

Volunteering across the criminal justice system

**Baroness Neuberger's review as the
Government's
Volunteering Champion**

March 2009

Contents

Summary and Introduction	2
Chapter 1: Context	3
Chapter 2: Why promote volunteers?	7
Chapter 3: Obstacles and barriers	17
Chapter 4: How can we do better?	25

Volunteering across the criminal justice system

Summary/introduction

This is the second of my public service reviews as the Prime Minister's volunteering champion. Once again, I have been struck by the amazing contribution and dedication that volunteers bring to the criminal justice system (CJS). I must state again, from the outset, that this review is not about putting 'volunteers' at the centre of the criminal justice system. It is of course about putting people at its heart, with volunteering being an excellent way of doing this.

It is also important to state that this is not about getting public services on the cheap. On the contrary, volunteer management needs to be invested in if it is really to reap dividends, and the CJS, without doubt, needs more of this kind of investment. Volunteers should never be used to replace staff, which benefits no one. But there are many situations where volunteers can add value – be that a passion, a personal touch or a claim to independence - in a way that paid staff cannot. It is in these situations that I would like to encourage more volunteer integration within the CJS.

However, it is worth emphasising that, although it requires investment, volunteering can reap multiple dividends, both social and economic. Some agencies may be starting from scratch, not knowing where to begin. I would encourage them to make that leap! There is a mountain of advice and guidance out there to help them on their way. Research has shown that organisations that invest in volunteer management can reap returns up to eight times what they have put in.

As this is the second public service review, I can begin to identify trends and patterns in how public services engage with volunteers. As with my review of health and social care, I have found that it is often service-users themselves that have the most to give in terms of helping others through voluntary work. In terms of what volunteers can add to the public services, I would like to move on from a paternalistic model that sees worthy volunteers helping those less fortunate than themselves, and instead recognise service-users as a valuable resource that have a huge amount to give in terms of their knowledge and experience.

It is also embarrassingly clear that there are deep cultural and attitudinal barriers to working with volunteers, and these will need to be overcome if the public services are really to get the best out of volunteers. There is a deep seated suspicion that volunteering is really about job substitution, with the related presumption that volunteers are a free economic resource. Add to that a culture which tends towards risk aversion, and is uncomfortable with the non-contractual nature of volunteers, and one can see why volunteers are not regarded as natural partners in many of our public services. As these trends are increasingly apparent in the two public service areas I have examined, it is safe to assume that these cultural barriers would be found throughout the public sector.

Not only that. In the CJS, it has also become apparent that volunteering has suffered from a lack of strategic leadership. One of my key recommendations is that a permanent volunteering champion should be appointed for the CJS, to continue the work I have begun and to champion the other recommendations I have made, as well as making his/her own. This document should be seen as a first step in a much more comprehensive process that is needed to examine the role of volunteers within the criminal justice system. This review represents a snapshot and a point of view. It has not been possible, in the short time I have been conducting this review, to carry out a more thorough audit of volunteers throughout the CJS, with detailed actions for specific departments. I very much hope, however, that this work will continue. Indeed the reason for making a start with it was the assurances I received from Ministers that they would be taking action.

This report is largely about the barriers to the integration of many volunteers within statutory services or services commissioned by the state (either locally or centrally), and how these barriers can be overcome. However, it is important to state that one area of the criminal justice system is in fact significantly run by volunteers – support for victims. In this area, volunteers are responsible for much of the service-delivery. Victim Support is a volunteer-led organisation and this works very effectively. However, I have found examples in other victims' organisations, where volunteers are not performing the idealised 'value-added' role that I describe elsewhere, but are often performing more essential services due to a lack of core funding. In this area, it is not a question of volunteer integration, but of ensuring that the third sector organisations that manage these volunteers receive adequate funding.

Chapter 1: Context

People volunteer across the Criminal Justice system in a number of different areas. There are volunteers involved in: -

- Arrest through to post sentence.
- Reducing re-offending.
- Supporting victims and witnesses.
- Administering justice.
- Preventative activities, such as mentoring those at risk of offending.

There are many different types of volunteering undertaken at every stage of the CJS, reflecting a wide range of activity.

The criminal justice system as a whole includes the prosecution service, prisons and probation, the courts, and policing. Practical and emotional support for victims is largely provided by the voluntary sector, with government funding. There is a long history of volunteering in the criminal justice system, and some very well established voluntary roles, such as magistrates, prison visitors and special constables.

How many people are volunteering?

Surveys have given us snapshots of the importance of volunteers in the criminal justice system. There are around 30,000 volunteers working as Magistrates, and 6000 working as Victim Support volunteers.

Volunteers work with offenders in prison, through the gate, and in the community in a variety of ways: for example, there are 1,850 Independent Monitoring Board members; numerous prison visitors; volunteers working through third sector organisations such as SOVA; 7,000 volunteers involved in prisons alone through faith-based organisations and many more in community chaplaincies; up to 84 Lay Advisors helping to oversee MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) relating to sexual and violent offenders; and it is estimated that around 7% of prisoners volunteer to help other prisoners.

Working with the police there are around 14,000 special constables, and 6000 Police Support Volunteers (rising to 10,000 by the year 2012). Indeed, Neighbourhood Watch is the biggest voluntary movement in the country.

Criminal justice volunteering as a broad area is not particularly well documented. 'What Can I Do?', a booklet and website produced by the Prison Advice & Care Trust and the Churches Criminal Justice Forum, is one of the few projects that has attempted to document and promote volunteering across the different agencies of the CJS. The Helping Out survey, which records what types of volunteering individuals engage in, does not include a coherent category for criminal justice. The nearest approximate areas are human rights/justice (4%), and local community, neighbourhood, and citizens groups (17%). Ultimately, we can only guess at how many volunteers there are in the CJS overall. We have no firm figures.

The Government's role

The Government context and arrangements are similarly complex. The system is administered by three government departments: the Home Office, Ministry of Justice (including the Office for Criminal Justice Reform which works trilaterally with the three CJS departments) and the Attorney General's Office. To add to this complexity, funding to support offenders and victims frequently comes via other departments, more so perhaps than in any of the other major public service areas. It is estimated, for example, that approximately 50% of public expenditure on adult offender services comes from other Government departments¹ in areas such as housing and skills.

