre, 1997).
- The way that people think about volunteering is influenced by their actual experiences of volunteering, with non-volunteers tending to be more negative than those with volunteering experience. Some people, mostly non-volunteers even see volunteering as an exercise in 'ego-tripping' (Fenton et al, 1994). This shows there are perceptions and stereotypes about volunteers and volunteering that act as barriers to people getting involved as volunteers as they may see it as something not for them.
- There is a perception that volunteering is time consuming and time demanding, acting to de-motivate individuals and limit their involvement (Davis Smith 1998, Thomas and Finch 1990, Institute for Volunteering Research, 2004). This indicates the need to promote volunteering as providing individuals with choice, not only in terms of the activities they can participate in, but also in terms of how much time individuals want to commit.
- Some older people may feel that they deserve a rest now they are retired and so the idea of volunteering may not appeal straight away when they retire. Yet, once they have been retired for a while and boredom has set in they may change their point of view.

In Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 'Experiences and expectations of people leaving paid work after 50' (2002) the following points are made;

- The ways in which people came to leave work were important in how well they adjusted to retirement. Those who freely chose to retire tended to have higher levels of income and more options open to them.
- A lack of knowledge on where to go to for information on how to get involved was reported – this is also stated in 'Altruism in later life' (Midlarsky and Kahuna, 1996).
- Interviewees felt that the opportunity to gradually withdraw from work would help them adapt better to retirement.
- It was seen as important that retirement advice should be provided independently and not by people's employers.

A Choice Blend (Gaskin, 2003) reports the following;

- Older volunteers complain of being given routine, low level tasks that do not take account of their abilities and potential (Hutchinson, 1999).
- Focus group participants in a Choice Blend (2003) research agreed that they would put up with 'boring' work for a while but that sooner or later they would say something or leave.
- Volunteer management issues – if induction and training are provided they are more likely to stay.
- Clary et al as discussed in A Choice Blend (Gaskin, 2003) found that 'concrete messages that present concrete (ie relatively particularistic) reasons for

volunteering work better than abstract (relatively value-laden) messages in recruiting volunteers.

- Induction is important as it provides a crucial point which can reinforce their motivation to volunteer and their sense of identifying with the organisation, or raise doubts about the wisdom of proceeding.
- The need for flexibility (Niyazi, 1996 states this too).
- There is a need to involve volunteers in the decision-making process and a feeling that they are being listened to.

People are attracted to particular opportunities and causes, not to volunteering in the abstract – need to advertise specific roles and organisations not the concept. When volunteers are recruited and carefully matched to opportunities they are more likely to be involved, active and committed to the organisation (Fischer and Shaffer, 1993).

NfpSynergy's report 'The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Volunteer' (Evans and Saxton, 2005) discusses the best time to 'catch' volunteers. It reveals a surge in volunteering once people reach the age group 64-75. This has been put down to a number of reasons such as wanting to remain busy and socially active after retirement. Research in Canada shows that the drop in volunteering rates after 75 years is largely caused by difficulties with health and mobility (McClintock, 2003). It is also possible that the growing social disconnection of people in this age bracket prevents them from hearing about volunteering opportunities (Putnam, 2000).

Many Reach enquirers are seeking to be occupied rather than specifically wanting to do voluntary work, but more women approach Reach looking for voluntary work in particular. The challenge for voluntary organisations is therefore to convince those seeking to be occupied that voluntary work is an attractive option.

'Altruism in later life' (Midlarsky and Kahana, 1996) states that volunteering by older people is important to counteract the stereotype that all older people are recipients of care, and that many are caregivers. For the volunteers themselves they feel that their lives are very meaningful and that they themselves are good and valuable individuals.

