EVALUATING VOLUNTEER IMPACT

doing volunteering justice

THE VOLUNTEERING RELATIONSHIP: WHAT WORKS?

Perspectives from Clinks' Volunteering & Mentoring programme

CLINKS

supporting voluntary organisations that work with offenders and their families

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CLINKS

Clinks is a national organisation that supports the work that Voluntary and Community Sector organisations undertake within the Criminal Justice System of England and Wales. Clinks' vision is of a vibrant and independent Voluntary and Community Sector working with informed and engaged communities to enable the rehabilitation of offenders for the benefit of society.

www.clinks.org

Contents

Written by Ben Jarman | Published by Clinks, © 2012

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Here are just some of the roles that volunteers undertake within the Criminal Justice System...

Youth justice

- Appropriate adult
- Mentor
- Youth Offender Panel member

Restorative justice

- Victim-offender mediator
- Family group conference facilitator
- Community Justice Panel member

Victims

- Witness Service volunteers in Crown and Magistrates' Courts
- Victim Support volunteer
- Helpline advisor
- Counselling

Probation

- Probation Board member
- Teaching literacy and numeracy volunteer tutor
- Supporting training courses
- Mentor
- Probation volunteer

Prisons

- Official prison visitor
- Custody visitor
- Prison visitors' centre (support and advice, assisting with practical tasks)
- Play worker for children during prison visits
- Literacy, numeracy and basic skills volunteer tutor
- Chaplaincy (from the main world faiths)
- Volunteer orchestra leader

Police

- Special Constable
- Police Cadet
- Independent custody visitors
- Police support volunteer
- Crimestoppers volunteer
- Crime Prevention Panel member
- Diamond Initiative volunteer

Other

- Independent Monitoring Board member
- MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) lay advisor
- Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator
- Magistrate or Justice of the Peace
- Providing helpdesks in Magistrates' Courts
- Raising awareness of Prisons Week and Prisoners' Sunday
- Community Chaplain
- Circles of Support member (working with sex offenders to reduce the risk of re-offending)
- Fundraiser for charities and voluntary and community organisations that support offenders, ex-offenders, prisoners, those at risk of offending or the victims of crime
- Volunteer for charities and voluntary and community organisations that support offenders, ex-offenders, prisoners, those at risk of offending or the victims of crime
- Campaigner
- Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel member
- Educating young people and promoting preventative measures
- Courts Board member
- Community Justice Panel member
- LCJB (Local Criminal Justice Boards) Independent Advisory Group member
- Trustee

Volunteer roles for prisoners

- Participating in park regeneration schemes
- Providing Braille transcriptions for blind people
- Creating artworks for hospices
- Making wheelchairs
- Citizens' Advisor (in conjunction with Citizens Advice Bureau)
- Peer-advisers
- The Samaritans listeners
- Acting in plays
- Timebanking

1 About this publication

This publication gives diverse perspectives on volunteering, based on interviews with a range of stakeholders. It makes the case for involving volunteers in work with offenders.

If you work for a **Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) or a campaigning organisation**, the information here may help you with funding applications, or in thinking about how and when to involve volunteers in your work. The material here may also help make the case that volunteers help to change public perceptions of offenders and reintegrate them to the community.

If you work for a **statutory or private sector organisation**, the information here may show you some examples of how the involvement of volunteers can help you to carry out your work more effectively.

2 Clinks' Volunteering & Mentoring programme

Clinks supports the Voluntary and Community Sector working with offenders in England and Wales. Our aim is to ensure that the sector and all those with whom it works are informed and engaged, in order to transform the lives of offenders and their communities.

Since 2008 Clinks has promoted best practice among volunteer-involving VCS organisations through its programme, which is guided by a Volunteering and Mentoring Network steering group consisting of organisations in the sector. We have also produced a set of best practice guides for organisations that involve volutneers, and have published good practice resources and a set of evaluation tools for use by volunteer-involving projects.

In the course of this work we have talked to many people about the impact made by volunteers. In particular, during the first half of 2012, we tested the draft evaluation tools through pilot evaluations conducted with four Clinks member organisations. We conducted in-depth interviews about the impact of volunteering with 54 people who work with volunteers, including:

- 29 offenders and ex-offenders, including twenty serving prisoners (several of whom also volunteer to mentor other prisoners)
- 14 members of prison, probation or police staff
- Seven members of VCS staff
- Four members of the public who volunteer in prisons
- In addition, we also conducted surveys on behalf of our partner organisations, collecting data from:
  - 25 offenders and ex-offenders currently working with volunteer mentors in the community
  - 32 members of the public who volunteer in prisons

This publication shares some of the insights we have gained from this work. In particular, we highlight the contrasting insights given by service users and volunteers into why the volunteer relationship is so important. We also make suggestions for how these findings should influence the design and co-ordination of volunteer-involving services.

> *"I've never felt as confident in myself in my life as when I was being mentored by the volunteer. I've been in and out of jail all my life. I was met at the gate. I didn't go to the pub, I went to the caff. Then we went straight to the social, got all that sorted out, everything. If I hadn't been met at the gate, I'd have gone on the piss. Definitely. I was an alcoholic. And once you've had that first drink..."*
>
> *Ex-prisoner, Sussex*

3 Who we worked with

Fine Cell Work is a charity and social enterprise that trains prisoners in paid, skilled, creative needlework to foster hope, discipline and self-esteem. This helps them to connect to society and to leave prison with the confidence and financial means to stop offending. 60 volunteers now train around 400 prisoners in 29 prisons across England, Scotland and Wales. Prisoners also volunteer informally as a result of this work, helping to support and teach each other inside prison, and in some cases running informal 'taster' sessions to demonstrate their work to other prisoners.