Due to the disparate nature of policy-making across the CJS, there has never, to my knowledge, been a cross-CJS volunteering review or strategy. Certain sections of the CJS have been undertaking their own initiatives on volunteering, often with considerable success. The Home Office, through the

¹ Home Office NOMS 2006: Improving Prison and Probation Services Public Value Partnerships

National Policing Improvement Agency, has developed a toolkit for constabularies: 'Police Support Volunteers: Helping Safer Communities'. The Youth Justice Board has recently published its volunteering publication 'Get Involved in the Youth Justice System'. The Ministry of Justice published its Third Sector Strategy in June 2008, which included a statement of its ambition to encourage the greater inclusion of volunteering in public service delivery and to promote good practice. NOMS published a consultation document 'Volunteers can: Towards a Volunteering Strategy to Reduce Re-Offending' in May 2007, responses from which have informed actions in the recently published *Working with the Third Sector to Reduce Re-offending*. The Ministry of Justice has recently awarded infrastructure funding of £145k over three years to Clinks, to support volunteering and mentoring with and by offenders and their families. Clinks' work around volunteering will focus on the delivery of quality advice, guidance and support, as well as advocacy for the Third Sector.

At a local level, the integration of volunteers is very strong in some areas, and patchy in others. The strength of a voluntary ethos often depends on the will and efforts of key individuals within an institution. Local Criminal Justice Boards, non-statutory bodies made up of the senior officers of CJS agencies, are currently the only local body with an overview of the CJS. They could and should consider how volunteering could help them achieve their objectives, both in terms of enhancing the effectiveness of the CJS and of improving public confidence. The LCJBs are similarly well placed to make the links to other cross-agency partnerships. In this context, the most notable of these are Local Strategic Partnerships, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, and Community Safety Partnerships.

What are the volunteers doing?

Volunteers already play a vital role in providing front line services to victims and witnesses of crime, in partnership with, and on behalf of, the Government. The OCJR provides funding to a number of voluntary organisations including Victim Support, Support after Murder and Manslaughter (SAMM) and the Poppy Project. The Home Office also directly funds a number of national organisations like Rape Crisis for England and Wales and the Survivors' Trust. Additionally, in the last 5 years, £8.3m has been invested in the Victims' Fund, which provides grants to charities, many of whom use volunteers, and whose primary focus is services for victims of sexual violence and childhood sexual abuse.

Victim Support has over 6,000 volunteers, throughout England and Wales, who offer a range of support for victims. Volunteers also offer direct support to witnesses in courts through the Victim Support Witness Service. The Office for Criminal Justice Reform is currently working with the charity to roll out an enhanced service business model.

The Magistracy is one of the oldest and largest volunteer services, with a long volunteering history. There are close to 30,000 Magistrates in England and

Wales, dealing with 95% of all criminal cases as well as some civil and family work. Magistrates are unpaid volunteers from all walks of life, who give up their time to make a positive difference to the community. Although Magistrates are volunteers, they are also independent judicial office holders and a key part of the wider judicial family. Volunteers are also involved in Magistrates' Courts in other ways, such as providing help desks.

London Court Help-Desk Service (HDS)

The HDS was first established at Bromley Magistrates' Court in May 1997 to provide help and advice to defendants who were trying to navigate the justice process. The founders of the Help Desks recognised that, beyond legal representation, little support was available to defendants. The initial model was very much an information assistance desk, using local people to offer basic information on the court process and orientation through the court.

In 2005, new funding from the Big Lottery was secured and the service model was revised. Two new desks were opened at Camberwell Green and Greenwich Magistrates' courts. It was recognised that court users needed more than simple information. Many had other issues that were often directly affecting their offending behaviour, be it substance abuse, housing problems, debt or welfare benefits issues.

Each helpdesk offers help with a range of problems, first identifying them, and, when required, providing individuals with a referral to external local agencies that can tackle long term problems such as substance abuse, domestic violence, debt, housing and related issues. The aim is to identify and tackle those contributory factors that often lead to offending behaviour, and to break the cycle. People may be shoplifting because they have debt to pay or a habit to maintain.

Apart from individual Help Desk managers, the teams at each desk are all local volunteers, of all ages, recruited from the diverse communities that are under each court's jurisdiction. The diversity of the volunteers, and their knowledge of the local area, has proved to be a valuable asset when engaging with defendants. It is felt they are able to offer a level of understanding and engagement that paid professionals might find more difficult.

Many of the volunteers are long term unemployed, lone parents or ex-offenders. Some of them were actually recruited when appearing as defendants in the Magistrates' courts. The extensive training and work-skills experience that volunteers gain as part of the Help Desk team has proved invaluable. Of the 43 volunteers recruited at the Camberwell Help Desk during 2006-07, more than 60% have since found paid work or places in higher education.

The service can provide a direct link between each local community and the courts which serve them, encouraging often overlooked groups to take an interest in the criminal justice system, participate and take an active role. This has a beneficial effect on court users, whose experience may be enhanced by their presence.

Volunteers are also involved in work with high risk of harm offenders. Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) work with offenders who have sexually abused children and who are at a high level of risk of re-offending. COSA volunteers offer their core member (the offender) social and emotional support that complements the statutory provision and helps them accomplish their personal goals, understand their actions and their need for behavioural change. MoJ has been supporting pilot schemes and an evaluation of their impact is under way. The development of Circles UK as an infrastructure organisation will ensure that a set standard and code of practice is delivered to assist in the development of projects set up as COSA.

Chapter 2: Why promote volunteering?

Whilst there are many in the CJS who support and encourage volunteering, there are some who query its impact because of the lack of much hard evidence that volunteers have any tangible impact on re-offending rates or public confidence in the system. As with many other interventions, it can be difficult to attribute success in reducing re-offending solely to volunteering. Just why I dispute the doubt they express will be argued in more detail later. However, I feel that there are broader reasons for integrating volunteers into our criminal justice system, as doing so will improve services to victims, offenders and the public at large.

Ultimately, I believe that, in all areas of public service, volunteers are all too often able to add something that cannot be delivered by paid staff, who need to maintain a professional distance. The very fact that they give their time freely, offering a 'personal touch' whilst bringing in additional skills, and that they provide an independent voice that represents their local community, enhances service provision for users. Having a volunteer programme can also help to diversify recruitment to the workforce, by introducing opportunities for individuals who might be less likely to be engaged by the traditional recruitment routes. That in turn may make the workforce more representative of the communities it serves.