### **What do we know about specific target groups within the older age range and their involvement in volunteering?**

Volunteering is socially and culturally specific, "it means different things to different people, according to their social, cultural, historical and political positions" (Ellis and Lukka 2001: 105 quoted in Machin, VAMU, 2005)

#### **Women**

- Forster (1997) and Davis Smith (1992) both find that more women than men in this age group are involved in formal volunteering, however, it also states that men appear to be more active in informal volunteering. The nfpSynergy Charity Awareness Monitor (2005) shows a consistent trend for women to be more likely than men to have volunteered in the last three months. The Canadian study "Understanding Canadian Volunteers (McClintock, 2003) found that while women are more likely to volunteer overall, men tend to give

a greater number of hours. It was also found that women tended to volunteer in order to explore their strengths while men were getting involved because their friends were volunteers. The Home Office Citizenship Surveys (2001, 2003) and the 1997 National Survey of Volunteering (Davis Smith) find that participation rates are equal between men and women.

- Women are more likely to get involved in activities such as sitting with or providing personal care for those who are sick or frail.

## **Men**

- Eighty-six per cent of men who volunteer are married – this suggests a problem with the image of volunteering for single men. (Forster, 1997).
- In contrast, Davis Smith (1992) states that there is no clear pattern between marital status and involvement in voluntary activity.
- The same study also states that men in this age group were more likely to see disadvantages in volunteering than women, being twice as likely to say that volunteering took up too much time, and more likely to identify lack of appreciation and being out of pocket as drawbacks to their voluntary work. Older men were also the more likely to say that they got bored or lost interest in their voluntary work.
- Men are more likely to get involved in activities such as providing transport, giving advice, information, counselling and, up to the age of 75, sport and exercise (Atwood, 2001).

## **People from professional working backgrounds**

- People in Social Classes A and B are two times as likely to volunteer than those in other social classes. This applied to both formal and informal volunteering. (1997 National Survey of Volunteering, Davis Smith).

## **Elders from BME communities**

- People with an Asian background are less likely than those with a white or black background to be volunteers. Asian and black people are three times as likely to volunteer in a role connected to their religion as white people (Atwood, 2001).
- Religion was found to be an important factor influencing someone to volunteer (Davis Smith and Gay, 2005).
- Asian and black people were more likely than white people to say that they had never been involved in informal volunteering and are more likely to say that they are involved less frequently than once a month than white people (Atwood, 2001).
- Informal volunteering is common among many groups, including African-American and Hispanic populations who often do not regard it as 'volunteering' per se and therefore are not likely to report it as such on a survey (Harvard, 2004).
- There could be cultural barriers to volunteering: A government paper, Opportunity Age: Meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (2005)

found that people of Asian backgrounds are significantly less likely than their white or black counterparts to be involved in volunteering.

- Older people from black and Asian groups might fear racism as well as ageism.
- There may be language problems, with only low percentages of older Bangladeshi and Pakistani women able to speak English.
- In addition there may be caste or gender issues in communities that create a barrier to people volunteering.

### **People in rural areas**

- Rural areas have higher rates of older volunteers than those described as 'urban or mixed' (Davis Smith, 1992).
- Ability to travel plays an important role for volunteers living in rural areas, and determines how easy it is for them to access volunteering opportunities. This age group is the least likely to own a car.

## **4. RETAINING OLDER VOLUNTEERS**

### **What can organisations do to involve older volunteers and encourage them to stay?**

People will feel more committed to an organisation and therefore more willing to stay a part of it if they feel more involved in its running. (Forster, 1997).

Feeling competent and successful is tied closely to continued service as a volunteer. Over time, volunteers also become committed to their fellow volunteers and to the cause that these people represent (Fischer and Shaffer 1993).

Volunteering has a contribution to make to improve the 'life satisfaction' of older people (Davis Smith, 1992).

Ways of including volunteers are;

- volunteer forums
- attendance at staff meetings
- the inclusion of a volunteer representative on internal working groups
- including all volunteers on circulation lists for newsletters, memos etc
- ensuring that volunteers are included in social events and that such events don't exclude them because of issues of cost or inappropriate cultural barriers
- not stereotyping older people by assuming their age makes them appropriate for a particular task or automatically bars them from something else.