Southside Partnership runs the Beyond Prison project, which trains ex-offenders to volunteer as peer mentors, supporting prisoners immediately before and after their release. At HMP The Mount, prisoners currently serving long sentences have been trained to act as peer mentors within the prison. They are trained to identify and assess other prisoners approaching their release date, who have learning difficulties or mental health needs, and referring them for resettlement mentoring in the main Beyond Prison programme.

Sussex Pathways is a community chaplaincy that trains and support volunteer mentors, who themselves work with released prisoners to ease their transition from custody to the community. Ex-prisoners are mentored from up to six weeks before their release, and are then met at the gate and supported in the community for up to six months. Mentors support the ex-prisoner they work with and also signpost them to relevant local services, working towards targets agreed by both sides.

YSS is a charity that supports children, young people, adults and families who are vulnerable and have complex needs. It works with clients referred, through a variety of projects, by West Mercia Probation Trust, supporting them back into the community. Volunteers are used to support paid key workers or to continue working with a client if they still need support after the time period specified by their probation order has expired. Staff are seconded from YSS to probation or the police, and vice versa. Clinks held three separate focus groups: one with service users, one with offender managers, and one with YSS staff. We then surveyed service users about their attitudes towards working with volunteers.

4 Volunteering: good for offenders and ex-offenders

Volunteers are independent of the Criminal Justice System and do not represent it. They add to what is already available and ensure that service users receive a different quantity and quality of support, adding to levels of trust, engagement and motivation, especially when working with people who are disillusioned and feel that they have been let down in the past.

YSS

Ex-offenders being supported in the community by YSS told us that they valued the additional support they receive from volunteers, often simply because it represents extra help. But they also often said that the fact that the volunteer is not paid makes the support especially meaningful and motivating. Commonly they referred to the fact that volunteers were not paid as evidence that their motivations and desire to help could be trusted more easily.

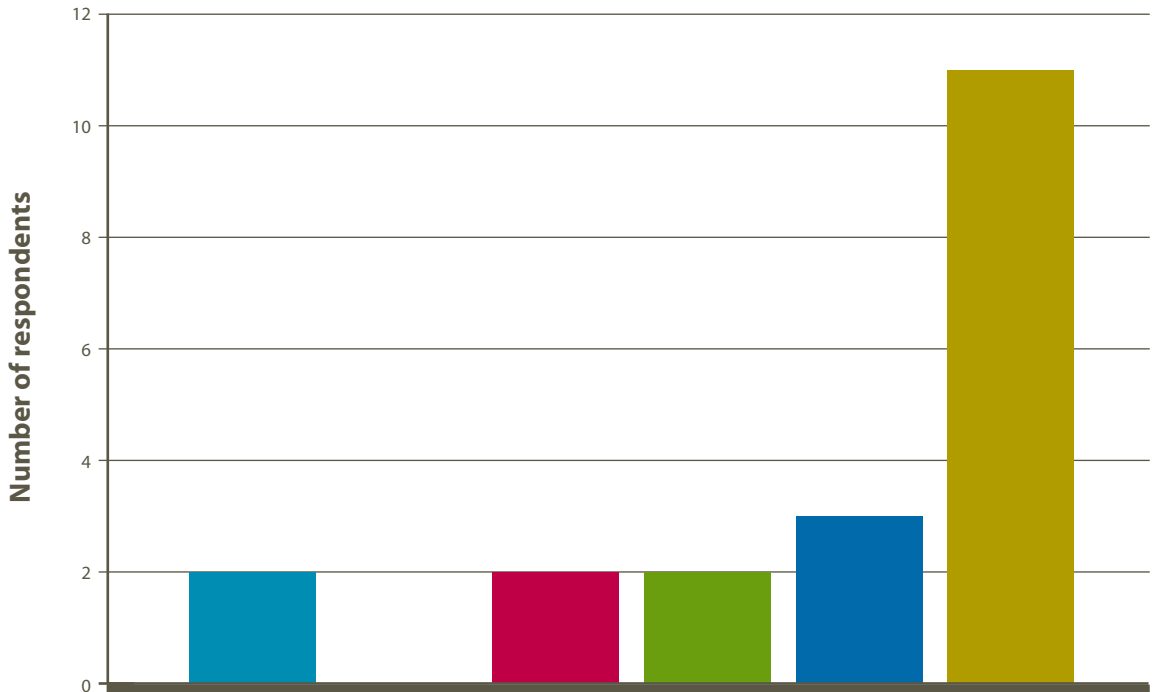
> *"I've worked with probation before but not with volunteers. I wasn't getting on with my probation officer so I never bothered or co-operated. They were always going to have that little grudge against me, I thought. From the help I was getting in jail, I came out, and there was nothing. I was just back to where I was before I came in. But you have a good relationship with volunteers, you want to co-operate with them, you can see they care."*
>
> *YSS service user*

YSS's service users were surveyed about what they thought of the partnership overall, between probation, YSS staff and YSS volunteers. 19 of 23 who answered the question agreed that the three worked well together, and questions about the motivations of different people in the service showed strong disagreement with the idea that probation officers did not have the offender's best interests at heart. Some service users made the point that support from YSS made them more likely to trust the probation service, which referred them to YSS in the first place. This suggests that additional, trusted support from volunteers may make a service more trustworthy in the eyes of its beneficiaries.