First Night & Family Support – Prison Advice & Care Trust

Across England and Wales, over 200 Prison Advice & Care Trust (pact) volunteers work to support children and families of prisoners, to enable them to maintain regular contact. A smaller number of volunteers receive additional training to work in 'First Night' teams at Holloway and Wandsworth prisons, working alongside professionals and trained and supervised prisoners known as 'Insiders', to interview prisoners coming into prison. These services have been shown to reduce suicide risk during the first 72 hours of custody, as well as picking up safeguarding issues for prisoners' children and dependent adults. Volunteers contact families to inform them of prisoners' whereabouts and to offer reassurance and information.

Visiting a loved one in prison, especially for the first time, can be a frightening and confusing experience. There is a huge amount of information to take in, at a time of great stress and anxiety. We know, from numerous studies, that maintaining strong family ties is one of the key means of reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners, and that there is a correlation between regular family visits, and improved resettlement outcomes.

However, uniformed prison officers face a hugely demanding job. Their key focus is what happens within the walls of the prison, and on security and good order. 'Civilian' volunteers, properly trained and supervised, and coming from diverse communities, can provide a very significant 'value-added' service. They offer a warm welcome and reassurance to family members visiting relatives in prison, as well as information on how to access support from a wide range of organisations working at community level. Many prison visitors have negative perceptions of prison officers, often drawn from TV or rumour. The presence of volunteers, working within clear boundaries, can ensure that important information and concerns are not lost, and that families in crisis can access the support they need.

For many prisoners, particularly those who may be fearful and at risk on their first night in custody, the opportunity to speak with a non-uniformed volunteer, or with an 'Insider' (trained peer-support prisoner), can reduce the risk of self-harm, and stress, to enable that prisoner to cope with the experience of a period of custody. For some new prisoners, hearing the reality of prison life from another prisoner can offer reassurance that they will be able to cope with the sentence, and it also provides encouragement to use time constructively.

Public ownership and empowerment

Volunteering is the ultimate form of community engagement. Whilst professional services are absolutely essential, the criminal justice system should not be seen as something only delivered by paid professionals for communities. Communities should and need to take some ownership of those services themselves. Individuals must feel empowered to create local solutions to local problems, and this can be achieved, at least in part, through volunteering. It can help lessen the fear of crime, improve confidence in the CJS, and make people feel more involved within those communities where crime is taking place. Restorative justice is perhaps the most obvious practice that allows justice to be brought back into the heart of the community, and this, when delivered in its purest form, will involve volunteers at its very centre.

Nor should it be forgotten that policing, probation services and courts were created by and originally run by volunteers. Though professionalisation was both sensible and inevitable, an unfortunate by-product has been the creation of closed institutions that can seem distant and alien to the communities that they are supposed to serve. Volunteers often manage to 'blow fresh air' into these institutions, increasing transparency, accountability, and making the

institutions more representative of the communities they serve. For example, the National Policing Improvement Agency has found that the demographic make up of Police Support Volunteers is very different from that of the police force more generally, bringing diversity to the policing family. 57% are female, 25% above the age of 65 and 7.5% are from BME groups, whilst 1.5% would describe themselves as having a disability.

Volunteers such as Appropriate Adults, Custody Visitors, and Panel members, can also provide an independent voice within the system, and act as a check and balance to safeguard the rights of service-users. The fact that someone is unpaid allows them to be seen as truly independent in a way that paid professionals, who are reliant on their posts for their livelihood, might not be. Non-professionals are often in a better position to challenge professional practices, as they can offer a more objective viewpoint. Volunteers can be an efficient means of securing accountability as well, where post-holders are not subject to democratic elections.

Lancashire Constabulary

Lancashire Constabulary describes its system for involving volunteers as 'the icing on the cake' of their police force. Their volunteers provide a bridge to the local community. The benefits they have brought to the force include:

- making the policing family more diverse and representative of those that they serve
- opening up an organisation that was perceived to be quite closed and opaque
- increasing public confidence and giving the police a more 'human face'

Background

Lancashire Constabulary decided to investigate the idea of setting up a coordinated volunteer unit after the 2004 Criminal Justice White Paper recommended the use of volunteers to extend the policing family. Up until then, there had been isolated use of volunteers in parts of Lancashire Constabulary, but nothing coordinated. Further investigations found little evidence of coordinated police support volunteering across the UK, but, in America, such schemes were more common.

Following a visit to San Diego police, which has a vibrant force of over 1000 volunteers, the Neighbourhood Policing unit submitted a bid to their Police Authority for £350,000, which was successful. This enabled them to set up a central team to coordinate volunteers across the force.

How it works

A central unit within the Headquarters Division of the force sets policies, ensures the territorial divisions have guidance and the ability to deliver, and provides vetting of volunteers for the rest of the force. Each of the six territorial divisions has their own volunteer coordinator, although individual volunteers have their own line managers who set day-to-day tasks.

There was some initial suspicion amongst staff and the local trade union (Unison) reps that volunteers would be used as a form of job substitution, but these fears have now been allayed. The local union rep is now consulted before any new volunteer roles are created to ensure they are supplementary to staff duties. The rep has also been involved in drawing up national guidelines on police support volunteering for Unison.

What volunteers do

Volunteers act as a bridge to local communities. They provide knowledge and insight into communities that many police officers did not previously have access to, and they help to organise PACT (Police and Community Together) meetings.

They are also often able to gather information from local residents that is not forthcoming to uniformed police officers. One initiative in Blackpool, involving volunteers from the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Community, received a volunteering award from CSV for its ability to reach out to a community that has traditionally been suspicious of the police. There had been a history of under-reporting of homophobic incidents in Blackpool (an area with a large gay community). The 'blue phone' initiative was set up, whereby gay volunteers were given mobile phones which members of the community could call to discuss any incidents, with a view to reporting them to the police. As a result, there has been a huge rise in the number of reported incidents.

The arrival of volunteers has increased the diversity of the policing family. Policing is still a male dominated profession, whilst 67% of the volunteers are women. 6% of the volunteers are from BME background, in comparison to 4% of the workforce. The constabulary feels that this has had a large impact on how they police. The police force has often been perceived as a very closed organisation. The influx of volunteers has made them more open and reflective of the communities they serve.

Why it works

Since the scheme started, Lancashire Constabulary has taken on 637 volunteers with an attrition rate of only 12 (6 of these went on to get jobs with the constabulary).

Whilst they are keen to stress that volunteering was not introduced as a cost-saving measure, it is calculated that it has nonetheless produced a significant return on the policy authority's investment of £350,000.