In addition to the above volunteers, like paid staff, benefit enormously from;

- good induction
- ongoing training and skills development
- regular supervision

- a safe, friendly and comfortable work environment.

Rochester and Hutchinson (2002) found out that people stayed within organisations because;

- they were doing something interesting and worthwhile and there was recognition that their work was valued by all levels of the organisation
- they were given responsibility and a degree of autonomy, this allowed them a sense of creativity within their role
- they welcomed being treated with respect and welcomed public acknowledgement of their contribution.

In *Older and Bolder, Involving older people in volunteering*, (1999), Hutchinson says organisations need to;

- work with older people to help and enable them to recognise the skills they do have
- offer volunteering opportunities with a chance to make a real difference and not just treat volunteers as cheap labour
- set up working practices that don't make assumptions about the wishes and interests of older people.

Finally Forster (1997) points out that the commitment to the organisation that makes for a good volunteer force has its downside. Volunteers can often push themselves too far, causing burnout and stress. It can also cause problems within the volunteer's existing relationships, which may be already under pressure from life changes. The very act of empowerment can sometimes lead to struggles for control in the organisation which can manifest itself in a resistance to 'being managed'.

### **What might discourage older people from volunteering or prevent organisations from retaining volunteers?**

- Thirty-four per cent of 65-74 year olds are not aware of the need for help or opportunities to help – shows a need to improve communication with these people of volunteering needs in their local area; (Atwood, 2003).
- Thirty-seven per cent of 65-74 year olds and 58 per cent (higher than any other age group) of over 75s cited 'personal circumstances' as a reason for non involvement – this includes family responsibilities, and reasons to do with physical or mental health or disability, domestic and household commitments; (Atwood 2003).
- There was a strong impression that the policies and practices of organisations were inherently ageist. This manifested itself in three ways. Firstly by organisations imposing upper age limits on volunteers. Secondly by there being a strong bias towards the recruitment of young volunteers and lastly as mentioned above by the tasks being offered to older volunteers being stereotyped and given tasks thought appropriate for their age, despite their particular skills and abilities, (Rochester and Hutchison, 2002).
- Worry that they might be asked to do too much- this is usually linked to personal circumstances and commitments – linked to caring responsibilities or

health problems/a physical disability eg with some conditions such as arthritis, people tend to have good days and bad days. They were anxious about letting people down if health or family problems intervened and did not feel organisations would always understand their personal circumstances. There was felt to be a strong need for organisations to realise that there needed to be a more flexible approach to volunteers needs.

- Retirement age for volunteers. Davis Smith (1992) reports that two thirds of the organisations surveyed that had a retirement age limit, had a lower than average participation by older volunteers and half of the organisations reported losing volunteers because of their retirement policy.
- Insurance: the same report as above pointed out that ten per cent of organisations reported difficulties in insuring volunteers, in particular drivers. Davis Smith (2000) found that of the organisations polled that had an upper age limit on volunteering, 36 per cent gave insurance as the reason for the imposition of that limit and 57 per cent gave it as the reason for retiring voluntary drivers.
- There may be a concern about loss of state benefits.
- Access to transport – this links in with feeling vulnerable eg at the bus stop in the dark, especially in winter: “the elderly are much more likely than others to give poor health and lack of transportation as reasons for not volunteering” (Fischer and Shaffer, 1993).
- Feeling like cheap labour instead of paid staff.
- Lack of expenses provision or expenses paid by cheque or paid at monthly intervals.
- Availability of choices – not aware of the diversity of volunteering opportunities available.
- Perceptions and assumptions – perceptions of older people themselves and other people’s perceptions of older people. Some feel it is more for younger people.
- Older people may lack an understanding and knowledge about the volunteering opportunities available (Machin, 2005).
- They may lack confidence in their skills or health to be able to carry out specific volunteering tasks (Rochester et al 2002, Chambre 1987, Granville, 2000).
- Might be involved in activities they do not class as ‘volunteering’ – for example participation in residents’ associations or local committees (Granville, 2000).
- After retirement, people are less likely to be asked to volunteer and, consequently, are less likely to do so (Harvard, 2004).
- Some older people have been found to stereotype volunteers as female, white, and middle class and consequently do not get involved as they don’t see that they fit in with this image.
- In terms of social class a seminar organised by Experience Corps to study volunteering in disadvantaged areas found;
  - the word ‘volunteer’ put some people off as it has hierarchical implications
  - many people’s work experiences have left them with little belief in their own abilities
  - long term dependency on the state leaves many people uncertain about dealing with authority