4 Volunteering: good for offenders and ex-offenders

Figure 1: Selected results from the YSS service user survey

The opinions of YSS service users on the probation staff they work with



	Staff paid by the probation service are in it for themselves, not for me
Totally agree	2
Agree	0
Slightly agree	2
Slightly disagree	2
Disagree	3
Strongly disagree	11

> *"When you get support and approval from a volunteer, it means much more than from family. You expect it from family, you get it all the time because you're blood, but you never get it from a stranger, so when a volunteer gives it you feel even better."*
>
> *YSS service user*

> *"You feel like a lot of people look down on you because you've done wrong and volunteers, they don't – they just help you. It helps you feel better in yourself. They pick you up, make you feel better, to go and do it."*
>
> *YSS service user*

4 Volunteering: good for offenders and ex-offenders

Sussex Pathways

Ex-prisoners supported in the community by Sussex Pathways told us that they saw volunteer involvement as a sign of the organisation's genuine commitment to them. This credibility and trust was not only generated by the involvement of volunteers; they also referred to Sussex Pathways' small size[1] as evidence that the people involved with it were 'committed to the cause'. They also contrasted this with what they saw as the dysfunction and lack of clear priorities in larger organisations, such as prisons.

The service users at Sussex Pathways seemed to value the closer, less formal relationships with volunteers and staff at a small organisation. They did not feel that staff at larger organisations were necessarily less concerned about their welfare and interests, but spoke of a different culture in larger organisations, where the support offered to them was less personal. They also spoke about how working with a volunteer created a sense of responsibility: if someone was giving their time for free to work with them, they felt responsible to the mentor.

> ***Q:*** *Is the work done by volunteers better than that done by paid staff*
> ***A:*** *"It depends on [the staff member's] commitment to the cause. The papers come out with a lot of negativity about prisoners. Some people dwell on that. But volunteers, they think "I want to help someone stop reoffending". That's good. But if the paid staff set up the organisation, then you know they've got that commitment too. Sussex Pathways is quite small, only three and a half (full time equivalent) paid workers; if it was more like fifty you might ask yourself: 'well, of that fifty, how many are really committed to the cause? To what they are supposed to be about?' Of the three and a half, they are all committed to the goals and values of what the organisation is about."*
>
> *Sussex Pathways service user*

> *"Paid workers are working for an organisation with procedures and methods put onto them. They have to tick boxes to satisfy superiors. With a volunteer, it's up to them whether they do it or not. They've decided for themselves. Not to pay bills. So there's more dedication there."*
>
> *Sussex Pathways service user*

> *"So many times I have worked with paid workers and they have wanted to get onto the next appointment. When I found that my mentor was a volunteer, I thought 'that's even better'. Because he's retired, but is still putting his life out there to help us. And he could be sitting there laying back, but he wants to be out there working, helping people."*
>
> *Sussex Pathways service user*

> *"Mentoring gives you a bit more confidence. That someone is out there to help you. You hear a lot of negativity about prisoners in the media, where things don't work out and systems let people down. It's about support being there if you want it. Makes you feel more positive, definitely. Very positive. You can talk to people who are willing to believe in you. It helps in those times when you think 'people don't care about me. Why should I care about them?' It brings up your self-confidence in yourself."*
>
> *Sussex Pathways service user*

1. Sussex Pathways has three members of paid staff

4 Volunteering: good for offenders and ex-offenders

Fine Cell Work

Serving prisoners who work with Fine Cell Work told us that the volunteer relationship is uniquely positive and central to the existence and benefits of the stitching they do. They contrasted the atmosphere of volunteer-run workshops with the main prison regime, and reported a greater sense of engagement with volunteers, mentioning the volunteers' independence from the prison as a key factor in this.

Some also saw volunteers as representing wider communities outside prison: on the one hand, the Fine Cell Work community, which gave prisoners a sense of belonging; on the other, the community more widely, allowing the prisoners to show that they could achieve things through persistence and self-belief.

Both groups typically described volunteers as having a more 'personal' touch. Some said this meant they were more likely to engage with a volunteer than a member of staff, though this was not universal, and most offenders and ex-offenders also referred to the fact that they felt there were good and bad staff members.

> *"Some officers are better than others, but a uniform is a uniform. They are different to volunteers. You are on one side, officers are on the other. The ladies that come in with Fine Cell Work are different. They treat us like people. Officers treat us like cons. Some officers are nice: they're not all the same. With volunteers, the respect is already there. With officers, it has to be earned. You're always more careful."*
>
> Fine Cell Work stitcher

> *"Some staff care more than others, but they are being paid and have to be there. Volunteers are here for us. That's immediately different."*
>
> Fine Cell Work stitcher

> *"Money is such a motivator. Prison education means money, it means structure and targets, it means the local college coming in, or another one coming in, they are being paid by the prison and they have to prove what they are doing. Fine Cell Work, with a volunteer, just runs. Targets and structure like they have in Education are external. Someone outside sets a target, and if the results are crap the prison service will take on another company. Prison workshops are driven by profit – they have to be. The volunteers aren't asking for that. They've looked after me and they let me develop in my own way."*
>
> Fine Cell Work stitcher

> *"There is no way that FCW would work if it was being done by prison staff, not volunteers. If it was done by prison staff it would be done by the book; it would be the first thing to go if they were short-staffed, because it's not important to the prison's targets, though it matters to us. It's small, they would say it's not cost-effective. It's better than it used to be but a lot of prison staff don't know Fine Cell Work is going on here, and they don't all see it as productive for them and their prison."*
>
> Fine Cell Work stitcher

> *"That's the thing with volunteers. They're outside all that. X doesn't have a role to play in the prison – she's not a prisoner, she's not an officer, she's not here to do anything else than show us something different."*
>
> Fine Cell Work stitcher

5 Volunteering: good for organisations and their staff

Both statutory and voluntary sector staff were positive about the impacts of volunteering. Many said that volunteers had a different, more personal, relationship with offenders than they did with staff (especially staff from the statutory sector), and said that volunteers helped to bridge the distance between offenders and staff. They also commented positively on the different quality and quantity of support that could be made available to service users by volunteers.