Lancashire Neighbourhood Policing Unit feels that the key to its success has been high-level corporate buy-in and investment. They are a beacon police force and have been visited by over 30 other police forces. They have found that many forces are being left to set up volunteering schemes within existing budgets. They are keen to stress that volunteering is not a cost-free resource, and that it needs to be invested in to make it successful. It needs to be coordinated at a central, corporate, rather than divisional level.

Rehabilitation for offenders

Volunteering also has the potential to rehabilitate offenders. It can provide skills, a route to employment and learning, a sense of responsibility and a new role in society. Previous research has shown that offenders who have successfully reintegrated into communities tend to be more other people-oriented, and may also express a desire for lasting accomplishments. You could say they have found new meaning in life.² Volunteering can be a powerful vehicle for finding that meaning. Unlike many rehabilitative treatments, volunteering is an ordinary activity that ordinary people do. It enables offenders to see themselves as helpers and givers, rather than just passive beneficiaries.

Studies have shown that volunteering can reduce antisocial behaviour even after “selection bias” has been taken into account i.e. these offenders were more likely to be committed individuals before they volunteered. Professor Chris Uggen at the University of Minnesota investigated whether involvement in volunteer work lessens the likelihood of antisocial behaviour. He found a clear negative relationship between volunteer work and future arrests even after statistically controlling for pre-existing antisocial behaviours, pro-social attitudes, and commitments to conventional behaviour.³ The case study of Kensington & Chelsea Volunteer Centre demonstrates clearly the rehabilitative effect volunteering can have on offenders.

Kensington & Chelsea Volunteer Centre Resettlement project

Kensington & Chelsea Volunteer Centre began working with offenders from Wormwood Scrubs Prison in 2002, with funding from the Tudor Trust. They now work with a number of prisons including Wandsworth and Latchmere House.

The Centre matches Category D prisoners who are due for release with suitable volunteering opportunities that are on their database. This includes everything from volunteer drivers to theatre assistants. The Centre has around 25 charities who are able to offer placements.

The offenders are able to fulfil these roles whilst on day release, leading up to their full release date, when they may go on to perform the same volunteer role full-time. This allows them to gain practical experience at the end of their sentence, in preparation for life outside of prison. It also allows a seamless transition that does not end abruptly once a prisoner is released.

As well as providing them with these volunteer placements, the Centre also signposts the volunteers to agencies which may be able to help them with other issues, such as debt, housing or specialist skills training.

² See also Giordano, P. C., S. A. Cernkovich and J. L. Rudolph. 2002. Gender, Crime and Desistance: Toward a Theory of Cognitive Transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 107, 990-1064.

³ Uggen, C. and Janikula, J. (1999). Volunteerism and arrest in the transition to adulthood. *Social Forces*, 78: 331-362.

Since 2002, the project has worked with around 200 offenders, and, so far, only one of them has gone on to re-offend. The success of the project can largely be attributed to two factors:

- The practical experience it gives offenders who are facing life outside prison – many of the courses prisoners are able to complete are often seen largely as a ‘tick-box’ exercise that do not prepare them for the practical skills they actually need in a day-to-day workplace.
- The altruistic nature of the work they are doing. Many offenders learn that they can give something back to society through volunteering. This can change significantly the mindset of those that participate, and it clearly raises their self-esteem.

Whilst the charity has no problems in finding placements for offenders, it has more difficulty in receiving referrals from the prison service. As a small project, it does not feel the prison service takes them very seriously. In addition, at present the service is limited to category D prisoners, who are able to go on frequent day release before the end of their sentence. They would like to extend the service to category C prisoners, in order to provide the same seamless transition. But such prisoners are not allowed the time out of prison to gain this valuable practical experience.

Preventing offending

As well as rehabilitating existing offenders, it has been suggested that volunteering can raise awareness of good citizenship, provide diversion and prevent young people from turning to crime, for many of the same reasons that it can rehabilitate existing offenders. Although the effect is more difficult to prove, examples such as those outlined in the Met Cadet Force case study indicate that volunteering can divert young people away from crime and make them feel more integrated into their communities.

The Metropolitan Police Voluntary Police Cadets

The MPS have 1250 cadets providing 4000 hours volunteering activity every month in support of the MPS including: crime prevention advice, street audits, test purchase operations for knives and role-play training for police recruits. The VPC are expanding to 4000 members based on the Westminster model where 25% of the cadets are referred by the Youth Offending Team. In the 5 years it has been running, no member of the Cadets has re-offended.

The success of the Westminster VPC is based on the principles of supporting young people at risk of offending as set out by the Kings Fund. They are:

- Pro-Social Modelling
- Warm and welcoming approach – with individual focus
- Mentoring
- Restorative approaches to problem solving

The young people are given opportunities to learn new skills and receive accredited training through the Police and the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, while volunteering in their communities. Several YOT referrals are now adult leaders with the VPC.

Cadet B is a first generation asylum seeker who quickly fell into a group who regularly shoplifted and were involved in petty crime. She was referred by Youth Offending Team and after being disruptive initially, gradually responded. On summer camp she said to staff "If I wasn't on camp I'd be with my friends shoplifting in Oxford Street". She said that the pride and discipline provided by membership of the VPC and the challenging activities had diverted her from crime but also had enabled her to feel part of the community, developing her pride in being 'British'.

User involvement

Former offenders and victims know like no one else what it is like to experience what they have been through. As such they are ideally placed to help influence strategy, and inform service design and delivery from sentencing to treatment. A professional package of support is of course essential for offenders and users of the criminal justice system, but the opportunity to speak to someone who has had similar experiences, and has come out the other side, can be very useful. This voice of experience is valuable both to current users of the criminal justice system, and to the policy-makers in charge of the system. More often than not, these service-users will be volunteers.

Volunteers are already completely integral to victim support services, both through the largest Government funded charity Victim Support, and through more specialist support for victims of more specific crimes (see Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre for Women in Merseyside case study). Those who have survived and recovered from a crime may be in a position to share their experiences with other victims in a beneficial way. Some victims find it more comfortable and reassuring to seek assistance from others who have shared similar experiences and know what it is like to 'walk in their shoes'.

For example some Third Sector organisations working with adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse have reported that 'peer' support is significantly important to disclosure and recovery. These types of services are nearly always run or supported by volunteers. Many established victims' charities, such as Support after Murder and Manslaughter, were originally set up by volunteers who had themselves experienced such crimes. The internet has also allowed a profusion of support groups, especially for victims of newer and more unusual offences, such as cyber-crime.