- Poor literacy with the written word may limit responses to written material and inhibit people from coming forward.

Niyazi (1996) talks of reasons for non-involvement;

- economic circumstances
- ageism in British society
- apathy (taking retirement literally and stopping participating in everything) so it is best to try to catch them *before* they retire according to Midwinter, (1991)
- competition from other leisure activities.

Midwinter (1991) found 20 per cent of organisations guilty of age discrimination either by imposing a retirement age or by limiting the tasks that older volunteers are offered.

Davis Smith (1992) quotes a RSVP study in which lapsed volunteers were asked why they stopped volunteering. Twenty-three per cent cited losing contact with the organisation, 21 per cent cited health reasons, and 21 per cent gave lack of time as the main reason for stopping their volunteering activity.

Davis Smith (1992) also describes perceptions of older people showing that over half of people aged 50-74 felt that volunteers were most likely to be middle aged. This gives an impression that older people may have a restricted view of who volunteering is likely to appeal to, which might work against them getting involved and seeing it as something for them.

### **What motivates older people to volunteer?**

Many older volunteers took up volunteering because of the social benefits (Forster, 1997), CSV 2001);

- Fifty-two per cent began to gain regular social contact, and
- Thirty-one per cent to make new friends.

An important motivation is to: (Hutchinson, 1999)

- help out and to give something back
- feeling that you are making a difference
- doing something stimulating
- being with others the same age
- being needed and valued.

and also to provide a sense of purpose or achievement; to bring structure to one's life and to give an opportunity to try something different.

Other issues to consider include;

- development of appropriate and wide ranging roles
- use of experience, knowledge and skills

- skills development/opportunity to use skills
- ability to socialise.

### **Can we prove that volunteering is good for you?**

In Ellis (2003) it is pointed out that the volunteer mentors saw enhanced physical and mental well-being as one of the four key outcomes of their work.

BUPA survey 2001 for CSV: 'Volunteering in later life', quoted in CSV (2001) shows that only 22 per cent of volunteers polled by BUPA said they suffered from anxiety, stress, insomnia or depression compared to 28 per cent of the general population.

Staying fit and active is good for your health, and volunteering is an excellent way of doing this;

- In BUPA's Health of the Nation survey 2000, 70 per cent of older volunteers reported that they were in 'good' or 'excellent' health
- Volunteers were more active than the population as a whole with 78 per cent exercising at least twice a week, and 33 per cent every day compared with 18 per cent of British adults.

A number of research studies have shown a link between physical activity and good mental health. Volunteering is a means of maintaining good social contacts, which in itself is a way to stave off depression and loneliness. Many older people live alone and so good social networks are important.

According to the General Household Survey (GHS) 1996, table no 2.13

- 31 per cent of men, and
- 58 per cent of women over the age of 75 live alone.

The less active a person is both mentally and physically, the less able they become and in time the less healthy they become.

Fischer and Shaffer (1993) put forward a different viewpoint, one that healthier and more active people are more likely to volunteer. It is not the volunteering that makes them healthier, but that they were healthier in the first place. They were unable to get convincing evidence that volunteer work causes people to be healthier and happier.