> *"When you offer that kind of support [that volunteers give], offenders simply trust you more. It makes it easier to work with them – and then usually the word gets around as well. I've had people asking to be referred [for mentoring] because they have been impressed by how their friends have been doing."*
>
> *Probation officer, working in partnership with YSS*

YSS

Probation and police staff working in partnership with YSS cited the flexibility of volunteering as a major benefit, allowing a service to be provided by a volunteer, for example after the expiry of funding earmarked to work with an offender over a set period of time. They said that the availability of YSS volunteers also meant that service users could be offered support at crucial times when probation or police staff were not able to attend, for example ensuring that a service user had support and encouragement at a meeting with housing services.

Statutory staff also told us that the kind of flexible, on-demand support broke down barriers between themselves and offenders, dispelling doubts and cynicism on each side about the other. Staff also said that YSS's involvement meant they were

5 Volunteering: good for organisations and their staff

> *You have to think a lot about recruitment and training. It's not a drawback of volunteering, but it's top of the tree for me – you have to have the right person for the role, and that means having the right training."*
>
> *YSS key worker*

freer to concentrate on other aspects of their role, including victim-centred work. However, they said there were some limitations and drawbacks to volunteering, for example expressing doubt that volunteers were capable of working with high-risk clients.

YSS's own staff told us that volunteer involvement meant they could bridge gaps in their service, as well as extending it to times when staff could not work with an offender – for example, at weekends or after the expiry of a funding cycle. They described training and management as essential, and generally did not have the same doubts about whether volunteers could, with the right training, work with high-risk or more serious offenders.

Southside Partnership

At HMP The Mount, we spoke to prison staff about the work being done by prisoners who had been trained by Southside Partnership's Beyond Prison programme as volunteer peer mentors.[2] Many interviewees said they had initially been sceptical about the virtues of prisoner volunteering, but that they had been won over by seeing it in action. Like the probation and police staff working with YSS, they saw peer volunteering by prisoners as a means of bridging gaps between themselves and prisoners, and of making visible to prison staff problems and issues of which they might otherwise remain unaware.

> *[Our clients] will relate to me better if I say I'm from YSS than if I say I work for probation. It lifts a barrier, straight away. Volunteers work for no one, and I think that lifts even more barriers..."*
>
> *YSS key worker (on secondment from probation)*

> *Working with a volunteer can be a bit of a kick for the lads we work with as well. They don't like getting out of bed in the morning and getting to a job. Yet someone will come and work with them, free of charge, to help them. It challenges their ideas and attitudes. It shows that others are willing to take time out, not always be judgemental because they have committed crime in the past. Someone's giving them that second chance."*
>
> *YSS keyworker (and seconded probation officer)*

> *If you'd asked me [about prisoner volunteering] ten years ago I'd have said 'keep them all banged up'. But it's in everyone's interest to have a smoother prison with less agitated, aggravated prisoners. Mentoring and volunteering really helps with that."*
>
> *Prison officer, HMP The Mount*

Staff at HMP The Mount were very positive about the impact that could be made by trained peer mentors, to the extent that several said prisoners who volunteered were not adequately rewarded for their contribution to prison life. They also tended to stress the importance of selection and training, saying that the motivation for peer mentors in particular was critical: if it was not right, they could do more harm than good. One member of staff described prisoner volunteers as giving the prison access to an "untapped resource", though one that carried with it the responsibility to invest in that resource with training and recognition. Another said that the prison's efforts to resettle prisoners were improved by the fact that peer mentors were available to assess and refer prisoners to Southside Partnership for mentoring after their release.

2. At the time the interviews were conducted, the project was quite new and not all of the staff were familiar with its aims and methods; some of them spoke about volunteering by prisoners more generally

5 Volunteering: good for organisations and their staff

However, there was agreement among prison staff that mentor motivation was crucial and that this made it important for the prison to think about how mentors and other prison volunteers were selected.

> *Peer mentors, if they're properly trained, can see need that's not apparent to staff. Prisoners don't always understand what help is available to them, and it can be like there's a gap between them and the staff who could help them. Mentoring is less official and makes that gap easier to bridge. It is another point of contact for people who feel they don't have one."*
>
> *Offender manager, HMP The Mount*

> *If you see someone over and over again, you get cynical and think, 'Oh, I'll give it two weeks [before they reoffend]' and that's really not a good approach to work with them. Because you've really got no time to actually physically sit with them, and say, 'Right, we've got to do this, this, this and this for you, so things turn out different this time.' But if you have the chance to go, 'Right, let somebody else have a look at this, then maybe [things turn out different].*"
>
> *Police offender manager, working in partnership with YSS*

> *Volunteers can be a lot more flexible in what they are doing. If they want to - and sometimes they do – they can work an hour or more or even a whole day with someone, something that the keyworker simply can't do. They can respond to a problem that's preventing something else taking place, immediately. If a client comes in and they are suddenly homeless, you can't always respond immediately by taking them to the housing office or whatever. But we have had mentors waiting with them all day [at the housing office] or helping them get into a local B&B. [Key workers] simply can't do that."*
>
> *YSS volunteer co-ordinator*

> *Since peer volunteering started on this wing, I'm much more aware of what's going on on the wing than I was before. Prisoners are much more easily influenced by their peers than they are by us – for better or for worse. So if the prison knows how to use them, [prisoners volunteering] can add a lot. Problems can be resolved before they become something official and before they affect a prisoner's record."*
>
> *Prison officer, HMP The Mount*

6 Volunteering: good for volunteers

The volunteers we spoke to had diverse reasons for getting involved. There were some common elements in how volunteers with Fine Cell Work and Southside Partnership spoke about their volunteering. Nearly all said they were motivated by the feeling that they were doing something worthwhile to make a difference and help others; most also said that a real benefit of volunteering was a feeling of wellbeing and self-confidence. In many cases volunteers said they were motivated by sharing their own skills and experience for the benefit of others. They said that they had learned from their volunteering, sometimes in unexpected ways. Volunteers also consistently highlighted the demands placed on them by their roles, expressing the view that what they did was not for everyone.

