CLiNKS

supporting voluntary organisations that work with offenders and their families

Valuing volunteers in prison

A review of volunteer involvement in prisons

Acknowldgements

We would like to thank everyone who has helped us to research and write this report, particularly those who welcomed us during research visits, the 14 organisations who provided the case studies, and the 827 people who gave their time in answering the survey.

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About Clinks

Clinks is the national infrastructure organisation supporting voluntary sector organisations working with offenders and their families.

Our aim is to ensure the sector and those with whom it works are informed and engaged in order to transform the lives of offenders and their communities. We do this by providing specialist information and support, with a particular focus on smaller voluntary sector organisations, to inform them about changes in policy and commissioning, to help them build effective partnerships and provide innovative services that respond directly to the needs of their users.

We are a membership organisation with over 600 members including the voluntary sector's largest providers as well as its smallest, and our wider national network reaches 4,000 voluntary sector contacts. Overall, through our weekly e-bulletin Light Lunch and our social media activity, we have a network of over 15,000 contacts, which includes individuals and agencies with an interest in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and the role of the voluntary sector in the resettlement and rehabilitation of offenders.

Contents

Foreword

Volunteering can help people acquire skills, increase their self-confidence, and support them into jobs. It can also open up closed institutions making them more visible to the public, garnering the skills of people in the community and civic resources to support rehabilitation and engaging communities, making them more able and willing to welcome people back on release from prison.

Our Criminal Justice System, from police and courts to prisons and probation, is indebted to the hard work and commitment of volunteers. Prisons have a rich history of volunteers tirelessly supporting rehabilitation and resettlement through initiatives like prison visitors, the Independent Monitoring Board and multi-faith chaplaincies. I am pleased to see such engagement with the criminal justice sector from a wide range of voluntary sector organisations, large and small, that use volunteers so effectively.

I want to see more volunteers in our prisons, and clearly more can be done. That is why I asked Clinks to uncover good practice, address gaps, and point out any barriers to implementing more volunteering schemes in prisons. To do this, Clinks conducted 72 interviews with staff in prisons across England and Wales, surveyed over 800 volunteers and volunteer managers across 121 prisons, and wrote up 14 in-depth case studies of local approaches. User Voice, an organisation that specialises in understanding service user views, held five focus groups. Clinks' recommendations are practical, easy to implement and signpost us to what needs to be done.

This report sets out the way forward. It shows us how we can genuinely value volunteers and make the most of their energy and commitment in our prisons. It sets out how we can make volunteers central to the reform agenda, not just to our prisons but to probation as well.

Andrew Selous MP
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Rehabilitation.

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Executive summary

1.1. The aim of this project

This project, commissioned at the request of Andrew Selous MP, aimed to explore how we can increase the amount and scope of prison volunteering across England and Wales. One of the National Offender Management Service's (NOMS) key priorities is supporting the use of volunteers in prisons.

Clinks, NOMS, voluntary sector organisations and prisons have all been keen to identify good practice that can be used more widely to maximise the impact of volunteering and minimise any barriers that limit its use. This publication is intended to inform individuals and organisations involved with, or interested in, enhancing volunteering in prisons.

1.2. Background

Volunteering in prisons has a tradition that extends for over a century. In that time volunteering has taken many different forms and contributed in a number of ways to the rehabilitation of people both in prison and on their release into the community. Organisations and the people who volunteer their time to work in prisons are diverse. Some organisations involve a small number of volunteers to provide ad hoc support for members of staff. Others provide large-scale programmes commissioned regionally or nationally.

Not all volunteering is managed by voluntary sector organisations. Some prisons recruit volunteers themselves, often through the chaplaincy department. A major source of volunteer involvement in prisons is the Independent Monitoring Boards (IMBs), whose volunteer members ensure that proper standards of care and decency are maintained in prison establishments.

1.3. How the research was conducted

The research questions

To get the best possible information on the volunteering happening in prisons and how it could be improved, Clinks asked the following questions:

- What are the benefits of volunteering?
- Where are there examples of good practice, and where are there gaps?
- What factors support or act as barriers to effective volunteer involvement in prisons?
- What specific actions would support the development of more effective volunteering?

The scope of the research

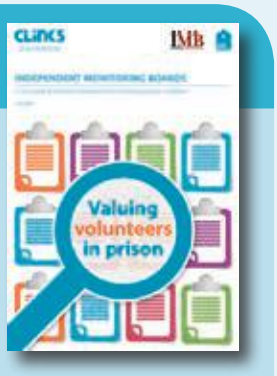
The project has focused on volunteering that:

- involves volunteers from the community[1]
- takes place partly or completely within a prison
- is organised by a range of organisations from the public, voluntary or private sector.

Methodology

This research collected information on volunteering in prisons by conducting a series of interviews, case studies, service user focus groups and an online survey. See Appendix 3 for a detailed methodology.

See also



The case studies gathered by this project give examples about how 14 different organisations involve volunteers in prison.
The case studies cover:

- how volunteers are involved in each organisation's work
- what resources are used to recruit, train and manage volunteers
- what barriers to volunteer involvement have been encountered
- how these barriers have been overcome.

Valuing volunteers in prison: case studies of volunteer involvement are available on the Clinks website

CLINKS CASE STUDY

See also

This report's sister publication explores service users' perceptions of volunteering. The report, based on peer-led research conducted by User Voice, covers:

- service users' experience of volunteers and volunteering
- the characteristics that volunteers are seen as bringing to their work
- the experiences of ex-service users who have tried to volunteer in prison.

Valuing Volunteers in prison: the views of service users and ex-offenders is available on the Clinks website.

> *'Volunteers are a key strategic tool in engagement. They offer reassurance, a credible offer of "no judgement", they develop relationships that can be seen to open up and grow in potential. And they give a different perspective – they're outside prisoners' ordinary experience.'*
>
> *(Interview with the chief executive of a voluntary sector organisation working in several prisons).*

1.4. The findings

Prison volunteering has clear benefits for stakeholders

Service users said they considered volunteers to be independent, trustworthy and motivated by a genuine desire to help others. Prisons and voluntary sector organisations identified that volunteering engages service users and that the involvement of unpaid volunteers made services more credible. Well-managed volunteers were thought to add capacity, flexibility and a personalised offer to service users that could aid innovation and support a positive culture in prisons. Volunteers themselves found their work in prisons to be extremely rewarding and interesting.

There are different delivery models for volunteering across the prison estate

In the 12 prisons visited by this project there were different levels of volunteering. Some prisons featured a wide range of roles with a clear volunteering strategy and policies to support it, whilst others supported volunteering through the enthusiasm of individual staff members. The majority of prisons we visited did not have a whole-organisation approach to volunteer involvement.

Several factors support successful volunteering

A number of common factors were identified that support successful volunteering:

- clear strategic oversight and support at governor/director level for volunteering
- being flexible on what and when volunteering is allowed in the prison
- robust procedures for recruitment, selection and training build trust and confidence in volunteers
- support for volunteers with security vetting helps them to take up their roles quickly
- good management and supervision supports volunteers to undertake their roles
- giving trusted volunteers appropriate responsibilities can ease pressure on staff
- promoting the positive role of volunteers helps to integrate them into the prison.

Several factors are barriers to successful volunteering

A number of common factors were identified that act as barriers to successful volunteering:

- volunteering can involve a large time commitment often during office hours, making it difficult for some people to get involved
- delays to volunteer recruitment, often associated with security vetting and volunteer training, can cause volunteers to lose interest
- lack of support from prison staff can hinder volunteers' effective and safe involvement in the prison regime
- security vetting is sometimes poorly understood by volunteers who have a criminal record, which may act as a barrier to their involvement.

What volunteers do

Volunteers undertake a wide range of roles in prisons, from the comparatively simple (staffing a tea bar in a prison visitor centre), to roles that are far more complex (acting as independent monitors of prison conditions). In some cases, volunteers directly support paid staff, and in other cases they work relatively independently. Volunteers offer a large amount of their time, with most volunteering at least once a fortnight and for at least two hours on each occasion.

Who volunteers to work in prisons

Prison volunteers responding to our survey were predominantly white, aged 55 or over and were retired or not currently in paid work. This does not represent the profile of the prison population, and shows a lack of diversity amongst those who volunteer. Some organisations have recruited a more diverse volunteer base, the result of proactive steps to do outreach work in local communities, or have designed roles that are more flexible for volunteers who have other commitments.

1.5. Actions to support more effective volunteering

Clear roles should be identified for volunteers, and their work should be strategically integrated

1. In consultation with local partners, individual prisons should identify areas across their provision where they believe volunteer involvement could enhance their work.
2. Individual prisons should define their own minimum standards for the training, management and supervision of volunteers in a volunteering policy. The policy should use existing good practice and successful volunteering already taking place in the prison as their model where possible.

Prisons and their partners should proactively recruit volunteers from as diverse a base as possible

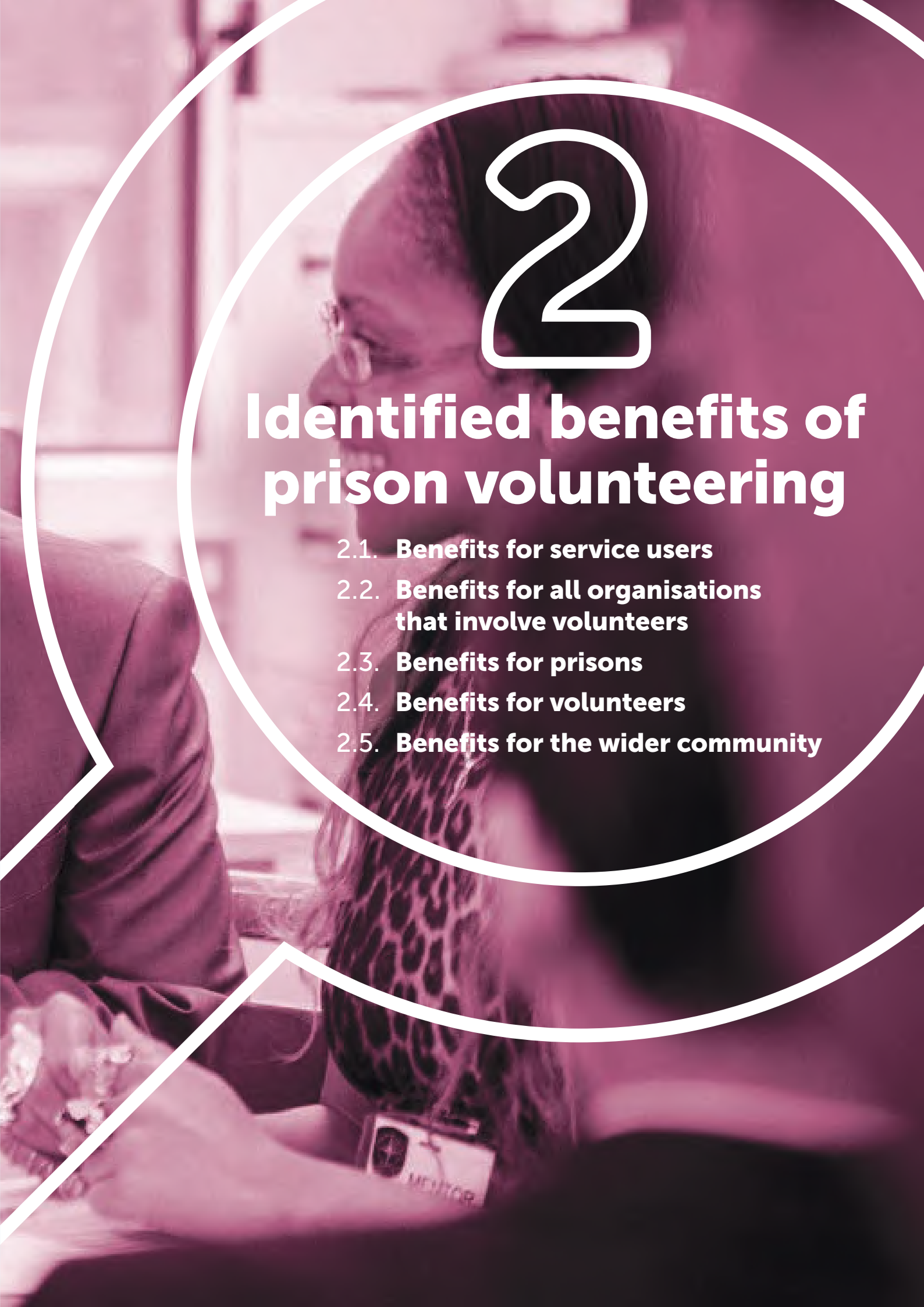
3. Mechanisms should be developed so that prisons can clearly communicate with local organisations which could help meet the need for services delivered by volunteers.
4. The number, role and diversity of volunteers involved in individual prisons should be recorded in order to create a benchmark against which future volunteer involvement can regularly be judged.
5. All organisations involving volunteers in prison should take steps to publicise and celebrate their achievements and the benefits of volunteering, with a view to encouraging greater volunteer involvement.

Volunteering should receive a consistent level of coordination and support

6. Individual prisons should establish their own clear volunteering strategies and volunteering policies in consultation with organisations that involve or support volunteers. This should result in the identification of resources that will be used to support volunteering and clear expectations for what different stakeholders can expect.
7. Individual prisons should review their security vetting and induction training arrangements in order to make them as volunteer-friendly as possible. Guidance and training should be given to staff and outside organisations to ensure partner organisations can share responsibility for their volunteers completing applications correctly.