## 5. SUPPORTING OLDER VOLUNTEERS

### What volunteering standards do charities need in place to support older volunteers?

Training is important for all staff within organisations. Relevant training both increases the knowledge and skills of volunteers and increases their self-confidence. This in turn makes them a more valuable asset for the organisation, makes them feel valued by the organisation and thereby motivates them to stay within the organisation. Davis Smith (1992) found that older volunteers did not bring with them any particular training problems.

Dingle (2001) points out that especially with older people there is a potential barrier to training as people can think they are too old to learn new skills. The thought of classroom type teaching can seem daunting to those whose last interaction with this kind of teaching may have been fifty years before. He suggests that in these situations older people may feel easier if the training is packaged as 'information exchange' or 'team days'.

Finally, it is useful in these training situations if the volunteer can be shown that rather than learning a whole new skill base, that they are in fact adapting skills they already have to a new situation. Likewise, it might be seen that a more practically based 'on the job' training through mentoring and/or shadowing existing volunteers may be a more successful educative approach.

Forster (1997) says that the need for supervision is more important as an issue when it comes to dealing with inadequate standards of work practice.

Managers/supervisors recognised that there was a need to adopt a different approach. Three quotes from managers say it all, 'I had to let him down gently because he was a volunteer'; 'You've got to use kid gloves when you handle some of them'; 'With a paid member of staff you get to the point much quicker'. The underlying issues from the perspective of the managers seemed to be a fear of upsetting the volunteer, a fear they would leave or worse that they would leave spreading damaging issues about the organisation. Forster recognises that these fears may come in part from an unconscious set of rules about how you approach older people and this in turn can get in the way of a transparent discussion about performance.

This can lead to issues of how declining effectiveness of volunteers is dealt with. Forster (1997) again says that a strong commitment to the task or the organisation can make it very difficult for some volunteers to let go. The same is of course true of the organisations commitment to its volunteers. With older volunteers she suggests that this subject be approached much earlier on through staff days, training and supervision. This makes it less of a difficult subject to broach if it occurs. Other ways of solving this difficult issue are to look at the possibility of adjusting the task the person is carrying out. However, if this is not practical she suggests allowing volunteers to attend formal events such as AGMs or less formal staff events to enable them to keep the social aspect and maintain people contact.

Development of a working relationship between older volunteers and paid staff generates its own particular tensions. Forster (1997) refers to tensions between paid employees and volunteers as one of the 'unpleasant secrets of non-profit organisations'. The accepted maxim is that if things are going well, the relationship is egalitarian and mutually supportive. However, if tensions arise both sides can retreat behind their stereotypes of the other.

Staff can see volunteers as amateurs or even as a threat to their jobs. Younger staff felt under scrutiny by older experienced volunteers. Volunteers on the other hand could end up feeling undervalued and overused

## **Access**

**Physical environment:** Though a majority of people over 60 regard themselves as in good health (Health Survey for England 1996), there is an undeniable link between ageing and health problems that involve specific needs, for example, documents in large print, Braille and audiotape and access for people with mobility problems. However, as Davis Smith and Gay (2005) point out "lack of access for disabled volunteers was something coordinators felt they had little control over." Another point raised about the difficulty of working with disabled volunteers was that they often had the support needs that coordinators felt were beyond the capacity of the organisation to provide.

**Transport:** This was a much-raised point when volunteers talked about things that limited their ability to volunteer. Forster (1997) says within her survey organisations referred to transport difficulties especially at night. Solutions to this may be to organise meetings during the day or to arrange a shared car system which enabled everyone to get home. Rochester and Hutchinson (2002) find that volunteers may have difficulty travelling for health reasons. Some no longer had a car or were no longer able to drive because of failing eyesight. Public transport especially in rural areas was unsatisfactory. Three suggestions to mitigate against this problem were; the provision of transport to enable people to volunteer; to organise people so that they volunteered near their home and finally to use technology in the form of Internet or e-mail to enable people to volunteer from home.