Additionally, the impact of crime may result in some victims feeling unable to cope and marginalised, and volunteers can play a valuable role in helping them to rebuild their confidence and trust in others.

Former offenders are also well placed to assist current offenders going through similar experiences. Professional support is, as ever, vital, but having subjective experience gives someone a unique understanding and insight. As one former offender, now involved in a mentoring scheme, put it:

"They are not doing it because they are forced to. You get sick of people coming to see you just because they are paid to. They may have been nice, but at the end of the day they clocked off and went home. What offenders need is someone who has been where they have been."

Such sentiments from offenders recently led the Prince's Trust to establish a new mentoring scheme which, like St Giles Trust's long standing scheme, trains former offenders to mentor current prisoners. Ex-offender mentors, who have broken the cycle of re-offending, can provide role models, and offer hope, to current inmates, and demonstrate that there is life after crime. This was created after 65% of offenders responded to their survey stating that they would like to have a mentor, and 71% would prefer an ex-offender.⁴ It is too early as yet to evaluate the effect of the project on re-offending, but the experience and knowledge of the volunteers will without doubt provide real benefit to younger offenders.

But what is needed is activity that helps to break down the barriers to the involvement of volunteers more generally. If that were to happen, former victims and offenders could become much more involved in the criminal justice system, and allow future offenders/victims to benefit far more from their experience. The examples of Bettws Timebank and the Time Dollar Youth Court demonstrate what can be achieved when users are directly involved in delivering services. Indeed, volunteering has provided a route in for many of the paid staff in the CJS who are themselves former victims or offenders.

Young people involved in crime prevention – Bettws Timebank

In Bettws, near Newport in South Wales, the police, faced with high levels of antisocial behaviour from local young people, recognised the need to engage with young people, positively and upstream. In partnership with the Boys and Girls Club, the school, and local community groups, the police have established a new youth timebank.

This includes anti-bullying projects and clean-ups at the school, environmental projects, supporting local community groups with activities, helping to run children's and youth activities at the centre, attending training by the police and making decisions with staff and local community police. The young people use their time credits for attending classes at the youth club e.g. Judo, cheerleading and carpentry or attending trips.

The project has been running for a year and now has over 100 members. It has had a dramatic impact on levels of anti-social behaviour. The Police have recorded a 17% reduction in crime (mainly anti-social behaviour) over the past year, in particular anti-social behaviour within Bettws, since the introduction of the youth time bank into the Boys & Girls Club.

The Time Dollar Youth Court (TDYC) – Washington DC

The Time Dollar Youth Court was set up by the Timedollar Institute in 1996 to address the need for an alternative to the mainstream juvenile justice system and to promote the development of strong, healthy communities in Washington DC. TDYC co-produces a new kind of juvenile justice based on peer-to-peer judgements and community engagement.

Young people's juries are given the power to impose a sentence on young offenders. By serving this peer sentence, non-violent young 'respondents' – anyone under 18 who is charged in court – can avoid formal prosecution for their offences, which commonly include disorderly conduct, simple assault, possession of drugs and truancy.

Young people can earn time credits for any additional community service work or jury time they complete, in addition to that which was handed out to them as part of their sentence. All jurors earn time dollars for jury duty, mentoring and training. They can redeem these time dollars for a recycled computer.

TDYC gives first-time offenders an opportunity to be a 'change agent' for juvenile justice in the District of Columbia, by actually becoming involved in the services as a volunteer. Young people are mandated to participate in all or some of the following:

- Youth Court jury training
- Active participation, counseling, mentoring in drug abuse programmes
- Community service
- Youth developmental workshops
- Peer tutoring
- Life skills training sessions
- Apologies to their own family
- Writing essays on a subject deemed important as it relates to the offence

In addition to any sentence, respondents can be required to serve as jury members for at least eight sessions. The act of being on a jury and judging their peers can be transformational, as Edgar Cahn suggests:

'So that for eight weeks after they are trained as jurors they are on the other side of the table listening to kids who did just what they did a few months before, telling the same stories that they told that they thought were so unique, complaining about the same hardships and the same situations that they thought were just applicable to them. And they are coming to understand that there is a different way and they are coming to get a sense of being valued because they are helping somewhere else.'

Outcomes

In 2007, TDYC received over 778 referrals from its various sources, heard 639 cases during the calendar year and 444 young people have completed the program to date, a 70 per cent completion rate. The recidivism rate for youth court respondents is at 17 per cent, compared with the average of a 30 per cent recidivism rate for teens going through the regular juvenile system. Nearly twice as many kids take advantage of the second chance that TDYC provides to them.

Bridging communities

Volunteering by those who are not former offenders or necessarily victims can also have a broader cohesive effect on those that take part. Many offenders have been born into a background of criminality, with 65% of boys with a convicted parent going on to offend.⁵ The fact that volunteers are doing this willingly and without payment, with no vested interest, often allows those they are helping to develop a relationship of trust that is often not possible with paid staff. On the other side, it can also allow non-offender volunteers to understand the complexities that cause people to offend, and to see beyond stereotypes and prejudice.

A similar result can be seen in relation to victims of crime. Crime can have a significant impact on a community. Involving local people in initiatives around crime prevention and supporting victims can help a neighbourhood feel a sense of responsibility and unity. It is known that a key part of the recovery process for victims is being able to re-establish trust in their community and in humanity more generally. The fact that someone is giving their time as a volunteer to try and help their recovery is a great demonstration of dispassionate kindness. That very kindness can be a great contributory factor in re-establishing that trust.

Volunteer Supported Education – HMP Feltham

The Volunteer Supported Education project at HMP Feltham engages volunteers to deliver basic skills to young offenders through one-to-one tutoring.

VSE works alongside Kensington and Chelsea College, the formal education provider at the prison. It adds value to education services by tutoring students who often refuse to attend formal group education classes and those who have poor basic literacy and numeracy skills. They frequently manage to engage young men in learning who had previously been failed by formal education. Volunteers are able to get to know the young men and address problems that inevitably remained ignored in larger classes.