1.6. Limitations

The research methods used for this project result in some limitations to the conclusions in this report. In particular, volunteering by ex-prisoners and volunteering within Community Rehabilitation Company supply chains was under-represented in the information gathered. We were also unable to establish that the service user focus groups were conducted using a sample that was definitely representative of the prison population as a whole. Further detailed information about the limitations can be found in Appendix 3.



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Identified benefits of prison volunteering

2.1. Benefits for service users

The service user focus groups identified a number of benefits to volunteering. Service users often reported that volunteers brought an independent perspective to the work they did in prison. Participants saw volunteers as people from the community who want to help rehabilitation efforts, but were not in positions of authority. Participants stated that it was beneficial for people in prison to have experience of relationships that were based on a human and caring dynamic.

> *"It's an independent voice to listen to; you've got all that control and compliance in prisons [...] there's little humanity, and I think volunteers coming in provides that humanity to prisoners."*
>
> *(Focus group participant)*

The independence of volunteers coming in from the community was said to translate into a stronger motivation to engage with services. Reportedly this was because the volunteers' unpaid commitment to work with the service users motivated the service users to return that commitment.

> *"My mentality as an inmate was "I ain't doing nothing for nothing." If I do something I expected something back in return all the time. I think the lads get that you [as a volunteer] don't have to come in here [and you do it] because you wanna share your experience. It shows that there is a way out."*
>
> *(Focus group participant)*

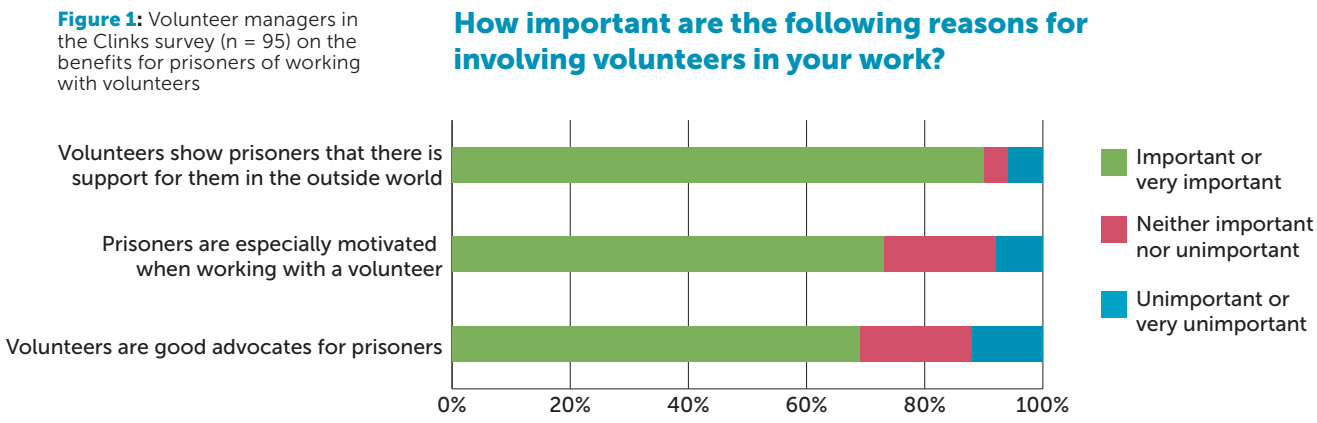
There was some indication that participants simply appreciated the chance to work with someone from the community outside prison, as a break from the routine of prison life.

Some service users in the focus groups expressed the wish that more volunteers could have lived experience of the prison system, on the basis that this provided a particularly strong motivation for prisoners to work with them.

> *"It just shows that there is hope and that's a massive thing, to think there is some light at the end of the tunnel."*
>
> *(Focus group participant)*

However, most participants stated that lived experience was not essential to provide effective voluntary services and the motivation to provide help and assistance for free was still greatly welcomed and respected. The survey of volunteer managers offered support for the idea that prisoners are motivated by the idea of working with someone from the community outside prison (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Volunteer managers in the Clinks survey (n = 95) on the benefits for prisoners of working with volunteers



> *"We find that when a volunteer comes willingly and can tell men and women that they enjoy spending time with them this can be a real boost to self-worth and sends the message that they are individuals of value".*
>
> *(Interview with the manager of a volunteer mentoring programme)*

29 of the 74 interviewees (prison and voluntary sector staff) talked about the benefits of volunteering for service users. These centred on volunteer investment increasing prisoners' motivation to engage further, boosting prisoners' self-worth and sense of hope, and helping prisoners focus their attention and interest on the world outside.

Interviewees also mentioned the potential for volunteers to offer a non-judgemental relationship, and described how this had the benefit of increasing engagement with services.

> *"Volunteers are a key strategic tool in engagement. They offer reassurance, a credible offer of "no judgement", they develop relationships that can be seen to open up and grow in potential. And they give a different perspective – they're outside prisoners' ordinary experience."*
>
> *(Interview with the chief executive of a voluntary sector organisation working in several prisons)*

2.2. Benefits for all organisations that involve volunteers

Involving volunteers also benefits organisations, both those in the voluntary sector and prisons. In the survey, volunteer managers were presented with a list of possible benefits for organisations of involving volunteers, and asked to say how important each was in their work.[2] Table 1 presents the organisational benefits that were referred to by more than half of respondents as being important or very important.

Table 1: Volunteer managers in the Clinks survey (n = 95) on the benefits of volunteer involvement for their organisation

	Important or very important (%)
Volunteers mean that we better represent the local community	81%
Volunteers make the work we do more flexible	79%
Volunteers bring a more "personal touch"	76%
Volunteers enable us to innovate	74%
We wouldn't be able to do our work without the volunteers	73%
Volunteers have a positive effect on staff morale	70%
By spending more time with prisoners, volunteers free up time for staff to spend on other things they have to do	63%
Volunteers help us cover things that it is not possible for staff to cover	57%

The benefits experienced were different for different organisations, depending on what they used volunteers to do. The main benefits described in interviews and case studies could be grouped into two main themes: capacity and flexibility and offering a more personal touch.

Capacity and flexibility

In some contexts where volunteering was well managed and supported it allowed for the organisation to have additional capacity and flexibility in their work. This was mentioned in interviews in response to an open question about the benefits of volunteering. In some cases, organisations described

services that would not exist or could not be offered without the involvement of volunteers. In others, volunteers are used to support a period of continued engagement with service users who had completed an intervention delivered by paid staff.

In other organisations, volunteers are recruited to directly support the work of paid staff by supporting individual prisoners where staff members were required to deal with an entire group or class.

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Example case studies

For example, in the case studies provided by **HACRO/HMP The Mount** and **HMP/YOI Parc** volunteers support staff by providing individualised assistance to learners on different courses. At **HMP Send**, volunteers deliver courses that have been designed and accredited by the chaplaincy department at the prison. The more experienced volunteers act as course leaders, with less experienced volunteers assisting in the classroom.

The **Prisoners' Advice Service** described how volunteers enabled the more efficient deployment of staff resources. The organisation's volunteers support legal advice clinics in prisons and follow up with any necessary letter writing after the clinic. This delivers continuity of service and enables staff time to be spent where it is needed most.

The use of volunteers to add capacity was described as enhancing the quality of service that could be offered by paid staff working alone.

> *"The contract [for our relationships and parenting courses] only usually covers one paid facilitator but [it] can be really good to have a volunteer in there to help with evaluation [or to] deal with individuals who are agitated, [less] literate, and so on."*
>
> *(Interview with the regional director of a voluntary sector organisation)*

We also interviewed trustees from the Friends organisations in four prisons. These groups of local volunteers raise funds for various initiatives in the prison that address unmet needs identified in meetings with the prison management. For example, the Friends organisation in one prison organised volunteers to offer lifts to prison visitors from the local station, because the bus service was unreliable and operated at times not suited to the prison's visiting hours. The capacity to generate ad hoc funding for specific activities through volunteer action added flexibility, and could be used to fill gaps in existing service provision or to test new ideas.

> *"For example, someone wonders, "wouldn't it be good if there were some exercise equipment in the yards". So we [raised money to] fund the first one. The prison then rolled it out themselves in all the other yards, but [we] did the first one."*
>
> *(Interview with the Chair of the Friends of a YOI)*

Offering a more personal touch

In some contexts, volunteers were said by interviewees to be able to offer support with a personal touch in a way that was different to what employed staff could provide. In some cases, this was within specific services like befriending and mentoring, where the involvement of volunteers who were not paid was seen as fundamental to the success of the service. While staff members inevitably had a wider range of responsibilities in a prison, volunteers could be recruited to specifically offer personalised individual support:

> *"If [you're meeting someone at the gate and] the release is delayed, they can do more with volunteers than with staff. This is because a staff member has to go and do other things, whereas a mentor is just there for that individual."*
>
> *(Interview with the director of a network of resettlement mentoring organisations)*

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For more details of these projects, see the following case studies:

- **Trailblazers**
- **Mosaic**
- **Feltham Community Chaplaincy Trust**
- **The Chaplaincy at HMP Send**

Eleven interviewees reported that the relaxed and personal relationships offered by volunteers helped service users to be more open, which in some cases could lead to them disclosing information that they would not offer to a member of prison staff. For example:

> *[A prisoner] gets contact with someone who has the time to see them and thinks it is a worthwhile thing to do to give time to others. This leads [him] to open up and can make needs visible [to the prison] that would not be otherwise.*

(Interview with a governor responsible for oversight of all volunteering at a Category C prison)

2.3. Benefits for prisons

Responses by prison staff to the survey (see Figure 2) suggested that prisons experience a range of benefits from volunteer involvement which are additional to the extra capacity provided by volunteer roles.[3]

The interviews and case studies allow some of these issues to be explored further. Almost half of the 74 interviewees (47%) described benefits that volunteering brought to prisons. Interviewees referred to a more positive atmosphere, which was described as building a more trusting environment with less of a 'them and us' feel. This was said to be important because prisoners could engage with these activities on a voluntary basis, because they wanted to, rather than because it was mandated by their sentence plan. 71% of prison staff agreed that volunteering can offer activities that staff would not be employed to do.

> *Not every person is going to be reached by the off-the-shelf things. There are going to be people who thrive from [participation in] the smallest and most unusual activities.*

(Interview with the governor of a Category B prison/YOI)

The different kind of relationships that volunteers formed with prisoners, and the introduction of different viewpoints, offered prisons a perspective on problems and needs that could otherwise be missed. For example, interviewees described how the trusting and relaxed atmosphere between a volunteer and a service user made it more likely that information related to Safer Custody concerns was reported, enabling additional support to be offered before issues escalated.

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The IMB case study offered several recent examples of this kind, and one interview with a prison governor reinforced this point by saying:

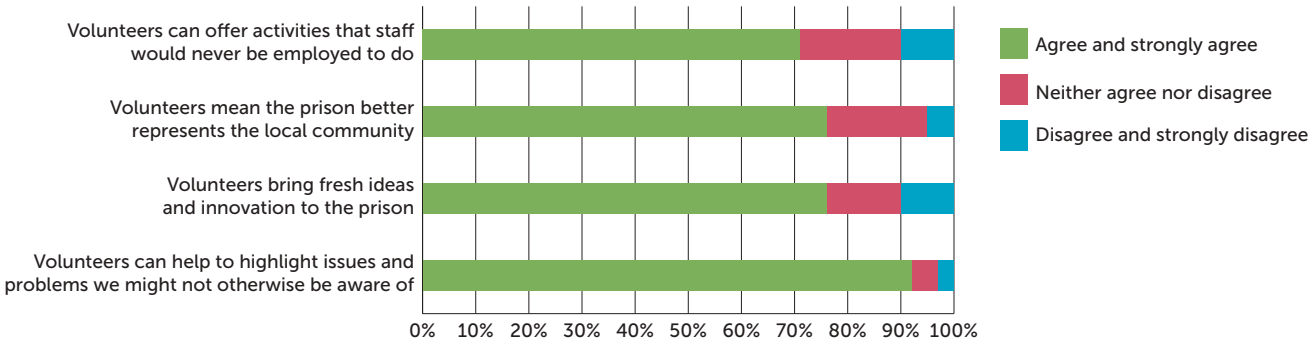
> *[IMB volunteers] can tell me things about the jail that I don't know, or don't have an easy way of finding out..*

(Interview with the governor of a Category B prison)

Volunteering promoted a positive, hopeful culture in prisons, particularly those holding long-term prisoners who are less likely to have contact with the world outside. The governor of a high security prison said that volunteering can reduce isolation and help to change the culture of the prison.

Figure 2: Survey responses by prison staff not directly involved in managing volunteers (n = 59) on the benefits to prisons of volunteer involvement

From your point of view as a member of prison staff, do you agree with the following rationales for having volunteers involved?



> *"Having the outside community involved in the prison is culturally very powerful. Prisoners, especially if they are in long-term prisons and very isolated from life outside, normalise their position. So do staff. Volunteering contributes to an overall culture that is about progression. [It] helps put energy into that element of hope."*
>
> *(Interview with the governor of a high-security prison)*

We gathered evidence that some people volunteer with the specific aim of gaining experience and progressing into paid employment. The case studies give examples where prisons have recruited staff directly from among their volunteer base, which was said to be a distinct benefit because the volunteers had existing experience of working in the prison, had already received some degree of training, and crucially, would not have to make a new application for security clearance.