## **Black and Minority Ethnic Volunteer recruitment**

### **Overview**

The review of the Black and Minority Ethnic Twinning Initiative (Gaskin, 2003) pointed out that there were many positive outcomes that could arise from an increased number of BME volunteers in mainstream organisations. However, the reality is that barriers still exist on both sides that prevent members of BME groups volunteering outside of their own communities within the mainstream voluntary sector.

### **Barriers to BME recruitment**

A report produced by The Institute of Volunteering Research (MEM-VOL Migrant and Ethnic Minority Volunteering, 2003) indicated that these barriers may include;

- Lack of outreach work by mainstream organisations to BME people.
- The need to offer interesting and challenging volunteering work
- Issues relating to language. This could be a specific problem with BME elders from certain communities. Patel in Working with Minority Ethnic older people in London has found that 49 per cent of Bangladeshi men aged between 50 and 74 would not be able to speak English as would 45 per cent of men in the same age range from the Pakistani community. The figures quoted for women within these communities show that only 10 -15 per cent of women between 50 and 74 speak English. Though there seem to be no figures at present for the same communities looking at the age range 65-74 it would seem logical to assume that the figures for those speaking English would be even lower.

Nayazi (1996b) quoted in Gaskin (2003) cites as key barriers;

- a preference for informality
- a culture clash with middle-class oriented organisations. The issue of class is an interesting one. Britton (1999) in a qualitative study of a black voluntary organisation, the Black Justice Project, found that 'a substantial ninety percent of the (BME) volunteers were broadly middle class'.
- The operation of racism and tokenism.

More specifically Akpeki (1995) identified barriers to participation of BME groups as trustees;

- the use of inappropriate marketing strategies
- a lack of commitment by mainstream organisations to involve BME trustees
- a lack of strategies to recruit support and retain trustees
- an absence of monitoring systems
- no support of equal opportunity policy
- no exit interviews.
- isolation felt by lone BME volunteers
- a lack of clarity in voluntary organisations about why black trustees were being recruited.

### **Overcoming barriers to BME recruitment**

The MEM-VOL (2003) report states that with the exception of the Black and Minority Ethnic Twinning Initiative there have been no programmes set up by national Government specifically focussing on migrant and minority ethnic volunteering. However, work has been done on general volunteering programmes which have included issues of diversity and the inclusion of a wider group of volunteers. Also there has been research within the voluntary sector looking at the inclusion of groups that are currently under-represented in the volunteer workforce.

Volunteering in Social Care (2000) published by the National Centre for Volunteering lists the following ways to encourage BME volunteering;

- Contact existing community groups and discover if/how the group delivers the service within their own culture.

- Take time to analyse your own assumptions about BME groups and volunteering.
- Draw up an equal opportunities policy with an explicitly anti racist stance; ensure the policy is being adhered to through on-going monitoring and periodically review the policy in the light of changes in legislation, attitudes and good practice.
- Ensure that all managers, staff and volunteers are made fully aware of the policy and encourage a positive view of BME people within the organisation;
- Mention the policy within all publicity and recruitment material.
- Explore the possibility of linking into informal networks within the BME communities.

To encourage applicants from the BME communities Camden Volunteer Bureau suggest positive action such as;

- placing articles in the BME media eg The Voice, Eastern Eye etc and in culturally specific community centres where your publicity will be seen by the people you are attempting to reach
- think carefully about the image of your organisation. For instance, are you displaying positive images of people from BME communities? Are there employed workers and trustees from the BME communities?
- translate publicity and recruitment material into the language of the group you are trying to reach.

David Obaze (2000), in notes from a training session on the Recruitment of BME volunteers, adds;

- use welcoming and reassuring language in your publicity
- point out the benefits of volunteering in your group eg training and support
- try to use local black trainers
- make sure your publicity has photographs that reflect ethnic diversity
- involve BME groups in your policy making and recruitment
- use of role models, real life stories can provide a more powerful argument for volunteering
- acknowledge diverse religious and other festivals when organising events
- given what is known about the cultural preference for informal helping amongst the BME communities it may be better if organisations can allow for an initial informal role and then develop this.