Students attend weekly 2 hour tutoring sessions according to their

⁵ Social Exclusion Unit Report (2002), Reducing the Risk of Re-offending by Ex-Prisoners

availability. A highly significant feature of VSE's approach is that tutors tailor their work to individual students, and the teaching focuses on practical work that they can use when they are released, for example:

- Basic literacy includes enabling students to perform tasks such as write a letter home, fill in an application form or apply for a bank account.
- Numeracy includes how to use bus/train timetables, calendar work, time management and invoices. It is linked to specific tasks required in the workplace where appropriate.

Chapter 3: Obstacles and barriers

If we acknowledge that the increased integration of volunteers into the agencies of the CJS would ultimately benefit the users of those services, and support reducing crime and re-offending, the question of what the main barriers to integration of volunteers are becomes ever more important.

Cultural barriers within the public sector

This is the second report I have written on the involvement of volunteers in public services. During the course of both reviews it has become increasingly clear that there is a more general cultural problem with the involvement of volunteers in the public sector. The voluntary sector has its own issues with volunteer management, often due to scant resources. The problems within the public sector, however, seem to go much deeper. Although there are many people within the CJS who do champion and support volunteering, volunteerism is often seen as irrelevant or even viewed with suspicion. If volunteers are to be integrated into the CJS more successfully, then deep cultural and attitudinal barriers need to be tackled. There are three main mindsets that need to be overcome: the suspicion that volunteers will be used as a means of job substitution; the related belief that volunteering is a free resource; and a widespread culture of risk aversion.

1) Suspicion of volunteering as a form of job substitution

Where volunteers are engaged in public service delivery, there is always a very real risk that they will be used as a form of cheap labour. This should not be allowed to happen. Volunteers should be used to add value, for the reasons outlined in chapter 2, such as providing an independent or user voice, which paid staff can not provide.

They should not be used as a means of cutting costs, not least because volunteers are in no way a free resource. This is an undertaking of the Compact Volunteering Code, which states that Government and the Third Sector should "recognise that voluntary activity should never be a substitute for paid work". Agencies that attempt to use volunteers as a form of cheap labour will ultimately provide benefits to no one: the volunteers will feel exploited, staff will feel threatened and demoralised, and ultimately service-users suffer. Not only that, but the volunteers will leave and may decide not to volunteer again in any way at all.

Public service unions are particularly keen to ensure that volunteering is not used as a form of job substitution. Through the course of my research I have uncovered examples of excellent working relationships between volunteer managers and local trade union reps. But I have also come across examples where the relationship does not work at all well. Local trade unions should seek to understand more fully the benefits that volunteering can bring to paid staff and the organisation. They could be instrumental in ensuring that volunteering schemes add value, and prevent any form of job substitution. They could also encourage volunteering – in other areas – amongst their members.

2) Presumption that volunteering is a free resource

The presumption that volunteering is cost-free is related to the belief that volunteers are an economic resource who can be used to save money. This is not the case. If they are to work effectively, then they need to be invested in. Volunteers require payment for out of pocket expenses (in particular this enables a greater diversity of volunteers, including people on lower incomes), the same line-management, and nearly all of the same HR support services as paid staff, with the exception of a salary. This presumption has two serious consequences: firstly, it means that volunteers within statutory services do not receive adequate management, and, secondly, that third sector organisations which involve volunteers do not receive adequate funding from the CJS, which believes that the volunteers can perform this role cheaply. It is within this second group that many volunteers within the CJS sit, and there is a considerable risk, in some of these organisations, that the passion and dedication of the volunteers is taken for granted by statutory services.

Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre for Women in Merseyside (RASA)

RASA was set up July 1987 by a group of women from the Wirral who realised there were no services for women in Merseyside who had experienced sexual violence. The women established a counselling helpline, and, since 1987, have provided the following services:

- Information on health issues
- Information on legal aspects of rape and sexual violence
- Support when visiting the police, doctor, hospital, court or anywhere else.
- One to one counselling for as long as it is needed.

All of these services are provided by trained volunteers. RASA currently has around 35 volunteers, who dealt with over 3500 calls to the helpline in 2007. RASA is aware that the services provided by its volunteers have often been the only source of support in the lives of many women who have been through this experience.

Volunteering with RASA is an intense and often distressing experience. It is important the volunteers receive thorough support in their role. All volunteers are supported at regular supervision conducted in line with

BACP regulations. Despite this, the centre has never had to advertise for volunteer posts, as they have a well known reputation for good volunteer management. In 2006, RASA was made a Goldstar volunteering exemplar programme, and it has currently been tasked with creating an accredited training standard for other volunteers who work in the area of sexual violence.

Originally solely run by volunteers, they have, intermittently, managed to secure funding from the local authority and charitable trusts for the services they provide. However, funding is always tight, and the staff at the centre have, at times, had to work for no pay. RASA's income was just under £56,000 this year, whilst it is estimated that they have saved statutory services millions of pounds through their work. For example, many women who have experienced sexual violence go on to develop mental health issues, drug and alcohol addiction and other problems. It is estimated that about half of imprisoned women have experienced sexual abuse at some point in their lives (<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/s95women02.pdf>). It costs in excess of £42,000 a year to keep a woman in prison.

A lack of investment in volunteer management inevitably results in volunteers having a bad experience. During the course of my research I have come across many cases of volunteers who have had a negative experience, as a direct result of poor investment in their management. This is more common where a statutory volunteer role is new, for instance in the case of panel members on Youth Offending Teams. The agency is still adapting to these changes and a supportive culture is still being developed. The Youth Justice Board has worked on a number of initiatives to support best practice in managing volunteers. Nevertheless, Government should be taking this very seriously if they wish panel members to stay and play a key role.

3) Culture of risk aversion

There are undoubted risks associated with involving volunteers in the delivery of public services. Professional staff are under a statutory obligation to provide a contractual service. Volunteers, on the other hand, have no obligations under any legal contract. Their relationship is fundamentally different, and this inevitably carries risks, as well as benefits.

So there is a fine balance to be struck. But this should not mean that volunteers need to be excluded from the delivery of public services. With the correct risk-management, and some considerable imagination, volunteers can still be involved in adding value to a service provided by statutory providers. The tight legal situation emphasises even more the need to ensure that volunteers are not a cheap form of labour used to perform statutory roles, but add value and bring different perspectives.

The importance of proper risk-management also highlights the need for a joined-up, coordinated approach to volunteering from senior directors within agencies. Without their leadership, it would be very difficult for the

professionals on the ground who deliver services to include volunteers in their work without leaving themselves seriously exposed.