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For more details see the case studies:

- HMP/YOI Parc
- HMP The Mount

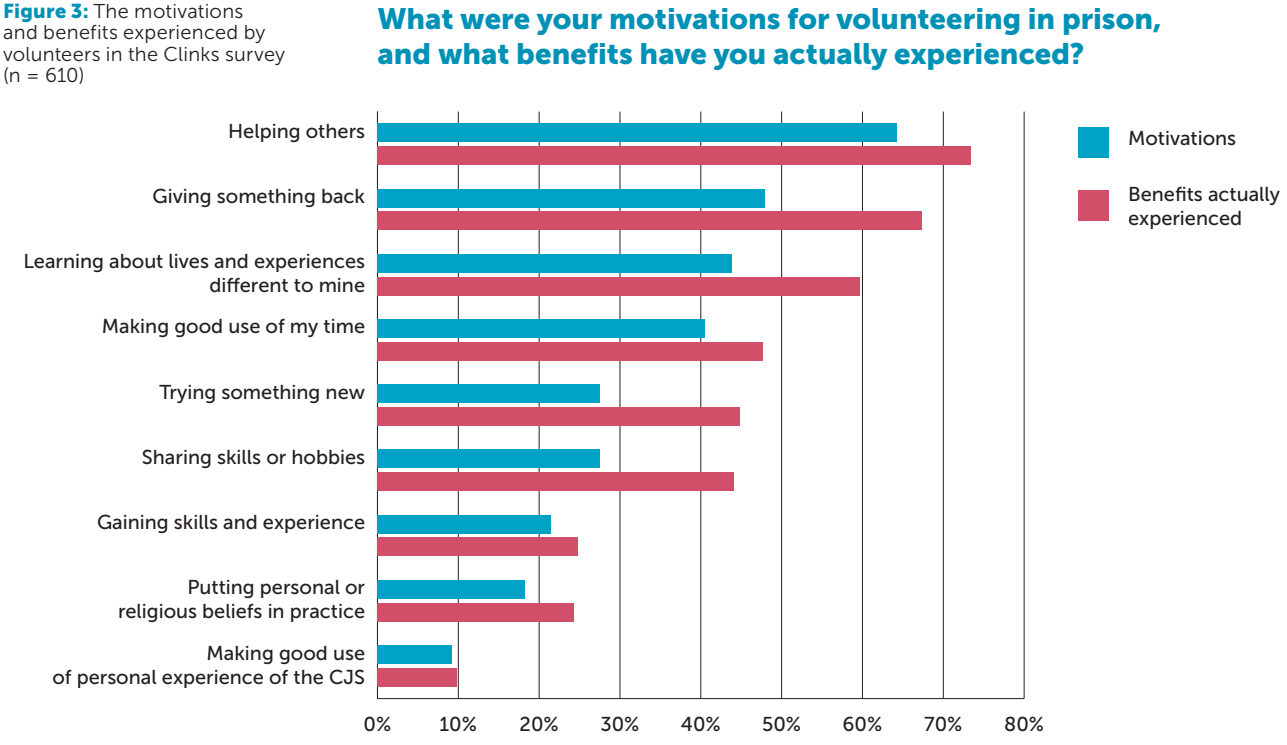
2.4. Benefits for volunteers

Volunteers become involved in prison work for a variety of reasons, and their experiences and the benefits they receive from their roles also vary.

Our survey asked volunteers to identify what had led them to volunteer in a prison, and identify the benefits they had experienced from this work (see Figure 3).

> *"Volunteering in a prison is by far the best thing I have done since joining Samaritans and maybe in my life, ever."*
>
> *(Vounteer with Samaritans)*

Figure 3: The motivations and benefits experienced by volunteers in the Clinks survey (n = 610)



Helping others and giving something back were the most reported motivations for volunteering. It appears to be more common for prison volunteers to come forward for these reasons, rather than to gain skills or experience. There was a marked tendency for volunteers to say they had experienced wider benefits, including some which had not formed part of their original motivation to volunteer. Volunteers were less likely to be motivated to volunteer by gaining something themselves, such as new skills or experiences.

Interviewees tended to focus on the benefits of volunteering for prisoners, prisons or organisations rather than on the benefits for volunteers. A minority (9% of 74 volunteers) mentioned the benefits they personally experienced.

2.5. Benefits for the wider community

This project did not set out to track community attitudes to offenders. Further investigation would be required to establish whether this is affected by volunteering. However, more than half of the survey respondents identified a major personal impact of volunteering on their attitudes. 67% of 610 respondents said that one of the things they had gained from their volunteer role was to learn from lives and experiences different to my own. Although not all interviewees talked about a positive impact on the community, one interviewee said:

> *"Volunteers can also speak positively to their own network of friends and acquaintances about the good transformational work that goes on in prison and [this] can also help break down the stigma that the offenders have. [The government should] promote volunteering as a means to promote the responsibility we all have towards offenders."*
>
> *(Interview with a trustee of a prison's Friends organisation)*

3

Factors supporting or acting as barriers to volunteering

3.1. Factors supporting successful volunteering

Strategic oversight by prison management

Interviews suggested that the strategic involvement and oversight of senior managers within prisons is essential to support successful volunteering. Senior managers' involvement helps to

- explain volunteer roles and their place in the prison's work
- communicate how staff should work alongside volunteers
- clarify and formalise relationships between volunteers and staff
- establish a volunteer-friendly culture within the prison
- broker cooperation between volunteers (and/or their managers) and relevant operational staff
- solve any conflicts or issues quickly.

The distribution of responsibility for strategic oversight of volunteering varied in the 12 prisons we visited. Two of the 12 prisons had a dedicated voluntary sector coordinator. A more common arrangement was for strategic oversight to sit with the Head of Reducing Reoffending, as part of their responsibility for partnerships.

A whole-prison approach to volunteering

Three of the 12 prisons visited described more formal arrangements for the coordination of volunteering between different departments. Staff members who had volunteers working in their departments met regularly. Interviewees found this helped to raise awareness of issues affecting volunteers, assisted in communication between volunteers and the prison, and improved the coordinated management of volunteering efforts.

> *We have a number of members of staff responsible for volunteers – the "volunteer coordinators". They meet quarterly and organise a quarterly volunteer newsletter. Because [...] some managers are known to be volunteer coordinators, staff are aware of where they should go with concerns about volunteers.*
>
> *(Joint interview with the Managing Chaplain and Head of Public Protection of a prison/YOI)*

Prisons that involved volunteers well had clear coordination arrangements between different teams or departments to deal with issues common both to their own volunteers and those from partner organisations. Two of the case studies underline the importance of this strategic and coordinated approach. In HMP/YOI Parc coordination across departments had helped to lower barriers to volunteering that had previously been imposed by inflexible training times and the challenges of vetting.

> *It is important to have a strategy for the coordination and management of volunteers [...] There were a number of challenges in the early days [like] the concerns of staff that [...] volunteers would replace their positions. We also had to work with other departments including Human Resources and Training [to make it easier to vet and train volunteers at convenient times.*

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From the case study by HMP/YOI Parc of the volunteering in its Parc Supporting Families team

HMP/YOI Parc

The chaplaincy at HMP Send described how the oversight of volunteer roles by the Managing Chaplain (who is part of the prison's Senior Management Team) helped to secure recognition and confidence in volunteers across a range of prison departments.

> *The use of volunteers [at Send] is only possible due to good communications with other departments. Security must be assured that volunteers understand and comply with rules. Offender Managers need to [know] how chaplaincy programmes can help their prisoners to develop and reduce the risk of reoffending. Safer Custody and Residential staff need to know that volunteers who have wing access are experienced and can be trusted. Activities need to have confidence that planned courses will be delivered. Overall a strong level of SMT confidence and support is essential.*
> *The Managing Chaplain plays a key role in [...] championing these initiatives, [...] communicating with other departments on an ongoing basis, and resolving any operational issues.*
>
> *(From the case study by HMP Send of volunteering organised by the chaplaincy)* **HMP Send**

Volunteer-friendly recruitment, vetting and training

The diversity of local arrangements used by the organisations involved in this project means that no single approach to volunteer recruitment and training can be recommended as suitable for all roles. However, some core principles to support volunteering were identified, summarised in Figure 4 below.

While 14 interviewees from voluntary sector organisations and prisons expressed a desire to see vetting streamlined and prison training made more flexible, it was also recognised that it can be difficult for prisons to do this where small numbers of volunteers are involved. A number of prisons have offered evening or weekend training when there was a sufficiently large number of volunteers to make this worthwhile. Whole-prison coordination of volunteering (see section above) provides a way to offer training to volunteers from several different organisations at once, boosting numbers and facilitating attendance.

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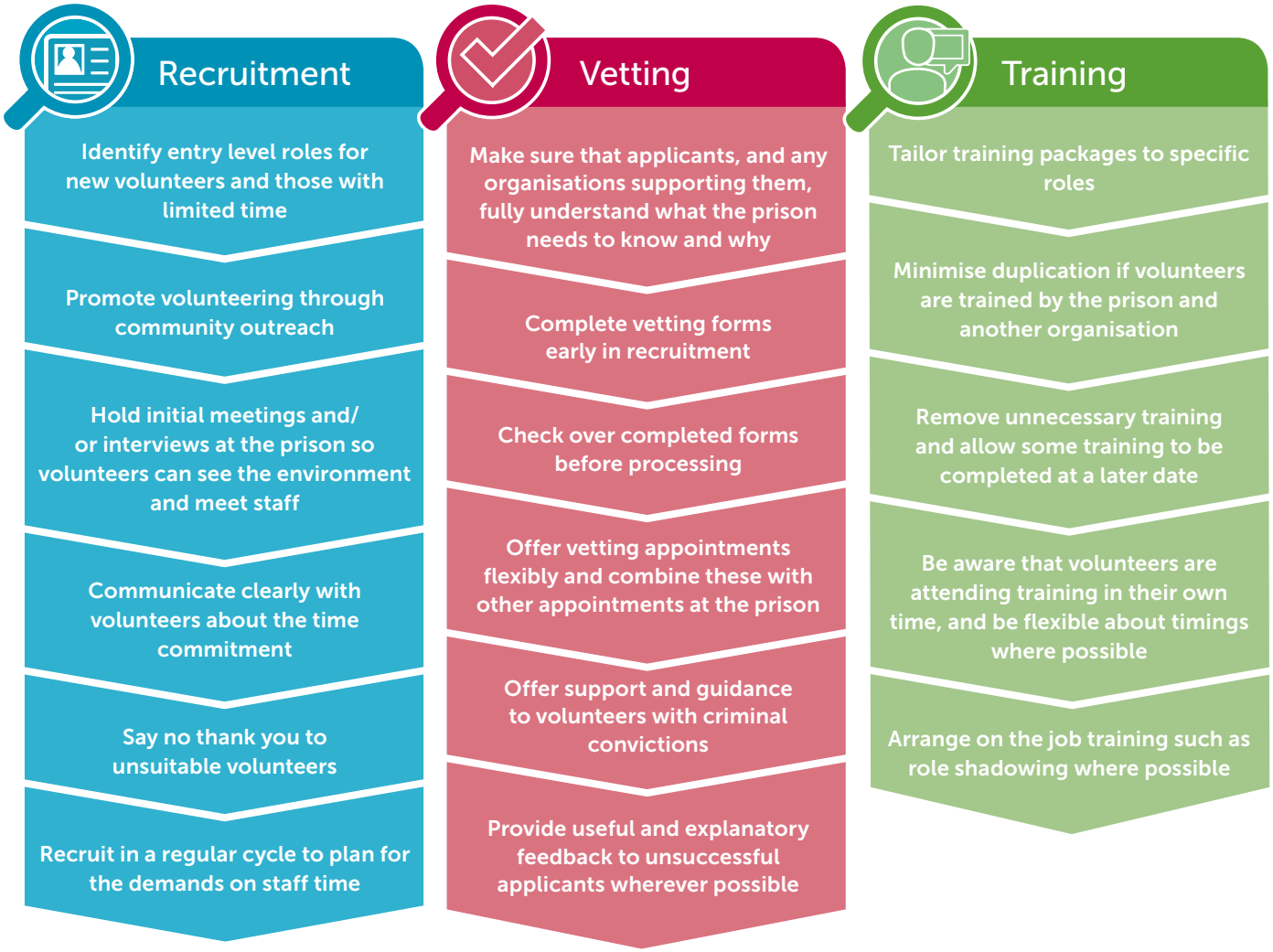
For more details of interesting training practice see case studies by the following organisations:

- HMP Whatton
- Hacro and HMP The Mount
- Independent Monitoring Boards
- Pact
- HMP Send
- Mosaic

Figure 4: Core principles to support volunteer recruitment, vetting and training



Volunteer support and supervision

Twenty of the 74 interviewees responded to the question - What factors support good work by volunteers? - by referencing arrangements for ongoing volunteer management, support and supervision. Volunteers in the online survey (n = 585) also rated ongoing support and supervision as an important part of being able to work successfully:

- 65% agreed that I couldn't carry out the role that I do without the ongoing support I've received
- 69% disagreed that the ongoing support I've received has mostly been irrelevant to my role

Support and supervision played a key role in helping volunteers to:

- navigate the steep learning curve involved in volunteering in prison
- build the volunteers' confidence
- build prison staff members' confidence in volunteers
- resolve any problems quickly
- identify opportunities for development
- provide a channel for the volunteers to give feedback to the prison and/or host organisation.