The BMETI review (Gaskin, 2002) pointed out the danger of not recognising the diversity within BME communities. They say that organisations hoping to attract BME volunteers should be aware of this diversity. They should take account of different cultural standards, including those around diet and dress, the working environment of women and the parental concerns about young peoples' attitudes.

## **Potential areas for future study**

During the reading that went to make up this literature review there were some groups that were made conspicuous by their absence and might either be the focus of a more intense review or will need to be the subject of research. They were;

- People with disabilities. Machin (2005) says that: “very little research is available on the involvement of disabled people in volunteering but studies have suggested that those with disabilities are under-represented as volunteers.”
- People from areas of deprivation.
- BME elders. Though much has been written about the barriers that exist to prevent people from the BME communities volunteering in mainstream organisations there seems to be very little quantitative or qualitative research to show if there is a significant difference in volunteering patterns that are specific to the age of the volunteers.

Author	Date	Title	Published by
Akpeki	1995	Black on board	NCVO
Association of Directors of Social Services and the Local Government Association	2003	All our tomorrows	ADSS/LGA
Attwood, Chris	2003	2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey; people, families and communities (Home Office Research Study 270)	Home Office Research and Statistics Directorate
Axa Retirement Scope	2006	Retirement, a new life after work	Axa
Barnes H, Parry J & Lakey J	2002	Forging a new future: the experiences and expectations of people leaving paid work over 50	Joseph Rowntree Foundation Transitions after 50 series
Bhasin, S	1997	My Time, My Community, Myself - Experiences of Volunteering within the Black Community	National Centre for Volunteering
Bowgett, Kate; Dickie, Kathryn & Restall, Mark	2002	The Good Practice Guide 2nd Edition 2002	National Centre for Volunteering
Britton, N.J	1999	Recruiting and Retaining Black Volunteers: A study of a Black Voluntary Organisation	Voluntary Action, Volume 1, Number 3, 9-23
BUPA Camden Volunteer Bureau	2000	Health of the nation survey Targeted Recruitment of Black and Minority Ethnic Volunteers	Camden Volunteer Bureau
Center for Intergenerational		16 tips for recruiting older adults as volunteers in intergeneration programs	Temple University
Chambre, S.M.	1994	Is volunteering a substitute for role loss in old age? An empirical test of activity theory.	The Gerontologist, 24, 292 - 298.
Chambre, S.M. Compact Working Group	1997	Good deeds in old age: Volunteering by the new leisure class. Volunteering; Compact Code of Good Practice	Lexington Active Community Unit, The Home Office
CSV Reports On	2001	The time of your life	CSV
Davis Smith, Justin	2000	Transitions after 50: Active participation beyond employment	Institute of Volunteering Research
Davis Smith, Justin	1992	Volunteering: widening horizons in the third age	Carnegie Third Age Inquiry

Author	Date	Title	Published by
Davis Smith, Justin	1998	The 1997 survey of volunteering	Institute of Volunteering Research
Davis Smith, Justin and Gay, Pat	2005	Active ageing in active communities	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Demos	2004	Home Alone	Demos
Demos	2003	The new old: Why the baby boomers won't be pensioned off	Age Concern
Dingle, Alan	2001	Involving older volunteers: a good practice guide	Institute of Volunteering Research
DWP	2005	Opportunity Age: Meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21st century	
Ellis,A; Lukka, P	2001	An Exclusive Construct? Exploring Different Cultural Concepts of Volunteering.	Voluntary Action, Volume3, Number 3.
Ellis SW	1998	The Intergenerational programme monitoring project: Final research	The Beth Johnson Foundation
Ellis SW	2003	Changing the lives of children and older people: intergenerational mentoring in secondary schools	The Beth Johnson Foundation
Esmond J	2002	Boomnet: Capturing the baby boomer volunteers	Australia
Esmond J	2002	Boomnet to Boomnot: Part 2 of the research study on baby boomers and volunteering in Australia by Dr Judy Esmond	Australia
Evans E & Saxton J	2005	The 21st century volunteer	nfpsynergy
Evans E & Saxton J	2003	Five key trends and their impact on the voluntary sector	nfpsynergy
Fischer LR & Schaffer KB	1993	Older Volunteers: A guide to research and practice	London: Sage Publications
Forster Jane,	1997	Potential of a lifetime; The Carnegie-TSB Foundations Third Age Volunteering report	Carnegie Third Age Inquiry
Gaskin, Katharine	2003	A choice blend: what volunteers want from organisation and management	Institute for Volunteering Research
Gaskin, Katharine.	2003	Joining Forces: The Black and Ethnic Minority Twinning Initiative: Evaluation and Good Practice	Home Office Research Study 256. Published by Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate. London.
General Household Survey	1996	table 2.13	Office for National Statistics