Understandably, security measures throughout the CJS can be very tight. Police volunteers are always checked vigorously and at a level commensurate with the roles they are being asked to perform. Security within prisons can vary and the level of checking required is usually dependent on the discretion of the prison governor. Whilst security is vital in this area, if measures are too onerous, they may prevent those who have a lot to give from volunteering. That is especially true for former offenders who are bound to come up positive on a CRB check. However, in terms of what they have to give, they may be the most valuable volunteers of all. It is understandable that some ex-offenders should not be allowed the level of access to intelligence that other volunteers might have, but simply excluding them is absurd. There are plenty of roles they could perform.

Lastly, it is vital that security checking, and the complexities that it can sometimes involve, should not be used as an excuse to involve no volunteers at all. Any kind of people management involves some sort of administrative burden, but this should not be used as a reason for inaction. It only highlights that volunteer management, like all other forms of management, requires investment and resources, and a huge dollop of common sense.

The subject matter

Volunteering in this area takes a certain type of volunteer who is willing and able to volunteer with people and in areas that many would not care to tread. Unlike volunteering with young people or in sport, for example, recruiting volunteers to work with offenders, or others in the criminal justice system, can be extremely hard.

Lack of leadership on volunteering within the CJS

In conducting my second review of public services, it has also become abundantly clear that there are considerable differences between the involvement of volunteers within the CJS and what happens within the health and social care system. One of the most striking differences has been the lack of clear leadership and coordination across the CJS on volunteering, both at a Government policy level, and within local settings.

At a local level, the involvement of volunteers is patchy. Many prisons, courts and forces are packed with well trained, enthusiastic volunteers, whilst others are bereft. Within these agencies, however, it is noticeable that volunteers often operate without a central volunteer manager, an issue that should be addressed. Within the health service, it is the norm for every hospital to have a named volunteer manager, yet many prisons operate without having a manager who has even nominal responsibility for volunteers. Those

volunteers who are managed well often exist within established volunteer schemes run by charities such as the Samaritans' Listeners scheme.

Similarly, many police forces are being expected to integrate volunteers into their work without any strategic support from the centre or training in volunteer management. There are many exceptions, including Thames Valley, the Metropolitan Police Service and the Lancashire Constabulary (see case studies), where the police authority has made an informed decision to fund a volunteers' unit. The integration of volunteers seems to depend largely upon the enthusiasm of key individuals within agencies, such as prison governors, regional offender managers, and police authorities.

Leadership and guidance from the centre is the most obvious means of making the case to these key individuals. Central government departments and agencies have made great efforts to promote volunteering in recent years, as detailed in chapter one, although these efforts have often been hampered by a lack of ring-fenced resources. In addition, there has never been any coordinated effort by Government to champion volunteers across all parts of the CJS, with the result that efforts to promote volunteering are far more advanced in some areas than others.

Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) could be a means of promoting volunteering in local agencies. LCJBs are made up of the senior officers of local CJS agencies who are responsible for improving public confidence through the local delivery of an effective and efficient CJS. They are currently developing their community engagement strategy, so they could have a key role in promoting volunteering by working with Crime and Disorder/Community Safety Partnerships and building relationships with local Volunteer Centres. They are supported by the Office for Criminal Justice Reform, which provides advice and guidance on how they might achieve those targets. There is currently no guidance for LCJBs on how they might use volunteering to achieve their local objectives, such as reducing re-offending and increasing public confidence.

Barriers to ex-offenders volunteering

Some prisoners volunteer extensively whilst inside prison. Many find that they enjoy the experience enormously, and it is widely acknowledged that it has real potential for building up their self-confidence. However, once outside prison, these opportunities can dry up very quickly. Though NOMS recognises the benefits of peer support and understands that offenders are often better able to relate to someone with similar experiences, some offenders find that many volunteering placements are not open to them because of their criminal record. Others might want to continue helping those still inside the prison, through a mentoring relationship, for example, but, sadly, this is not always possible

Many volunteer involving organisations are reluctant to take on ex-offenders. A positive CRB check can often spell the death knell of an individual's

involvement with an organisation. When this offence relates to the work that the volunteer will be involved with (e.g. a conviction for drink driving could preclude an individual from taking up a post as a volunteer mini-bus driver) this is perfectly correct, but if it is unrelated, it could effectively amount to discrimination. Voluntary organisations do themselves a disservice by excluding individuals who, through their life experience, could have a lot to contribute.

This difficulty that ex-offenders experience is absurd. In addition, it is well known that the post-release period is a dangerous risk point for ex-prisoners to re-offend. Organisations such as Citizens Advice have drawn attention to the gaps that often occur for ex-prisoners in gaining access to housing, benefits and other basic needs, which in itself may lead on to re-offending behaviour. This is also recognised by Government. The MoJ is working, for example, with DWP to explore ways to improve offenders' financial inclusion post-release, in the hope that it will also reduce their re-offending. It would appear that gaps in provision and a lack of opportunity to continue with a new-found passion for volunteering could have a similar effect. Although not as obviously dramatic as the need for shelter and money, individuals need to feel they have found a useful and meaningful role in society. And that needs to be sustained if it is truly to have a rehabilitative effect. Volunteering is an obvious way of helping to achieve this.

Lack of an evidence base

My previous report on health and social care found that more general research on the impact of volunteering is currently lacking. It recommended that the Third Sector Research Centre should try to build up an evidence base on the specific issue of the impact of volunteering in all sectors. Volunteering England has already developed some tools for assessing impact, such as the Volunteer Investment Value Audit (VIVA). VIVA enables organisations to produce a ratio showing how much value is generated from each pound invested in volunteering. Thames Valley Police conducted a VIVA in 2005 which showed that, for every £1 invested, they received a return of £4. This study led to the Police Authority to decide to invest in a volunteer scheme.

However, it seems that the benchmark for evidence of the positive impact of volunteering in the context of the CJS is set much higher, and proof of social and economic returns is not enough. This is largely because of a context of a tighter fiscal environment. Many departments are unwilling to invest in volunteering unless it can be proven, with robust data, that specific schemes can help to achieve the specific objectives of reducing offending, and increasing public confidence. Research on the impact that volunteering can have on the CJS, both in terms of reducing offending and increasing public confidence in the system, is patchy. There is robust evidence that certain volunteering schemes can reduce re-offending. A Ministry of Justice review of evaluated mentoring schemes showed promising evidence of impact, with mentored offenders reducing their re-offending by up to 11 per cent compared

with non-mentored offenders⁶. However, many of the studies showing an impact were of lower methodological quality; higher quality studies tended to be less encouraging.