> *Prison staff also need to understand that a volunteer's role is different to that of a staff member and that, in spite of their training, they [may not] have as much awareness of the prison environment. [Volunteers] must be given the opportunity to explain themselves [if a problem] arises.*
>
> *(From the case study by HMP the Mount and HACRO)*

The interviews and case studies described a number of different successful arrangements for volunteer supervision but, again, the wide variety of volunteer roles means that a single approach cannot be recommended for all roles. Figure 5 overleaf summarises approaches that should be considered.

Regular contact with volunteers can add to the benefits of good supervision and support. Two of the 12 prisons we visited maintain a database of all volunteer email addresses and send out a regular volunteer newsletter, as well as announcements and reminders, to make sure they are aware of any changes to the regime.

CLINKS CASE STUDY *Example case studies*

For more details of interesting practice in volunteer supervision see the following case studies:

Samaritans and **Shannon Trust** – who use regional supervision and identify roles for volunteers to support and supervise other volunteers.

Trailblazers and **Feltham Community Chaplaincy Trust** – who base members of staff inside the prison to support volunteers and ensure their roles run smoothly.

HMP Send – who have defined structures whereby volunteers can be developed into more advanced roles as their confidence and experience builds.

Fine Cell Work – who work closely to define support arrangements with prison staff.

Prisoners' Advice Service – who minimise the need for specific volunteer supervision by utilising volunteers to support work by paid staff.

HMP The Mount – who have two staff members responsible for supporting and supervising volunteers in the prison.

Some interviewees mentioned the need to ensure that new volunteers receive adequate supervision by prison staff:

> *You need to keep an eye on volunteers and make sure that they are OK, especially in the early stages [...] One [volunteer] we had passed clearance and got her key talk[4] done, but she was too anxious and uncertain with keys. [You are] not going to see that kind of thing if you don't have a chance to spend time with [volunteers].*
>
> *(Interview with a Custodial Manager working with volunteers at a Category B/C training prison)*

Supervising volunteers requires staff time but interviewees reported that it builds staff confidence and trust in volunteers, meaning that over the long-term volunteers may be able to operate more independently. Through supervision sessions, staff can gain insight into volunteer skills and abilities. This knowledge can be used to develop the volunteer programme and result in staff being able to delegate additional duties to volunteers.

> *It's really important to find progression routes for volunteers – having them coordinating groups, delivering training, etc. Often they have had a full career and organisations could do more to utilise [their] experience and expertise. [This means] knowing them as individuals.*
>
> *(Interview with the director of a voluntary sector organisation working with prison chaplaincies)*

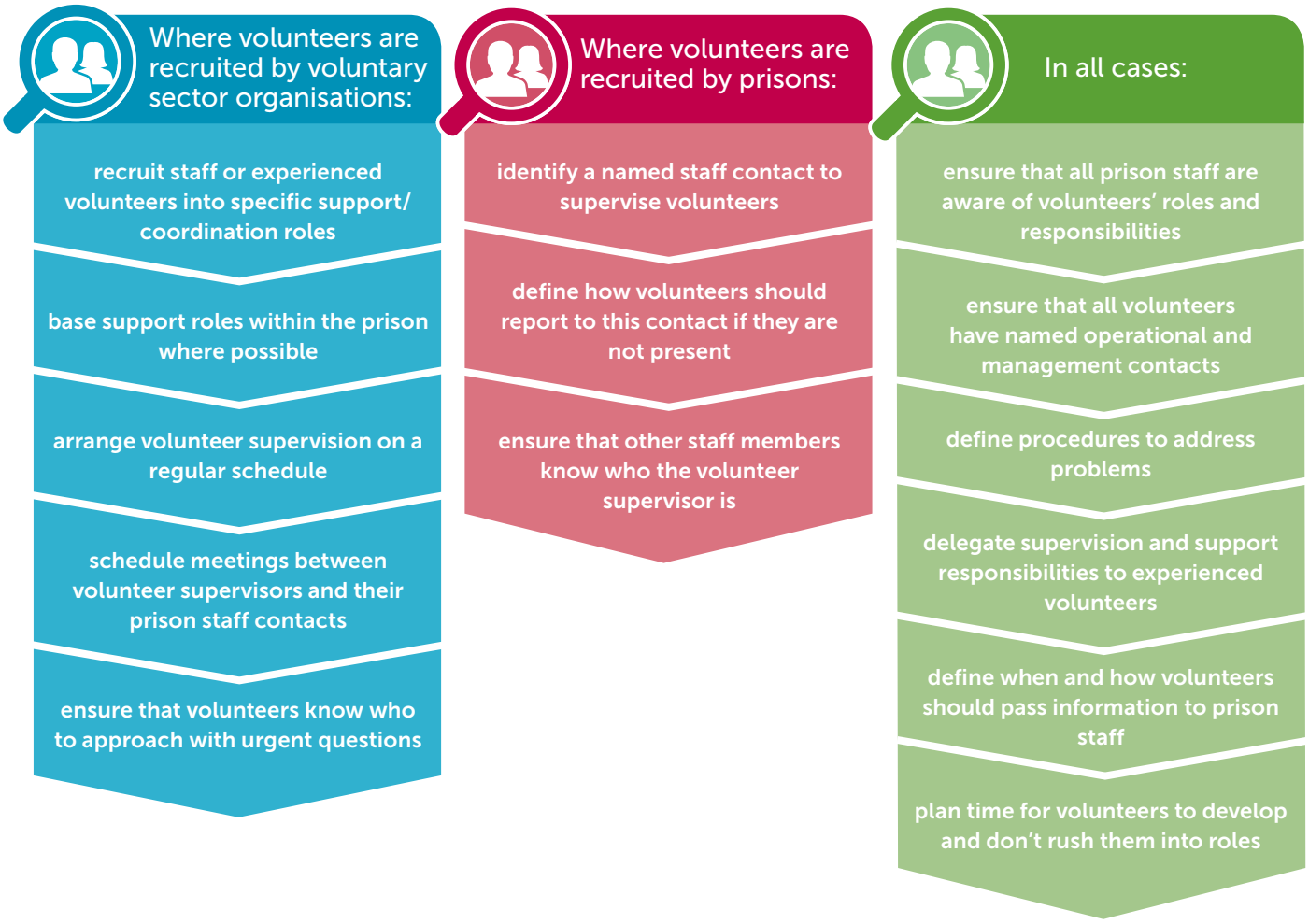
Fostering wider awareness of volunteering across prisons

Fifteen of the 31 members of prison staff interviewed believed efforts should be made to increase staff awareness of volunteering within prisons, specifically the roles and purpose of volunteers. They also felt that greater awareness of volunteers' activities would make volunteers themselves feel that the prison valued their work. It was important for prison staff more generally to be aware of the following:

- how volunteers supported or contributed to their work
- that volunteers should not be expected to have the same understanding of the prison environment as staff
- the need to consult with volunteers about changes that might affect their roles.

Three of the 12 prisons visited for this project organise quarterly or twice-yearly events where volunteers from different organisations are invited to the prison to meet one another and relevant staff, and to hear from the prison's senior management.

Figure 5: Core principles to support volunteer recruitment, vetting and training



These events, which are often also organised by voluntary sector organisations, were seen by interviewees from these prisons as bringing a number of advantages, including:

- letting volunteers network with each other
- celebrating volunteer achievements
- enabling staff and volunteers to meet each other and hear about each other's work
- consulting volunteers on changes that may affect them.

For examples of how volunteer events are used by prisons to promote integration, see the case studies by

HMP/YOI Parc

HMP Whatton

To aid the visibility of volunteers, some organisations among the case studies said that they made sure that their volunteers were easily identifiable within the prison by means of lanyards or T-shirts. These initiatives meant that prison staff were aware when a person was a volunteer, and keep this in mind when interacting with them when interacting with them.

3.2. Barriers to successful volunteering

Time commitments

Volunteer managers identified the time commitment involved in many volunteer roles as a notable barrier to volunteer recruitment and retention. Interviews and the case studies revealed that most volunteer roles take place in prisons during a typical working week. This effectively requires most volunteers to be available during the day.

Nineteen of 74 interviewees (26%) referred to the barrier posed by the times of prison regimes. Five linked this to difficulties they had experienced recruiting or retaining volunteers who were also in employment.

In one of the case studies, Samaritans stated they had undertaken a volunteer survey which showed that a large proportion of their volunteers felt that timetabling of prison visits made it difficult to commit themselves to working in prison.

> *84% of respondents [in a 2012 Samaritans volunteer survey] said that visits to the prison had to be done at a time that was either impossible or very inconvenient [...] Although this survey was carried out a few years ago, feedback suggests that the situation hasn't greatly improved.*

From the case study of the Samaritans Listeners scheme

Samaritans

Volunteer responses in the survey support the conclusion that prison volunteering is a major time commitment. When asked, roughly how often do you volunteer in prison?, 81% of the 616 said they visit at least once every two weeks, and 49% visit once or more each week. 78% of volunteers said that their visits to the prison lasted on average over two hours.[5]

Some interviewees referred to travel time as a barrier to volunteering. This was identified to be a particular problem in prisons in rural locations or with poor transport links, where volunteers must have their own transport. Not all prisons or voluntary sector organisations are able to offer full reimbursement of travel expenses, which can act as a further barrier to recruitment.

Volunteers must also allow time for administrative procedures and training before taking up a role, which is likely to include some form of induction training at the prison. Arrangements vary locally, but ten of 74 interviewees said that inflexible arrangements for volunteer training were a barrier to volunteering. In many prisons training requires volunteers to give up several consecutive days.

> *'Volunteers have to complete three full days of induction training [...] It is run monthly and there is no flexibility, plus it gets booked up so obtaining places is hard. [...] So it takes a very long time, sometimes months, between someone expressing an interest and actually starting work [...]'*
>
> *Managing Chaplain of a Category B local prison)*

Security vetting

Volunteers have to obtain security clearance which can be a lengthy process, delaying the start of their roles. Difficulties with security vetting were mentioned by 34 of 74 interviewees, with 12 reporting that difficulties were more pronounced with Counter Terrorist Check clearance.[6] Volunteer managers in the survey agreed that vetting poses a barrier to volunteer involvement (see Figure 6).

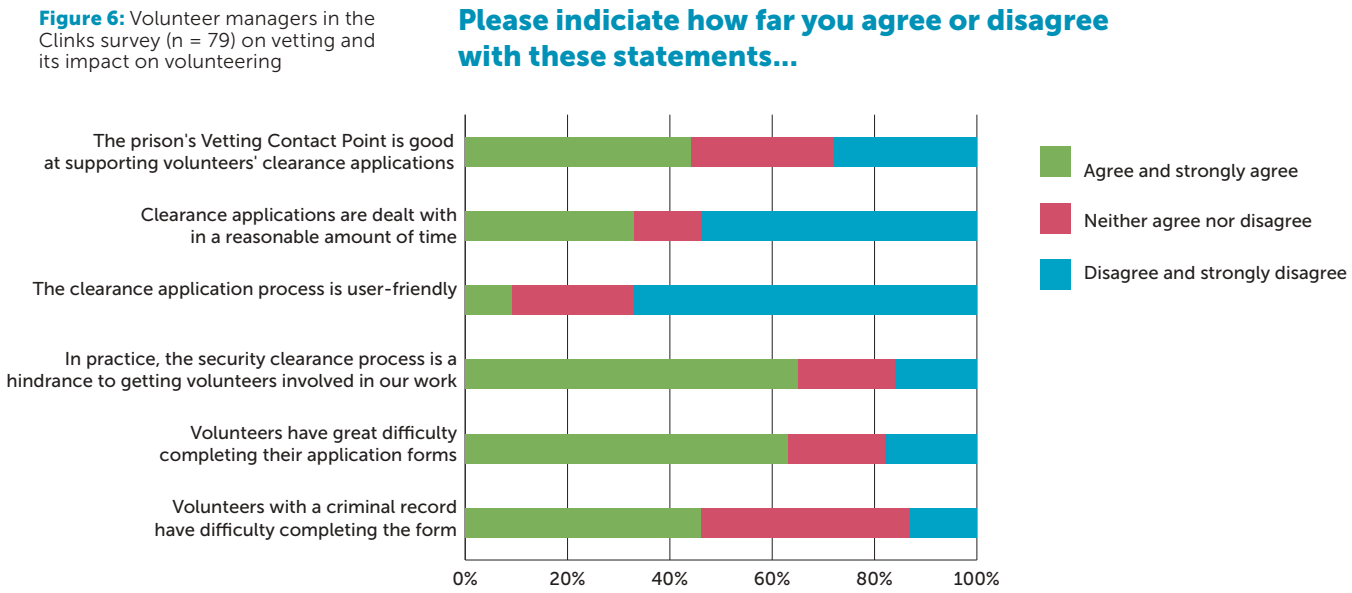
Difficulties with security clearance encountered by interviewees seemed to concentrate at the level of individual prisons. Volunteer managers working in multiple establishments were able to differentiate between more and less effective practice. Some had been able to improve matters in some locations by working closely with the prison's Vetting Contact Point (VCP), and in some cases, carrying out some documentation checks themselves after training from the VCP.