> *"Doing the assessment training [where mentors learn to assess the eligibility of other prisoners for Beyond Prison resettlement mentoring] was really positive. It focused on understanding the underlying issues that make people do what they do. I think it made me less judgemental. I have a neighbour on the wing who was self-harming. Before, I think I felt that he was attention-seeking. I don't think that now. I see it differently."*
>
> *Beyond Prison peer mentor*

6 Volunteering: good for volunteers

Peer mentors

Southside Partnership

Prisoners trained by Southside Partnership to work as volunteer peer mentors saw their volunteering as part of their progression towards life after prison. They said they were motivated by having experiences they wanted to share: as prisoners who had already served several years of their sentences, they felt they had something to pass on to others. Another motivation was the skills, training and experience that they would gain through volunteering. They spoke of the needs of other prisoners for release and resettlement mentoring, and saw themselves as a way of connecting other prisoners to sources of advice, help and guidance. They felt they were better placed to do this work than most, because other prisoners appreciated having a peer to talk to about issues that they might not feel comfortable talking to prison staff about.

> *Volunteering gives you the chance to earn the trust of others and to feel responsible. It feels good to be a role model – it builds your confidence. Some other inmates think less of you – they call you 'screwboy', 'grass', that kind of thing. But this was something we chose to do. You have to be thick-skinned for it, to feel secure in yourself."*
>
> *Beyond Prison peer mentor*

All four of the mentors interviewed said they hoped to find work supporting and advising others after their release. One mentor also said that volunteering had helped show his family outside prison that he was persistent and serious about these plans, and his involvement with the Beyond Prison training had given him a positive change to involve them in as well. These peer volunteers saw what they were doing as a means of consolidating and building on changes that they had already made to their lives, of gaining experience and skills, and of working gradually towards long-term aims. There was a strong sense of volunteering being something that had knock-on effects, with two mentors saying they were also now going to volunteer with a scheme that brought young offenders into prison, and another saying that he was looking into qualifications in Information, Advice and Guidance that he could do while in prison.

> *The skills you gain through the assessment training definitely help you deal better with other people inside the prison. It has been challenging, but it opens your eyes to different things: you become calmer, you get better at listening, you can take in what people are saying better."*
>
> *Beyond Prison peer mentor*

> *Mentoring has been good for my mental wellbeing since I've been inside. It's good to be good. Helping others makes you feel good about yourself. Volunteering can also help you progress in your own sentence. The prison staff know you and trust you, think you're responsible, respect you. It's not put on a sentence plan but it helps you work your way down through the categories on your way to release."*
>
> *Beyond Prison peer mentor*

The Beyond Prison mentors also said that volunteering carried some challenges; they said that some other prisoners might see them as 'screwboys' or 'grasses' – too close to the prison authorities. They said that while this was challenging, it would not deter them from carrying out the role. They did say, however, that the role of peer mentor would not suit all prisoners, and said that doing the training alone would not bring all of the benefits: the mentors had to be confident and respected already.[3]

3. Staff at the Mount agreed on this point

6 Volunteering: good for volunteers

Volunteers from the community

Fine Cell Work

Volunteers with Fine Cell Work also said they were motivated by wanting to share their skills, in this case needlework. They were not motivated by longer-term career goals but, like the Beyond Prison volunteers, all said they were motivated by the feeling of 'making a difference'. Those surveyed rated how important a list of the benefits of volunteering were to them personally; the four rated as most important were:

- Achieving something useful
- Offering something different from the usual prison routine
- Meeting people they would not otherwise have met
- Making a difference.

> *I was terrified the first time I went into prison [to volunteer with FCW]. I think doing it has made me realise that actually, I do have the resources to deal with things. Learning to contain the things that you see and hear about in prison has been good for me personally – I've learned to compartmentalise things."*
>
> *Fine Cell Work volunteer*

Fine Cell Work volunteers tended also to emphasise the fact that they had deepened their understanding of other people and of the Criminal Justice System as one of the chief benefits of volunteering. They also felt a strong sense of belonging and community with the organisation. As with the Beyond Prison peer mentors, many volunteers said there had been a knock-on effect of their volunteering; this took different forms, but most (81%) of the volunteers surveyed said they had spoken to others socially based on their experiences in prison, while 47% had done so in a more formal setting.

> *There are times when you feel very privileged to be involved: when you can't make it to a particular class and the next time you go in, they say they missed you; when you realise you're making a difference; when a prisoner tells you he has stopped self-harming because he has something to do in his cell."*
>
> *Fine Cell Work volunteer*