Author	Date	Title	Published by
Granville G	2000	Understanding the experience of older volunteers in intergenerational school-based projects	The Beth Johnson Foundation
Harvard Business School of Public Health	2004	Reinventing aging: Baby boomers and civic engagement	
Hirsch, Donald	2003	Crossroads after 50: Improving choices in work and retirement	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Hirsch, Donald (ed)	2000	Life after 50: issues for policy and research	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Hutchinson, R	1999	Older and Bolder in Hackney	Voluntary Action, Volume 2 Number 7
Hutchinson, R	1999	Older and Bolder: Involving older people in volunteering	Hackney Agency for Volunteering
Institute for Volunteering Research	2003	MEM-VOL Migrant and Ethnic Minority Volunteering	The Institute for Volunteering Research
Institute for Volunteering Research	2004	Volunteering for All? Exploring the link between volunteering and social exclusion	Institute for Volunteering Research
Institute for Volunteering Research	1999	Age discrimination and volunteering - research bulletin	Institute of Volunteering Research
Kirkman, Leah	2003	Tips for recruiting and managing older volunteers	Chronicle of Philanthropy's Careers
Machin, J	2005	Volunteering and the Media: A review of the literature	Institute for Volunteering /VAMU
McIntock N	2003	Understanding Canadian Volunteers	Canadian Centre for Philanthropy
Midlarsky E & Kahana E	1996	Altruism in later life	Sage library of social research
Midwinter Eric	1991	The Carnegie Inquiry into the Third Age	Centre for Policy on Ageing
National Association of Volunteer	2000	Guidelines for increasing the involvement of black elders in mainstream volunteering	National Association of Volunteer
National Centre for Volunteering	2000	Volunteering in Social Care	National Centre for Volunteering
National Trust East Anglia	2005	Third Age Volunteering	National Trust East Anglia
nfpsynergy	2005	Charity Awareness Monitor	nfpsynergy

Author	Date	Title	Published by
Obaze, D	2000	Recruiting Black and Minority Ethnic Volunteers	Notes from a training session run by David Obaze, Director, National Coalition for Black Volunteering
Niyazi, Filiz	1996a	Volunteering by older people: a route to opportunity	National Centre for Volunteering
Niyazi, Filiz	1996b	Volunteering by Black people: a route to opportunity	National Centre for Volunteering
Putnam, R.	2000	Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community	New York: Simon and Schuster
Reach research	1991	New for old: volunteering in retirement	REACH
Rochester, C & Hutchinson R	2002	The Review of the Home Office Older Volunteers Initiative	Home Office Research Study 248
RSVP Scotland	2004	Retire into action	RSVP Scotland
RSVP Scotland	2006	50+ volunteering - a vital resource	National Forum on Older Volunteering in Scotland
Russell Commission	2005	A national framework for youth action and engagement	
Thomas A. and Finch H.	1990	A Qualitative Research of Images, Motivations and Experiences, Voluntary Action Research Paper No. 2	The Volunteer Centre: Berkhamsted



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