Delays with vetting cause some volunteers to drop out of recruitment, especially if they are only available for a relatively short time. The project did not gather figures on the prevalence of this. Information provided by HACRO in its joint case study with HMP The Mount was that, over a four-year period, approximately three-quarters of volunteers referred to the prison through their Step Inside programme dropped out of recruitment while waiting for their security clearance to come through. Further investigation would be required to establish whether this figure holds for other organisations, but vetting was cited by almost all organisations as a reason why some volunteers drop out. For example:

> *"[Vetting] is still a significant drop-off point for volunteers as they realise the amount of time and effort which is required to complete [the process]. It is essential for us to manage expectations at this point; many volunteers who approach us full of enthusiasm can become disheartened."*
>
> *(From the case study by Pact of volunteer involvement in their services across multiple prisons)*

Several interviewees also said that they viewed delays in vetting as intractable, and tended instead to concentrate their recruitment efforts on people who were seen as likely to be able to commit themselves for a long period. This may in itself constitute a barrier to volunteering for some people, and reinforce the lack of diversity among volunteers described in section 4. Several case studies describe how organisations ask prospective volunteers for a minimum time commitment as a condition of recruitment, to ensure that time spent on their application would not be wasted.

Figure 6: Volunteer managers in the Clinks survey (n = 79) on vetting and its impact on volunteering



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Example case studies

Many of the organisations who provided case studies have developed ways to make security vetting for volunteers run more smoothly. These include:

HMP/YOI Parc – who ensure that volunteers have a single point of contact to support applications.

Mosaic and **Feltham Community Chaplaincy Trust** – who have adapted the structure of their mentoring provision so that vetting is not required for all volunteers.

Pact and Spurgeons – who have agreements with prisons whereby their own staff can do some of the document-checking for volunteers on behalf of the prison's Vetting Contact Point.

Vetting and people with a criminal record

Four of the 49 volunteer managers interviewed referred to having dealt with prospective volunteers with criminal records. Only one had experience of a volunteer applying for Standard Plus clearance, and the other three had not heard of it.[7]

The perception that security vetting discourages ex-offenders from volunteering also featured in the service user focus groups. A focus group was held with five former service users who had tried to volunteer. Their perception was that vetting created a blanket restriction on ex-prisoners volunteering, rather than considering individuals on a case by case basis, which they saw as preferable.[8] Quotes from the focus groups indicate that issues with IT skills and literacy may also be a particular concern with ex-prisoners, and lead to drop-out.

> *"[The vetting process] was quite scary you know. There's a lot in there. For me at that point of time with computers and that, I weren't sort of computer literate and it was tricky. The first one I got I couldn't complete it."*
>
> *(From focus group with ex-service users)*

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For more details see this report's accompanying publication:
Valuing Volunteers in prison

Integration of volunteers and prison staff

A lack of shared understanding about the role that volunteers play in an establishment can limit the potential for them to become integrated, because the support they receive from staff will be variable. In the survey, respondents were asked the question 'In your experience, what factors make it harder for volunteers to do good work in the prison?' 139 of 458 answers (30%) referred to perceived difficulties in volunteers' relationships with prison staff. Answers in this section tended to refer to one or more of the following:

- volunteers experiencing a lack of what they see as necessary support
- some prison staff did not know or understand the purpose of volunteers' roles and that some saw volunteers as a security risk
- communication with prison staff from outside the prison could be difficult and operational decisions affecting the whole prison were not always understood by volunteers.

The need to improve the relationship between prison staff and volunteers was raised in 33 interviews (45%). Poor relationships between prison officers and volunteers were seen as particularly likely where volunteer roles were new, or where a volunteer was seen by staff as naïve or inexperienced.

Sixteen interviewees mentioned that some staff were unaware of what volunteers did or how it contributed to their work. This suggests there is a need for better communication within prisons about volunteer roles and their contribution to the establishment.

> *"Staff need to know why volunteers are there. If they recognise a skills gap and the need for [the role], it makes a big difference."*
>
> *(Interview with the Head of Reducing Reoffending at a high security prison)*

Regardless of their role, 19 interviewees (25%) said that volunteers needed time to learn the challenges of the environment and to earn the trust of staff and other agencies in the prison. It was perceived that trust took a long time to develop, but could be easily lost.

> *"Prison staff need time and lots of engagement to understand that volunteers can add value, that they will not undermine the prison's work and the officers' authority. It takes years to build up [trust], and moments to lose it."*
>
> *(Interview with a volunteer manager working at a women's prison)*

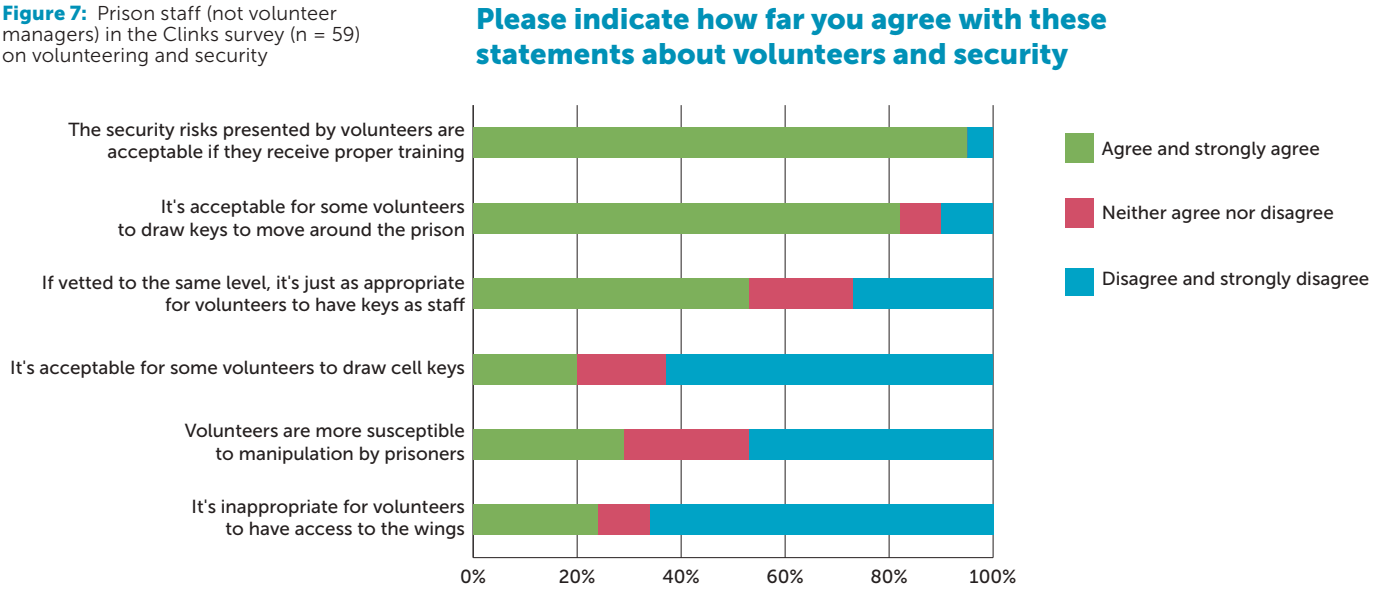
Volunteers, like anyone else in a prison, can pose a security risk if they are not aware of rules and procedures to follow. The survey indicated that only 12% of volunteers agreed with the statement prison staff treat me with suspicion. However, it also demonstrates that while prison staff broadly support the idea that the security risks posed by volunteering are manageable, they are not unanimous in their support for specific proposals, such as the idea that volunteers should have keys or access to the wings (see Figure 7).

The fact that volunteers can find it difficult to understand the prison environment may add to misunderstandings. Only 22% of the volunteers in Clinks' survey agreed with the statement it is easy to understand how the prison works, and only 19% said they had a named point of contact in the prison. This could leave volunteers uncertain about how to act in a prison setting, or who to approach for advice and guidance.

Ex-prisoners as volunteers

In recent years there has been a rising trend to involve people with previous convictions in the delivery of rehabilitation and resettlement services, both as employed staff and as volunteers. 11 of the 74 interviewees (15%) believed a criminal record was likely to affect the chance of successfully integrating into the prison. The service user focus groups conducted for this report, **'Valuing Volunteers in prison: the views of service users and ex-offenders'** gave a mixed picture. Some ex-service users reporting very positive reactions by prison staff to their attempts to volunteer, and others indicating very negative reactions. Further research would need to be conducted to fully understand the possible issues facing people with prior criminal convictions who want to volunteer.

Figure 7: Prison staff (not volunteer managers) in the Clinks survey (n = 59) on volunteering and security



4

Good practice: guidance, examples and gaps

4.1. Definitions of good practice

Appendix 1 compares previous guidance published by NOMS and others on volunteering good practice. The comparison demonstrates broad agreement as to what good practice actually looks like. Figure 8 contains a succinct summary from one publication.

The implementation of good practice guidance is voluntary. The content of published guidance is universally representative of practice identified during the course of this project. However, there was some volunteer presence in all 12 of the prisons visited, where we found a wide variety of approaches. Areas of apparent good practice in these sites were identified and are described in section 4.2 below.

Section 4.3 identifies a number of gaps between actual practice and the good practice identified in published guidance, based on evidence from the Clinks survey. This suggests that gaps exist in volunteer recruitment, focusing on the diversity of volunteers as well as the quality and consistency of support they are provided with to undertake their roles.

Figure 8: 'Good practice' in volunteer involvement as described by the Investing in Volunteers quality standard (source: http://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk)

1.	There is an expressed commitment to the involvement of volunteers, and recognition throughout the organisation that volunteering is a two-way process which benefits volunteers and the organisation
2.	The organisation commits appropriate resources to working with all volunteers, such as money, management, staff time and materials
3.	The organisation is open to involving volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community and actively seeks to do this in accordance with its stated aims
4.	The organisation develops appropriate roles for volunteers in line with its aims and objectives, which are of value to the volunteers
5.	The organisation is committed to ensuring that, as far as possible, volunteers are protected from physical, financial and emotional harm arising from volunteering
6.	The organisation is committed to using fair, efficient and consistent recruitment procedures for all potential volunteers
7.	Clear procedures are put into action for introducing new volunteers to their role, the organisation, its work, policies, practices and relevant personnel
8.	The organisation takes account of the varying support and supervision needs of volunteers
9.	The whole organisation is aware of the need to give volunteers recognition

4.2. Good practice

The Independent Monitoring Boards

The Independent Monitoring Boards (IMBs) consist of around 1,500 volunteers. The IMBs receive administrative support from an independent Secretariat. Arrangements for their governance, training, volunteer support and supervision are handled by volunteers elected from among existing volunteers.

Compared to other volunteering programmes, there is a high degree of volunteer independence, stemming from IMB members' access to all areas of a prison. This degree of access is not shared by all volunteers in other roles. IMB volunteers also work in close contact with prison staff because they are expected to report back and meet regularly with the prison governor.

Although the IMBs' role is unique, there are some areas of good practice that can be compared to other organisations. There appear to be major strengths in the IMBs' procedures for inducting and training volunteers, in their use of role-shadowing and mentoring for new volunteers, and in the resources they have developed to encourage volunteers to use a common framework for their inspections.

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See the case study
Independent Monitoring Boards

Official Prison Visitors

Official Prison Visitors (OPVs) apply to, and are appointed directly by, prison governors. According to the National Association of Official Prison Visitors (NAOPV), there are currently around 840 OPVs.[9] Prisons are required to appoint a member of staff as an OPV Liaison, and manage referrals to the scheme. In many prisons this role falls to the chaplaincy department.

Among the visits and case studies there were localised examples of prisons creating specific resources to support OPV volunteering, to supplement the handbook offered by the NAOPV. These included one prison where OPV roles were proactively advertised (HMP The Mount), one where meetings and shadowing schemes are organised to train volunteers (HMP Send), and another where OPV Liaison staff delegate some of their responsibilities to more experienced OPV volunteers (HMP Lewes). The NAOPV said that this kind of delegation led to better induction and training and more referrals for prisoners wanting visits. These all represent localised good practice in volunteer involvement.

Volunteering through prison chaplaincies

All prison chaplaincies involve some volunteers. Some are specific faith chaplains who are unpaid (volunteer chaplains). Many more are chaplaincy volunteers who support the work of prison chaplaincies in various ways. For example, by holding Bible study groups or providing music during faith services. They number in the thousands. Volunteering through chaplaincies appears to be more common than through other prison departments.

The chaplaincy at HMP Send had developed a large-scale volunteering programme delivering secular courses and activities alongside its more traditional faith-based activities. Volunteers perform a wide range of roles, some involving high levels of responsibility and independence, including supervising other volunteers. HMP Send's chaplaincy has adopted a proactive approach to recruiting volunteers, which includes outreach work taking place in the local community. This had led to the involvement of over 100 chaplaincy volunteers, a higher total than in any other prison in this project. The case study from the chaplaincy at HMP Send demonstrates that it is possible for a chaplaincy department to recruit large numbers of volunteers to deliver services within a range of roles and structures, adding capacity to the prison as a whole.