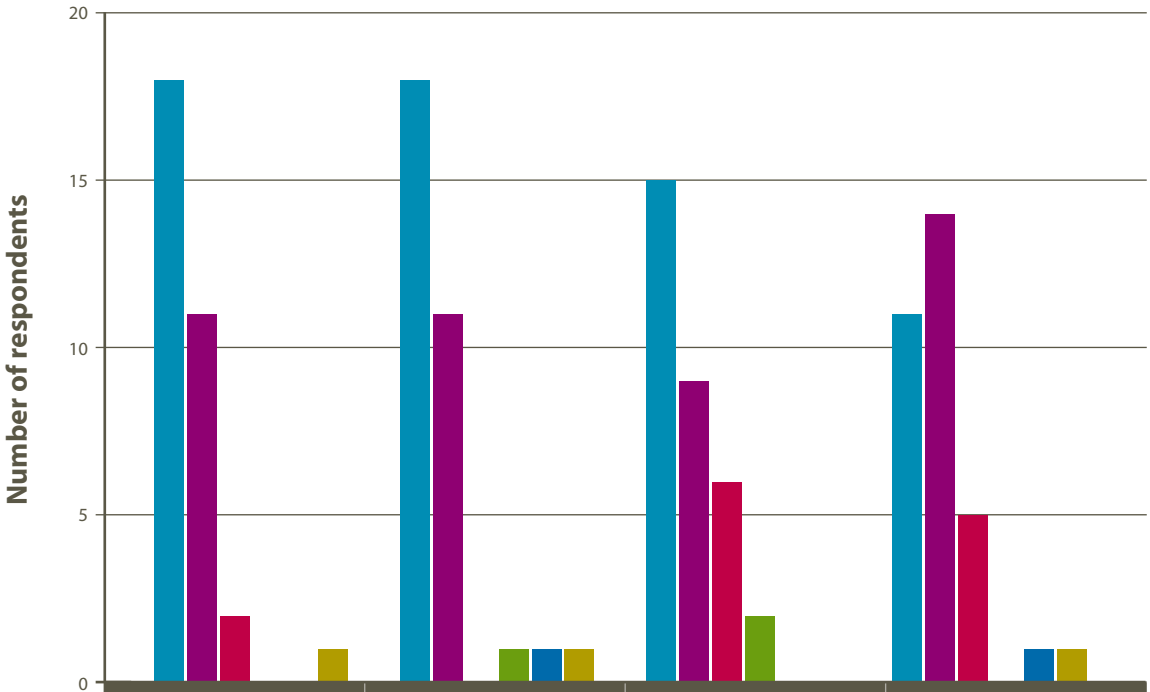
> *You learn a lot and gain a great deal of confidence by working with people who have committed serious offences and learning to manage those relationships properly. I give prisoners a sense that someone outside cares about what happens to them; I challenge the attitudes of others about the prison system; and I've learned a lot about the complexities of people's situations and lives."*
>
> *Fine Cell Work volunteer*

> *I've talked to other people about what I've done with Fine Cell Work, both formally and socially. I've written about what I do on my blog, and that had an overwhelming response. I'm also working on a stitching manual for prisoners to use to train themselves, and I've done other things as well. Volunteering has had a snowball effect for me."*
>
> *Fine Cell Work volunteer*

6 Volunteering: good for volunteers

Figure 2: Selected data from the Fine Cell Work volunteer survey

What other activities have you gone on to do as a result of your volunteering in prison with Fine Cell Work?



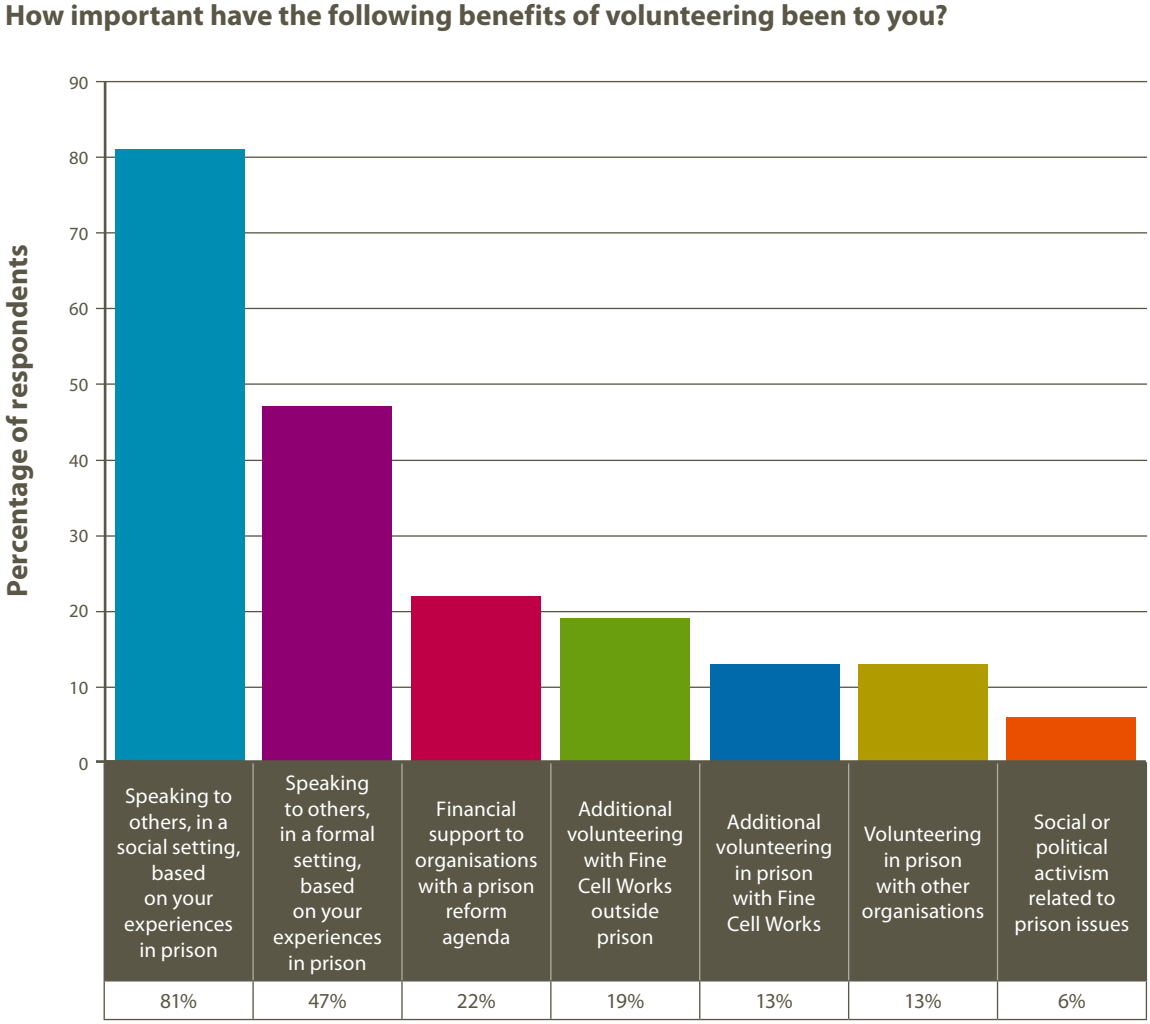
	I achieve something useful	I feel pride at offering something different to the usual routine of prison	I meet people I would not otherwise have met	I make a difference
Very important	18	18	15	11
Important	11	11	9	14
Slightly important	2	0	6	5
Slightly unimportant	0	1	2	0
Unimportant	0	1	0	1
Very unimportant	1	1	0	1

"You build up confidence by showing the prison staff that you have something positive to contribute. I think initially they see you as a lady who's got nothing better to do on a Tuesday night. But you prove over time that you are there for a reason and you can make a difference."

Fine Cell Work volunteer

6 Volunteering: good for volunteers

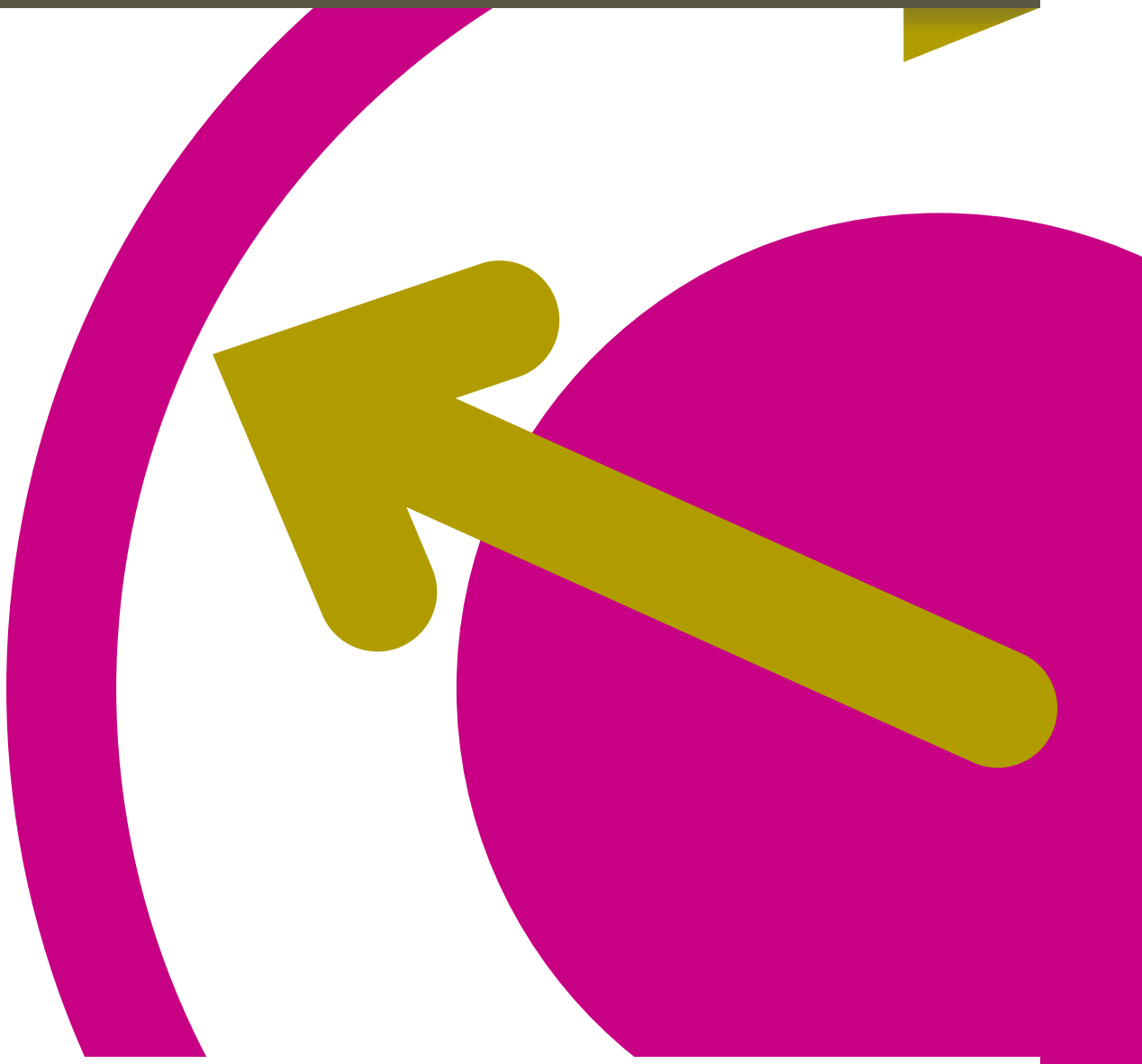
Figure 3: Selected data from the Fine Cell Work volunteer survey



There are light bulb moments. One prisoner I worked with had severe anger management problems. When I started working with him he didn't really speak; later he said that stitching and working in the atmosphere of the group had made him more patient. He was like a different person, and he said it was because of working with me and the Fine Cell Work group."