See the case study by
HMP Send

All of the managing chaplains we interviewed mentioned partnership working with outside organisations which recruited and trained volunteers, who were then managed in the prison by the chaplaincy. Two examples of this kind of partnership are the Sycamore Tree victim awareness programme run by Prison Fellowship, and the various Community Chaplaincies that exist as independent charities - see case study **Feltham Community Chaplaincy Trust**. Where these collaborative arrangements exist, they appear to be effective in helping prisons to recruit and train volunteers, and to help voluntary sector organisations ensure that they can perform their roles with support from prison staff. These relationships offer a promising example of how partnership between the voluntary sector and prisons can make volunteering work.

Whole-prison approach to volunteering

Among the prisons we visited, four appeared to have created whole-prison approaches to identify volunteer roles, and to recruit and manage volunteers to fill them.[10] The scope and nature of the roles described by each prison varied greatly, but in each case arrangements had been defined for how volunteers would be managed and supported by prison staff. Two of the prisons had developed partnerships with voluntary sector organisations to support volunteer recruitment.

For more details see the case studies from
HMP The Mount
HMP/YOI Parc
HMP Whatton

In these prisons arrangements for volunteer management were formalised and defined, though they were not always gathered together in a single volunteering policy. While it also appeared that prisons reported having experienced some of the same barriers to volunteering described in section 3.2, they found that by working to coordinate volunteering at a whole-prison level, they had been able to deal with some issues. It appears that where prisons have taken steps to develop an infrastructure for volunteering, people volunteering through voluntary sector organisations also benefit from a reduction in barriers to volunteering.

Befriending and mentoring

Many volunteering programmes arrange personalised support through befriending and mentoring, most commonly to support prisoners before and after their release. An identified strength of these mentoring schemes was that they appeared to involve more diverse volunteers. Mentoring roles do not usually require volunteers to have a high level of access to the prison, and also appear to give volunteers more control over the time commitment they are making:

- mentoring involves meetings between two individuals, which are easier to organise than classes or group meetings
- much resettlement mentoring takes place in the community after release and can be done more flexibly than meeting in prison
- while volunteers make a large time commitment during the period when they are mentoring, they do not necessarily have a mentee assigned to them at all times.

Two of the organisations which provided case studies said that they arrange for mentors to meet prisoners through legal visits, which removes the requirement for volunteers to gain NOMS security clearance.[11]

Mentoring also appears from the interviews and case studies to be relatively well supported and understood by prison staff to contribute to the prisons' overall work. Nevertheless, two of the three organisations which provided mentoring case studies said it was essential to base their own staff within the prison. This enabled them to build good working relationships with staff, leaving volunteers free to focus on their mentees.

For more details see the case studies from

- Feltham Community Chaplaincy Trust
- Mosaic
- Trailblazers

The fact that mentoring is widespread appears to have led to the creation of generic volunteer management resources from, for example, the Befriending and Mentoring Foundation and the Community Chaplaincy Association. These off the shelf resources appear to support high-quality volunteer training and to allow the easy adoption of developed good practice models.

Friends organisations

Some prisons have organisations of Friends, comprising volunteers from the local community, who support the prison's work. Trustees from three Friends organisations were interviewed, and we visited the prisons where two of these organisations operated.[12]

The Friends organisations interviewed all focused on one prison, did not employ staff, and raised money in the local community. Their activities were diverse and guided by local need, but generally involved local fundraising for specific initiatives inside the prison. Two Friends organisations made small resettlement grants to individual prisoners, and all three funded activities connected with the prisons' provision for family visits. The volunteering infrastructure within the Friends organisations interviewed was not highly formalised, but the Friends groups themselves, and staff from the prisons they served, said these arrangements fostered links with the local community.

Visits and families work

Volunteers are often involved in prisons visits and families' services.

Four organisations provided case studies of this type of work

- HACRO and HMP The Mount
- Pact
- HMP/YOI Parc
- Spurgeons

Six further interviews were with staff managing volunteers in similar work. Roles typically included staffing a visitor centre outside the prison walls, the tea bar in a visits hall inside, and play work with prisoners' children.

Organisations of this kind usually involve large numbers of volunteers, and as a consequence have developed good practice to recruit volunteers in volume. Typically, they are used to support family visits at fixed, regular times. Some roles take place outside the prison walls. This means that some volunteers do not require NOMS security clearance, which reduces the time between applying and taking up the role.[13]

Organisations in this category, for example the case studies by Pact and Spurgeons typically reported having some volunteers who were students, and others who fitted their volunteering around paid employment. The Clinks survey suggests this is less common in other types of roles (see section 4.3 below).

There are many examples of volunteering good practice in work with families and visits. Similar to good practice in befriending and mentoring, there is partnership, collaboration and sharing between similar organisations.

Specialist volunteering schemes

Voluntary sector organisations are commissioned or contracted to undertake work in prisons. These organisations typically involved volunteers in more specialised roles. Volunteers who undertake this work often continue to do so for a number of years, gaining experience in one or more prisons. The level of commitment required may make these roles less accessible to people who are in paid employment. These roles typically involve working closely with prison staff in order to deliver an intervention in the prison.

The organisations in this category which provided case studies include

- Samaritans
- Shannon Trust
- Fine Cell Work

Organisations in this category had typically developed a range of resources and procedures to support volunteering, volunteer supervision, and well-defined and extensive volunteering infrastructure. They also described how they recruited experienced volunteers to support roles supervising other volunteers, sometimes in more than one prison.

The adoption of national agreements with NOMS was identified by both Samaritans and Shannon Trust to have greatly supported the work of their volunteers, particularly because these created a clear expectation for each party and defined procedures to resolve problems and disputes. Fine Cell Work has similar agreements with individual prisons. The structure offered by these agreements represents an area of good practice which could be used to support other volunteering roles.

Good practice in recruiting diverse volunteers

Although the survey indicated a lack of diversity among prison volunteers in terms of their age, ethnicity and employment status (see p.34-35), some organisations among the interviewees and case studies reported far greater levels of diversity among their volunteers.

For example, only 20% of Feltham Community Chaplaincy Trust's volunteers are white, with 80% coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. Another London community chaplaincy interviewed said that around 40% of their volunteers were recruited from the local Muslim community. Case studies from both Pact and Spurgeons demonstrate that it is possible to recruit large numbers of volunteers who are younger and in employment or education.

The interviews and case studies which explored this theme showed that organisations with more diverse volunteers, especially in age and employment status, tended to recruit more proactively and did not rely only on word of mouth. They shared several features in common:

- they do outreach and promotional work with local communities
- they develop links with local organisations and community groups such as universities and/or places of worship
- they offer roles which involve a lesser time commitment and/or which partially take place outside the prison
- they were in large urban areas with a dense and diverse population
- they served prisons which had good transport links.

Some of these factors are dependent on prison location, which implies that recruiting a more diverse volunteer base may be more of a challenge for some establishments. Nevertheless, the success of active recruitment through outreach suggests that it is good practice to devote resources to recruitment and not simply to rely on word of mouth.

4.3. Gaps in good practice

Differences in the infrastructure supporting volunteering

Guidance on good practice in volunteering is mostly aspirational. It can be substantially different from the practice actually employed, which is determined by a range of factors including the resources available to plan and manage volunteer involvement. The implementation of good practice must be coordinated at a whole-organisation level (see Figure 8 on page 26). Coordination of this sort could be expected to result in the formation of a body of resources and processes, which may be brought together as a volunteering policy. In practice, the survey suggests that the existence of these procedures varies.

To investigate the prevalence of different aspects of good practice across the prison estate, volunteer managers in the Clinks survey were asked two questions on these issues. The first question presented a selection of resources and asked volunteer managers to say whether they thought these were essential, desirable or unimportant (see Table 2).

While very few respondents saw any of the good practice resources as unimportant, views as to what was desirable or essential varied. More voluntary sector staff than prison staff rated these resources as being essential. The only resource rated as essential by a similar proportion of both groups was training before volunteers start work in prisons, which more than 80% of both groups saw as essential.

Another survey question asked volunteer managers to identify which resources were in place within the organisation (see Table 3). The frequency of responses to this question again suggests that there are differences between the voluntary sector and prisons, both in terms of of the resources and processes they deploy to support volunteering.

Table 2: Responses by volunteer managers in the Clinks survey about what processes and structures are necessary to support volunteering

	Voluntary sector respondents (n = 51)			Prison respondents (n = 42)		
	Unimportant	Desirable	Essential	Unimportant	Desirable	Essential
Written role descriptions for volunteer roles	4%	22%	75%	5%	64%	31%
A written volunteer agreement/code of conduct, specifying dos and don'ts	4%	8%	88%	2%	37%	61%
An organisation-wide Volunteering Strategy	6%	37%	57%	14%	60%	26%
An organisation-wide Volunteering Policy	6%	24%	71%	15%	54%	32%
Training for volunteers before they start working in prison	6%	8%	86%	0%	20%	80%
Regular volunteer meetings/supervision sessions	4%	18%	78%	2%	60%	38%
Events or other organised means of thanking volunteers/recognising their contribution	4%	29%	67%	5%	45%	50%
A named member of staff responsible for volunteer coordination/management	4%	14%	82%	2%	40%	57%
Training for staff on working with volunteers	4%	46%	50%	2%	74%	24%

Table 3: Responses by volunteer managers in the Clinks survey about what processes and structures are currently in place to support volunteering in their organisation

	Voluntary sector respondents (n = 51)	Prison respondents (n = 41)	Average
Written role descriptions for volunteer roles	86%	20%	53%
A written volunteer agreement/code of conduct, specifying dos and don'ts	86%	51%	69%
An organisation-wide Volunteering Strategy	59%	2%	31%
An organisation-wide Volunteering Policy	75%	7%	41%
Training for volunteers before they start working in prison	94%	73%	84%
Regular volunteer meetings/supervision sessions	86%	51%	69%
Events or other organised means of thanking volunteers/ recognising their contribution	80%	44%	62%
A named member of staff responsible for volunteer coordination/management	84%	63%	74%
Training for staff on working with volunteers	37%	7%	22%

Responses to this section of the survey suggest:

- that the voluntary sector may see a wider range of resources as necessary to support volunteering
- compliance with published good practice guidance on volunteer management may be more widespread in the voluntary sector than in prisons
- prison staff who manage volunteers do not consider some components of published good practice guidance to be essential.

The survey also suggests that not all organisations use a volunteering policy. As shown in Table 3, 75% of voluntary sector volunteer managers said their organisation had one, compared with 7% of volunteer managers employed by a prison.[14]

While there is localised good practice in volunteering, both in prisons and in the voluntary sector, there are also gaps. Further investigation is required to understand the reasons for the different levels of volunteering infrastructure in prisons as compared to the voluntary sector.

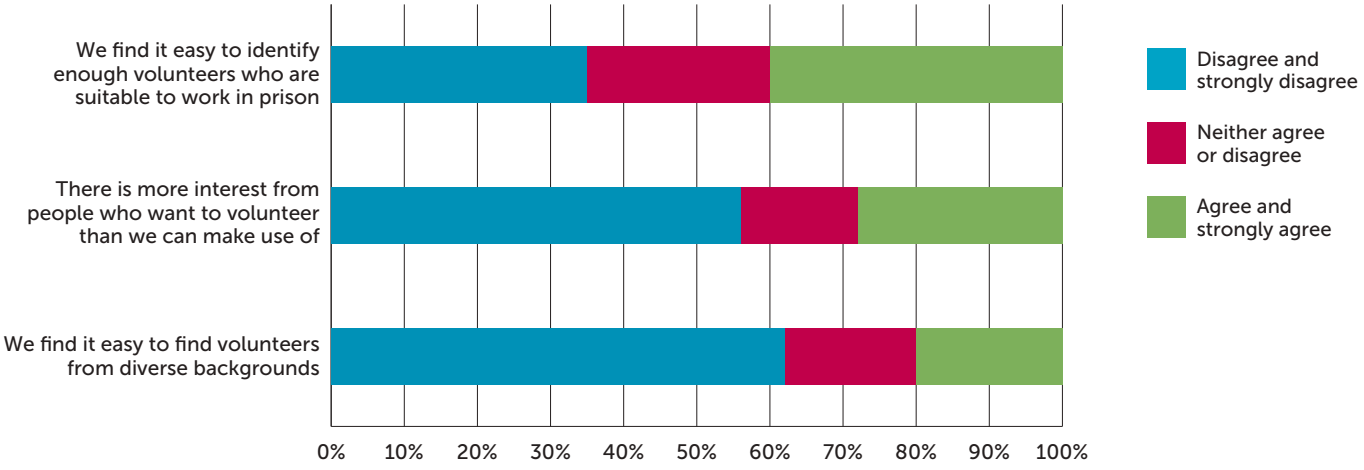
Challenges in volunteer recruitment

The survey identified that organisations can find it challenging to recruit volunteers (see section 3.2). Volunteer managers were asked how far they agreed with statements relating to volunteer recruitment (Figure 9).

A minority of respondents (20%) believed that it was easy to recruit volunteers from diverse backgrounds, while the majority (57%) disagreed that there was more interest from volunteers than their organisation could make use of. Prison staff responding to this question more frequently reported difficulties with volunteer management than voluntary sector staff.

Recruitment clearly poses a challenge, particularly if a specific infrastructure to proactively seek and sift volunteer applications has not been developed. This understanding was supported by the interviews, in which interviewees who had been asked to describe how they recruited volunteers also referred to the amount of time and effort this involved.