Fine Cell Work volunteer

7 Volunteering: good for the wider community



People in all of the four organisations we worked saw volunteering as having benefits for the wider community. There are indirect benefits if volunteering helps prisoners to gain the kinds of skills, experience and resilience necessary to desist from crime, but our work suggests that a very important consequence of volunteering is to build trust and break down barriers.

> *"Here's another thing I think is important – one of our key workers is passionate about this, he hears it all the time: a volunteer will be down the pub with his or her mates, saying 'Well, this group of people [i.e. offenders] isn't that bad. At all. They speak from experience. And that has a good effect on the community and on society as a whole."*
>
> *YSS volunteer co-ordinator*

The people we questioned during this project often referred to what they saw as a negative and stereotyped view of offenders among wider society. Volunteering helps to break down the barriers between people who play different roles: between prisoners and prison staff, for example, or between 'civilians' and 'criminals'. Some of the people we interviewed also told us that the involvement of volunteers helps to make offenders feel included in society more generally.

7 Volunteering: good for the wider community

I have found that people outside prison have very strong views on punishment. Either they think prisoners should be deprived of any rights, or they think they have all had troubled upbringings and are therefore unfortunates. I feel as though my volunteering has given them all a chance to be a little less rigid in their opinions."

Fine Cell Work volunteer

With me, it's not letting my wife down, my kids down, or my mentor as well. It builds self-confidence and respect. If you are responsible to someone respectable, a volunteer, it makes you feel that you're worth something. You can become a normal member of society. You feel more connected – connected to the community."

Sussex Pathways service user

What's really lovely is when you've been working with a client and a volunteer, and sometimes when they've been to an appointment with the client, supported them or shown them how to handle that situation, when the client may before have got a reaction that they didn't like from Housing or whatever … to hear them say, 'Well you know, I think housing was equitable, and they dealt with me fairly.' So the volunteer has opened their eyes to what life can be like, really. And [the volunteer] can see what life must have been like for the client that they are working with."

YSS volunteer co-ordinator

Offenders are definitely wary of the police, they are a little less wary of probation, and then less of the key worker, and when it gets to the volunteer it's a case of, 'why does somebody want to do this for me?' They start questioning [their attitudes] ... A lot are disillusioned and cynical, like 'this is what you get out of society, and nobody cares' and 'I've been kicked in the teeth so often.' Volunteers challenge that."

Probation officer working in partnership with YSS

The scale of recalls [to prison] and reoffending is huge. We've been inside a long time. We know how to get the most out of the experience of prison, because we've been doing that. [Volunteering to] mentor others could address a lot of that; it can generate other people who have not been in for such a long time the help that they need in order not to come back."

Beyond Prison peer mentor

It's natural to be negative, not to accept praise. Especially if you have reasons already to feel bad about yourself. But you're mentored, someone believes in you, you take responsibility, and you accept the praise, and then you say "yeah, I did do well at that". It's a big step."

Sussex Pathways service user

8 Key information about volunteering in the CJS[4]

- There are no authoritative statistics on the number of people volunteering in the criminal justice sector
- Volunteers work with offenders in prison, through the gate, and in the community, as well as working with police forces and probation trusts
- In 2005, it was estimated that 1,500 voluntary sector organisations work in prisons or with probation, with informal, non-incorporated organisations likely to swell this number
- 7,000 volunteers are estimated to be working in prison through the Prison Service Chaplaincy and other faith-based organisations
- It is estimated that around 7% of prisoners volunteer to support other prisoners
- Integration of volunteers with statutory services is strong in some areas, and patchy in others
- A large number of volunteers carry out statutory roles such as working for Independent Monitoring Boards in prisons. Due to the statutory nature of this valuable work, we have not included them in this project.

4. Information in this section is taken from Volunteering Across the Criminal Justice System: Baroness Neuberger's review as the Government's Volunteering Champion, Cabinet Office, London, March 2009, pp. 4-5

9 Further support and guidance from Clinks

You may be interested in collecting this kind of information from your own service users, volunteers, statutory partners and other stakeholders. Evidence of this nature can be used internally to evaluate programmes. It can also be used in monitoring and evaluation reports, reports to funders and commissioners, in publicity materials to attract volunteers, and in a range of other materials.

The interview schedules, focus group schedules, and survey questionnaires that we used to collect the views expressed in this pamphlet are available for free download and adaptation, along with guidance on how to use them and pointers towards further resources. Visit our website to download these resources.

Clinks promotes volunteering across the Criminal Justice System because of the added value that volunteers bring to offender rehabilitation. We have a range of resources relevant to volunteering, including a series of guides on establishing and running volunteering projects, case studies of good practice, and an online discussion group for volunteer managers (registration required).

Further information on our Volunteering and Mentoring programme can also be found on our website.

> ***Q:*** *What makes a good funding application for volunteer-involving projects?*
> ***A:*** *How volunteers are accepted by service users is crucial; how they are accepted and treated by other staff is also important. Most funders will want to see an application include evidence that the organisation has thought carefully about the selection and support and training of volunteers. But I think their positive contribution as volunteers needs to be explained too, especially when the volunteer is himself or herself a service user. I'd ask myself if the organisation is referring to evidence of this impact?"*
>
> *Former charitable foundation trustee*

> *Has rigorous thought gone into why and how volunteers are involved? Often organisations apply for funding for a volunteer manager or similar because they want to add capacity. There is nothing wrong with this, but have they thought about who they are recruiting, why they are looking for them, whether there's a good reason for them to be involved? If an organisation has a definite rationale for involving volunteers and that's based on evidence, it helps us to consider the application. It helps us see if the organisation is thinking about the issues in the right way."*
>
> *Charitable foundation grants manager*

EVALUATING VOLUNTEER IMPACT

doing volunteering justice

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