Figure 9: Volunteer managers in the Clinks survey (n = 90) on volunteer recruitment



The case studies from, for example, HACRO/ HMP The Mount, Spurgeons and HMP Whatton all outline the time and effort that is needed for robust recruitment procedures. Recruitment appears to be more difficult where prisons are in remote locations or where large numbers of prisons exist in relatively close proximity.

Prisons also find it challenging to recruit volunteers to roles they manage. Four of the 16 prisons which were visited or provided case studies, said that they had developed specific procedures to advertise for volunteers in roles such as Official Prison Visitors.

Where these procedures did not exist, other prisons had had some success recruiting volunteers through word of mouth. Word of mouth can be a powerful recruitment tool but on its own, is not good practice because it is unlikely to lead to organisations actively seeking to involve volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community.

CLINKS CASE STUDY

For more details see the case studies from

- **HACRO and HMP The Mount**
- **Spurgeons**
- **HMP Whatton**

'The prison expects that same level of training for volunteers as it does for staff... I understand that this is needed for volunteers who will work alone or draw keys but feel that there should be different levels of training for volunteers who will not draw keys or be left alone at any point as they come under the responsibility of the trained staff member'

Prison chaplain and volunteer manager

Low levels of diversity among prison volunteers

Recruiting for diversity appears to be an important gap in good practice across prison volunteering as a whole, though localised exceptions are described.

The survey responses suggest that the majority of prison volunteering is done by people from a relatively narrow range of backgrounds (see Figures 10, 12 and 14). Of the 627 prison volunteers responding to our survey, the majority were white (93%), aged 55 or over (76%), and retired or not currently in paid work (69%). This contrasts with the prison population as a whole, 26% of which is from a minority ethnic background, and 14% of which is aged 50 and over.[15] It also contrasts with figures on formal volunteering from the 2014/15 Community Life Survey (Figures 11, 13 and 15), which suggested that the predominance among prison volunteers of people who are older, retired, and white is greater than might be expected.

A total of 17 interviewees mentioned difficulties recruiting volunteers from diverse backgrounds, and attributed this to several factors:

- poor transport links to some prisons
- difficulties funding volunteer travel expenses
- less diverse local populations in the areas surrounding some prisons
- stigma surrounding some kinds of offending
- the requirement for volunteers to make a substantial time commitment
- the tendency to rely on word of mouth recruitment
- the tendency towards long service and the limited rotation of volunteer roles, which means that organisations do not frequently make vacancies which could be filled by new volunteers.

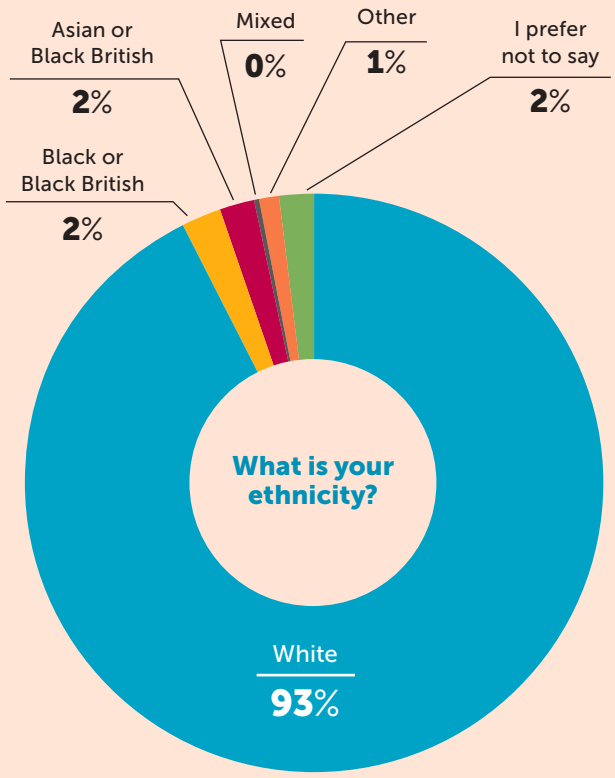


Figure 10: The ethnic background of prison volunteers in the Clinks survey (n = 627)

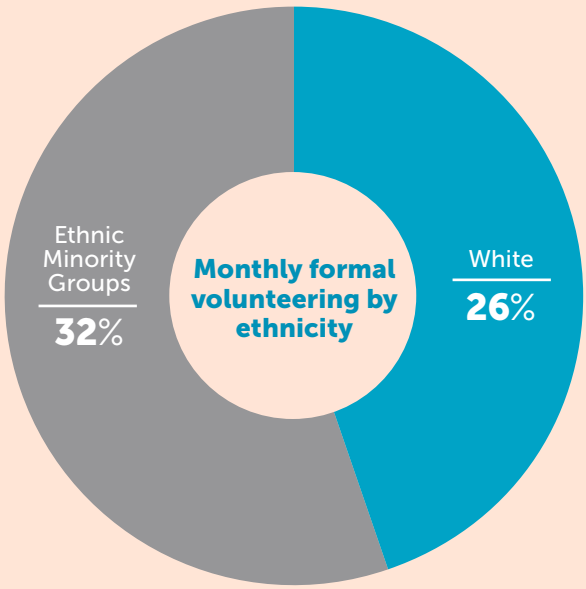


Figure 11: Participation in monthly formal volunteering by ethnicity (Source: UK Community Life Survey, 2014/15)

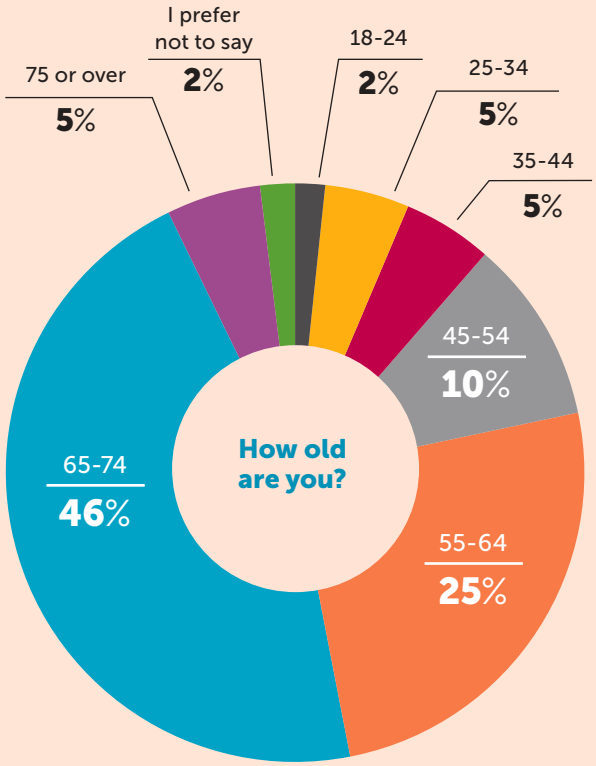


Figure 12: The age profile of volunteers in the Clinks survey (n = 627)

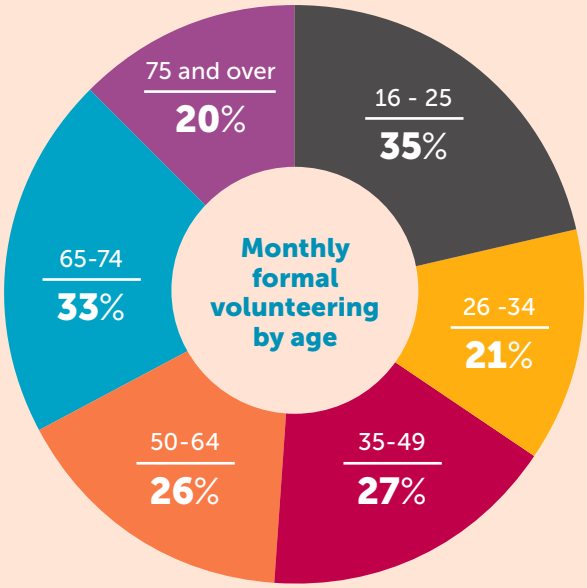


Figure 13: Participation in monthly formal volunteering by age (Source: UK Community Life Survey, 2014/15)

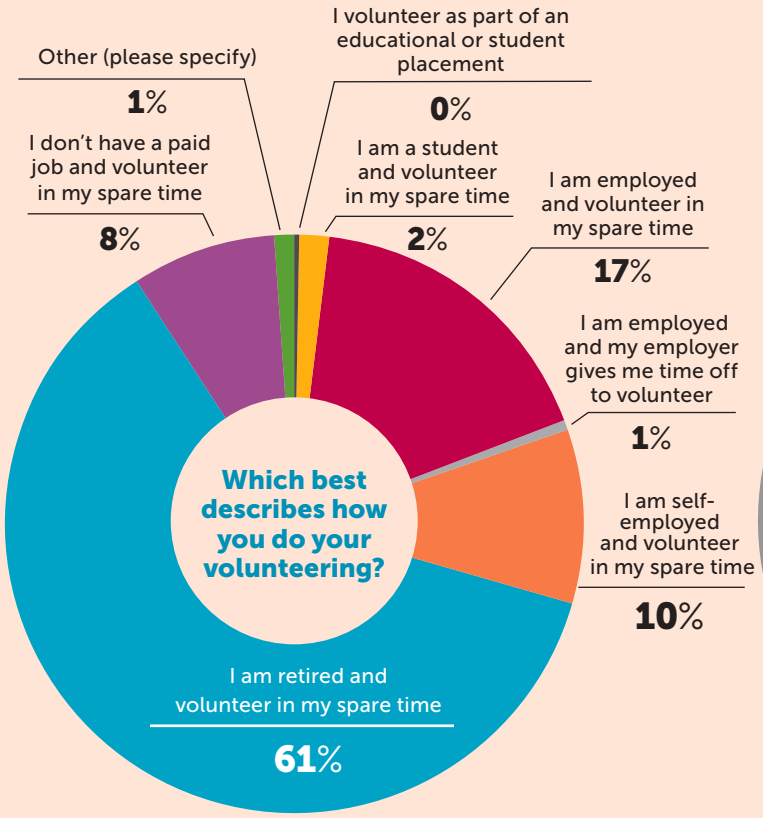


Figure 14: The employment status of volunteers in the Clinks survey (n = 616)

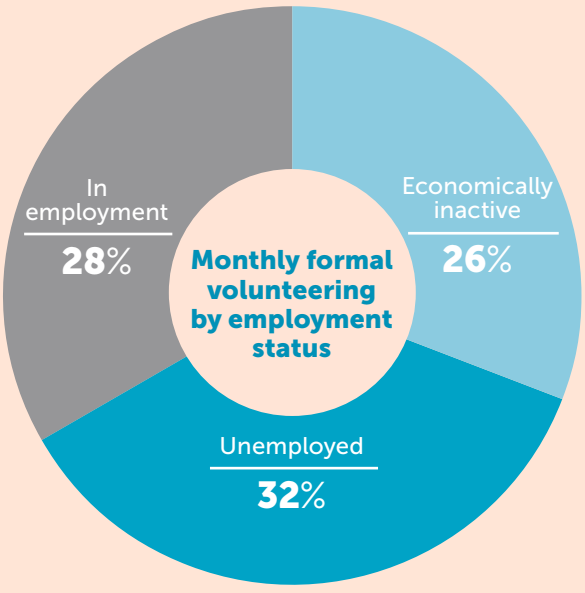


Figure 15: Participation in monthly formal volunteering by employment status (Source: UK Community Life Survey, 2014/15)

5

What actions would support the development of more effective volunteering?

5.1. Conclusions

Prisons are, by definition, closed environments. Volunteering can help to increase, what one prison governor interviewed described as the 'porosity of the prison perimeter', by promoting the involvement of the local community in the rehabilitative work that the prison carries out. Such involvement offers the chance for society to convey the message to prisoners that they are still seen as part of the community, and still have a part to play.

Prisons are complex and unfamiliar settings for volunteering. For that reason, it requires careful oversight at the strategic and operational levels. Strategic oversight is needed to ensure that volunteers are integrated with the prison's work, to overcome barriers and to develop greater flexibility for volunteers. Operational support is needed to let volunteers learn the environment, leading in turn to prison staff having more confidence and trust in their activities. When strategic and operational support for volunteering is combined it results in good practice and innovation.

Our research suggests that both prisons and voluntary sector organisations have taken a variety of approaches to managing volunteers. Despite great variety among the methods employed and the scope of volunteer roles, they have both developed examples of good practice. We have identified three actions to support more effective volunteering:

1. **Clear roles should be identified for volunteers, and their work should be strategically integrated.**
2. **Prisons and their partners should proactively recruit volunteers from as diverse a base as possible.**
3. **Volunteering should receive a consistent level of coordination and support.**

5.2. Actions to support more effective volunteering

Clear roles should be identified for volunteers, and their work should be strategically integrated

1. In consultation with local partners, individual prisons should identify areas across their provision where they believe volunteer involvement could enhance their work.
2. Individual prisons should define their own minimum standards for the training, management and supervision of volunteers in a volunteering policy. The policy should use existing good practice and successful volunteering already taking place in the prison as their model where possible.

Prisons and their partners should proactively recruit volunteers from as diverse a base as possible

3. Mechanisms should be developed so that prisons can clearly communicate with local organisations which could help meet the need for services delivered by volunteers.
4. The number, role and diversity of volunteers involved in individual prisons should be recorded in order to create a benchmark against which future volunteer involvement can regularly be judged.
5. All organisations involving volunteers in prison should take steps to publicise and celebrate their achievements and the benefits of volunteering, with a view to encouraging greater volunteer involvement.

Volunteering should receive a consistent level of coordination and support

6. Individual prisons should establish their own clear volunteering strategies and volunteering policies in consultation with organisations that involve or support volunteers. This should result in the identification of resources that will be used to support volunteering and clear expectations for what different stakeholders can expect.
7. Individual prisons should review their security vetting and induction training arrangements in order to make them as volunteer-friendly as possible. Guidance and training should be given to staff and outside organisations to ensure partner organisations can share responsibility for their volunteers completing applications correctly.

6

Appendices

6.1. Appendix 1: Summary of published good practice guidance

Source	NOMS (2005), Volunteering: A guide to good practice for prisons[16]	Clinks & Volunteering England (2010), Managing Volunteers[17]	UK Volunteering Forum (2014), Investing in Volunteers Standard[18]
Criminal justice specific guidance	✓	✓	✗
Creation of a volunteering policy	✓	✓	✓
Written descriptions of volunteer roles	✓	✓	✓
Definition of staff/volunteer relations	✗	✓	✓
Defined processes and responsibility for recruitment and selection	✓	✓	✓
Recruitment/selection to explore the volunteer's motivations	✓	✓	✓
Defined processes and responsibility for screening suitable volunteers	✓	✓	✓
Support with vetting applications	✓	✓	N/A
Volunteer induction training	✓	✓	✓
Volunteer agreements	✓	✓	✓
Support, supervision and management by a named staff member	✓	✓	✓
Commitment to volunteer diversity reflecting local community	✓	✓	✓
Policy covering payment of volunteer expenses	✓	✓	✓
Defined confidentiality policy	✓	✓	✓
Problem solving/complaints procedures	✓	✓	✓
Regular review of volunteer roles and policies	✓	✓	✓
Defined monitoring and evaluation of volunteering	✓	✓	✓
Definition of insurance covering volunteers	✓	✓	✓
Data protection statement	✓	✓	✓
Arrangements to thank volunteers for their contribution	✓	✓	✓

6.2. Appendix 2: Methodology

Data collection

Data was collected through the following means.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted through a combination of telephone and face-to-face interviews in 12 prisons with 13 volunteers, 31 prison staff and 30 members of voluntary sector staff.[19] The prisons and projects visited were selected by means of an open callout through Clinks' networks. Projects visited were those that responded, or were suggested to us as locations where interesting volunteering practice was taking place. The last two prisons visited were selected to broaden the range of prisons covered by the first ten visits, and because they appeared to have lower levels of volunteer involvement.

Case studies of good practice

Fourteen case studies were commissioned via an open callout, each from a different organisation that involves volunteers in its work.[20] Twenty one organisations expressed an interest in providing a case study. The organisations selected were chosen by Clinks to give examples of a diverse range of volunteering managed by organisations of different sizes and from different sectors, including prisons themselves. Providers of case studies were asked to describe their experience of establishing prison volunteering projects, including any barriers encountered. The full case studies have been edited for publication and published separately. This report also draws on them as illustrative examples.

Service user focus groups

Five service user focus groups were held to consult service users about their perspective on volunteering. User Voice was selected to deliver these focus groups due to their track record of service user engagement in the Criminal Justice System and their extensive pre-existing consultative groups in prisons and in probation services.[21] Two focus groups were held in male prisons: one category C training prison and one category B local prison. These groups engaged a total of 20 participants. Two focus groups were held with people currently on probation (ten male and three female). A final focus group consisted of three male and three female participants, all of whom were ex-prisoners who had themselves tried to volunteer in prison after the end of their sentences.[22] The locations were prisons and Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) where User Voice was already working, already working. Participants were selected using a sampling frame. These focus groups were conducted to ask current and ex-prisoners about their experience of working with volunteers.

An online survey

An online survey posed separate sets of questions to volunteers, volunteer managers, and prison staff. The questions were written based on the issues that emerged from a preliminary thematic analysis of data from the interviews, and to gather quantitative data on the experience of volunteers in prison and the kind of infrastructure used to support their work. The survey was completed by 627 volunteers, 119 volunteer managers, and 80 members of prison staff. Respondents worked in 121 different prisons in England and Wales.[23]

Data analysis

Notes from the interviews were analysed thematically using a framework analysis. Notes from the interviews and visits, as well as the emerging results of the framework analysis, were also used to identify key themes that would need to be covered by the survey and the case studies.

The case studies were also analysed thematically, with selections made from them to illustrate recommendations and findings in the report. The bulk of the questions in the online survey were aimed at obtaining quantitative data to further examine the themes identified through the interviews. This was achieved mostly by using Likert scale questions.

There were a total of 52 questions in the online survey. Questions 1-4 were for all respondents and gathered basic demographic information. Questions 5 to 26 were for volunteers only. Questions 27 to 38 were for volunteer managers only. Questions 29 to

49 were only for prison staff who did not manage volunteers. Questions 50 to 52 were optional free-response questions asked to all respondents. All respondents answered fewer than the full set of questions, because certain questions were only shown to respondents who had given specific answers to earlier questions. 81% of respondents completed all questions that were asked of them with the remaining 19% skipping some questions.

A descriptive quantitative analysis of the survey responses was carried out, and answers to the free-response questions at the end were categorised thematically. For a small number of questions, descriptive quantitative analysis of the survey responses was conducted to compare answers to some questions by different respondent groups. This analysis led to Tables 2 and 3 in section 4.3.

The focus groups were analysed thematically using a framework analysis to identify emerging themes and evidence of participants' attitudes towards working with volunteers.

6.3. Appendix 3: Limitations

The following limitations must be taken into account when considering the conclusions and recommendations in this report.

The survey sample

The survey data draws on responses from 627 volunteers, with at least one volunteer from all but eight of the 121 prisons in England and Wales. Responses were received from 119 members of staff (45 employed by prisons and 74 by voluntary sector organisations) who said they were directly responsible for recruiting, training and managing volunteers. We received responses from another 80 prison staff members who said they had contact with volunteers but were not directly responsible for recruiting, training, or managing them. Not all respondents completed all of the questions relevant to their role, but a pilot of the survey did not give reason to believe that this was the result of respondent fatigue.

As far as we have been able to tell, this is the largest survey conducted to investigate prison volunteering in general. However, we have not been able to find any comprehensive statistics relating to the numbers or demographic composition of volunteers working across the whole prison system. Neither individual prisons nor NOMS keep records which could be used to establish the representativeness of our sample.[24] This makes it impossible to measure the representativeness of our survey against the general population of prison volunteers as a whole. The discussion in section 4 regarding volunteer diversity, compares data from the Clinks survey with data on formal volunteering from the 2014/15 UK Community Life Survey, but these comparisons are indicative.

It was also the case that 51% of the volunteers who completed the survey were IMB members. This is not surprising given their overall numbers. However, their roles are very different to those of most other volunteers, leading to the possibility that their experience of volunteering may also be different.

The lack of pre-existing data about how many volunteers are operating in any given prison, or about their characteristics, meant it was not possible to target the questionnaire by selecting prisons as being low volunteering or high volunteering establishments. This means that the survey was not targeted at a specific group or specific establishments.

While the number of survey responses to the survey overall outstripped our expectations (200-300 responses expected), and this goes some way to giving confidence in the results, further data would be required in order to firmly establish the representativeness of respondents. Understanding of this limitation lies behind recommendation 4 above.

Data from interviews and case studies

Interviews and case studies were conducted in order to capture the experiences of people who had established volunteering programmes in a prison setting, and to gather information about the challenges involved in this. Information from the interviews was fully analysed using a framework analysis.

Our concern was to ensure that the evidence covered the full range of experiences, including problems and barriers. There was a risk that interviewees and case study providers would hold back information if it would be perceived to damage their working relationships with particular prisons.

During interviews, these limitations were mitigated by explaining to interviewees that their responses would be anonymised. Interviewees disclosed a wide range of positives and negatives in their answers. However, their self-selection does give reason to believe that some groups were under-represented. There are two main examples. Firstly, almost none of the interviewees had extensive experience of trying to involve ex-prisoners as volunteers. Secondly, no Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) responded to our call for evidence for this project. Two independent organisations in CRC supply chains said they preferred not to speak with us about their CRC work without first consulting the CRCs (even if their responses would be anonymous, and they were not able to get a positive response within the necessary timeframe). This means that volunteering in CRC supply chains and programmes using ex-prisoners as volunteers may be under-represented in this report.

The case studies were intended to both inform this report and to gather examples of different volunteering practice that could be published separately. It was therefore decided to name the organisation that produced them. In order to encourage the disclosure of as full a range of experience as possible, we provided each organisation with a checklist of areas that the case studies should cover. The resulting case studies do offer a range of information relating to barriers as well as to successes.

However, the coverage of problems and challenges is fuller in some case studies than in others. One organisation selected to provide a case study subsequently withdrew from the research, citing their concerns that covering barriers and difficulties could damage their working relationships with prison staff where they operated. This suggests that these worries were a consideration for some organisations. However, the comparison of data concerning barriers from the case studies and the interviews with information from the survey does suggest that the project as a whole gathered firm evidence about the factors supporting and hindering volunteering.

Service user focus groups

Participants in the service user focus groups were selected using a sampling framework but arrangements for both prison groups were cancelled by the prison last minute meaning the groups had to be arranged again at short notice. This meant that only some of the selected participants could take-part, and others who participated in the prison groups self-selected. As a result it is not possible to say that the focus group participants were representative of the offender population as a whole.

6.4. Endnotes

1. The report does not focus on peer volunteering by serving prisoners.
2. These respondents were staff members from voluntary sector organisations and prisons who said they were directly responsible for recruiting, training or managing volunteers.
3. This question was answered by prison staff who said they were not directly responsible for recruiting, training or managing volunteers, but who came into contact with them. 64% of respondents to this question were staff at governor grade. 25 of the interviews with prison staff were with governors or chaplains, as compared to four interviews with operational staff. This means that the benefits of volunteering for prisons described here may under-represent the views of uniformed and operational staff.
4. A key talk is the common name given to the security awareness and key training given by prisons to new volunteers and members of staff.
5. By contrast, the government's 'Community Life Survey for 2014/15' indicated that only 27% of people participated in formal volunteering at least once a month. If 49% of prison volunteers carry out their roles at least once a week, this suggests that their time commitment is towards the upper end of the scale compared to volunteering overall. See https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/447010/Community_Life_Survey_2014-15_Bulletin.pdf, p. 7.
6. Counter Terrorist Check (CTC) clearance is required for all staff and volunteers in high-security prisons, and some volunteers working elsewhere.
7. Standard Plus is a special level of clearance created to enable people to volunteer whose past convictions might prevent them passing the normal levels of security vetting. 223 applications for Standard Plus were made between its creation in November 2012 and February 2016.
8. Vetting does, in fact, involve individual checks and a decision made on an individual basis, indicating that these potential volunteers misunderstood the purpose and nature of vetting.
9. This is the equivalent of around seven OPVs for each prison in England and Wales, but some prisons have larger numbers than others, and some have none.
10. This does not include roles for volunteers organised by voluntary sector organisations. The prisons were HMP The Mount, HMP/YOI Parc, HMP Whatton (which all provided case studies) and HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall (which was visited as part of the project).
11. However, there were also said to be drawbacks to using legal visits in this way (for example, the case study by Mosaic).
12. In one of these visits the Friends nominated staff contact was unable to attend the meeting that had been arranged, so we only spoke to prison staff in one prison about the Friends activities there.
13. Volunteers in roles working with children will still need an enhanced DBS certificate.
14. Another question in the survey (asked to prison staff who did not directly manage volunteers) also suggested that wider staff levels of awareness of volunteering policies are low where they do exist. In the survey, 74% of 62 prison staff not managing volunteers said either that their prison did not have a volunteering policy, or that they did not know.
15. Prison Reform Trust (2015), Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile, www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Publications/Factfile
16. Not currently available online.
17. Available from http://www.clinks.org/vol_guides.
18 Available from http://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk.
19. Where interviews have been used in this report, they have not been attributed to identifiable individuals.
20. Case study participants were given a structured checklist of topics, and asked to cover those relevant to their work.
21. The focus groups were analysed thematically using a framework analysis to identify emerging themes and evidence of participants' attitudes towards working with volunteers.
22. Some had found after coming forward that they were unable to volunteer for various reasons. Others had successfully volunteered, for example in mentoring roles.
23. The survey was piloted before final distribution. The survey link was distributed to Clinks' list of around 10,000 contacts. All interviewees were asked to distribute the link to their staff and volunteers as well. We also sent out a link to the survey via the NOMS Senior Leaders Bulletin, and via the NOMS intranet. Descriptive quantitative analysis of the survey responses was carried out, with further thematic analysis of some open-ended questions. Some further quantitative analysis was carried out to enable comparisons between volunteers and volunteer managers working for voluntary sector organisations and for prisons. Responses from prisons not within the scope of the project (e.g. outside England and Wales) were excluded from the analysis.
24. NOMS' Security Vetting Services team told us that diversity monitoring information is collected from vetting applicants. However, the questions used for this are optional and are not completed by all applicants, and in any case are not subdivided so that volunteer applicants could be separated from staff.

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