The emphasis on meeting these narrow targets is, however, somewhat short-sighted in my view. It is also all too indicative of a lack of joined-up government. I have already stated that much of the funding that supports reduced re-offending comes from outside its main Government departments – the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office. In turn, any investment that these departments make can bring real outcome benefits for other Government departments. Investment in aspects of the CJS might not fit with the two departments' targets in public confidence and reducing offending, but it can have very positive outcomes for wider Government objectives. For example, the early, tailored, support offered by volunteers for victims of sexual violence may prevent much higher costs further down the line for the Department of Health (in terms of mental health care and addictions treatment) and the Department of Work and Pensions (in terms of benefit support, see RASA case study).

It is vital that more research is done on the effect that volunteering schemes can have on reducing offending and increasing public confidence in the CJS. However, I would suggest that placing such a huge emphasis on evidence that schemes are achieving these specific goals is also a tad hypocritical. The small voluntary organisations that are funded by our CJS are often referred to as 'experiments' that are yet to prove their worth. But nearly all the agencies of the CJS themselves began life as experiments staffed by volunteers. Many of those systems have themselves not delivered, in terms of the narrow objectives of reducing re-offending and improving public confidence. If Governments were to apply the same burden of proof to the penal system that they require for volunteering schemes, then with recidivism rates of 41.6%⁷, such a system would have been abandoned long ago.

Schemes may find it difficult to prove that they have an immediate impact on re-offending, but agencies that invest in them can usually rest assured that they are receiving value for money in terms of the services they receive from volunteers, as demonstrated by many of the case studies in this report. They will also be securing wider benefits for Government social policy. I have already stated that volunteer management needs to be invested in and that it is not a free resource, but the VIVA tool has shown very clearly that investment reaps serious returns. CJS schemes that have measured their returns, such as that run by Lancashire constabulary, have found that their investment in volunteering has produced a surplus in terms of services to the community.

But there are broader, more holistic, reasons for promoting volunteering, as I outlined in chapter 2. Criminal justice is a public service just like any other. Volunteering allows easy access to the system by those who might have the

⁶ <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs07/rdsolr1107.pdf>

⁷ Re-offending of Adults: new measures of re-offending 2000 -2005, Ministry of Justice

most expertise to offer - offenders and victims. It allows connections and understanding between worlds that are often poles apart. Volunteers can gain insight into the world of individuals whom they would normally only view through the prism of a media stereotype. Most importantly, it is essential that a system that possesses such huge powers over its service-users, the prisoners, should be transparent and accessible to the public that it is supposed to serve. That applies not only at a governance level, but also at the operational level, where abuse can all too easily take place. This transparency, and the involvement of the wider public, is the mark of a civilised, democratic, system.

The importance of employer support

There have been positive trends, both in the overall numbers of magistrates, and in their diversity, over recent years. However, there remains a pressing need to recruit more magistrates under 50 for the magistracy to reflect better the diverse communities it serves. Serving as a magistrate is a substantial commitment of time - at least 26 half days a year plus training. Many potential younger candidates will already be in full-time work. The support of employers in releasing employees to serve as magistrates is, therefore, crucial.

The Ministry of Justice has taken some positive steps in recent years to raise awareness amongst employers. From talking directly to employers and their organisations, they found that many employers were unaware of the important role magistrates perform in society or of the very real benefits employers can gain from the high quality training magistrates receive. Understandably, many also had concerns about the impact on their business of giving additional time off.

Recent years have seen slight increases in the number of magistrates appointed under the age of 50, but there is still a long way to go.

Lack of core funding for specialist victims' organisations

The Office for Criminal Justice Reform has provided core funding to Victim Support, and a number of other valuable victims' organisations over the past few years, through the Victims' Fund. Practical and emotional support for victims is mostly provided by volunteers. Victim Support, the largest victims' charity, is a volunteer-led organisation, which believes that the value-added provided by a volunteer workforce cannot be overstated. Feedback from service users shows that the fact that volunteers choose to offer support on a voluntary basis means a great deal to them. They are providing a service because they genuinely care. The ethos of Victim Support is to offer support to victims by involving people within their own community. This can help the victim to regain trust in their community, which in itself has a restorative effect.

However, beyond Victim Support, it has become clear to me that many volunteers within victims' charities are not providing the idealised 'value added' role that volunteers should perform, but perform essential management functions because their organisation does not receive core funding. I am fully aware that the Government can never fund every third sector organisation. However, it appears that the demand for victims' services is outstripping supply. In this kind of environment, volunteers will step in to fill the gaps, as they always have done.

This is most starkly demonstrated by the position of Rape Crisis Centres. There is clear evidence that there is demand for these services (105,000 direct contacts from October 2006 – October 2007), yet less than one in four (24.2%) local authority areas in the UK have a specialised sexual violence support service, an issue raised recently by the Chairman of the Equality & Human Rights Commission, Trevor Phillips. Out of the 38 Rape Crisis Centres that do exist, only 21 have a full time member of staff. Many are wholly reliant on volunteers.

Central Government has set targets in this area. The reduction of serious sexual offences features strongly in the Making Communities Safer Public Service Agreement (PSA), which sets the national direction for this area, and in National Indicator 26 on supporting services for victims of sexual violence. However, the reliance on volunteers for management and other core functions has lessened their capacity to liaise with local partners such as Local Area Agreements, Community Safety Partnerships and Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships, which would enable them to secure longer-term funding.

It appears that victims' organisations, such as Rape Crisis Centres, are underfunded by the criminal justice system. Although it is not for this review to judge the priorities of the criminal justice system, it must be right for me to comment on a situation where volunteers are being exploited.

Chapter 4: How can we do better?

In my exploration of the role of volunteers in the CJS, I have frequently been extraordinarily impressed by the enthusiasm and dedication of volunteers. However, I have been struck by two very different extremes in the way volunteers are involved in the CJS, neither of which is ideal. At one extreme, I have found a system that is statutory and professionalised, where the involvement of volunteers can be sporadic, and where they, and the value they bring, are often not taken very seriously. Whilst many prisons and constabularies have been making excellent steps towards opening the doors to volunteers, others all too often remain closed. Volunteers have the potential to add value in these areas by allowing communities to re-engage with distant institutions. At the other extreme, I have found parts of the CJS that are almost entirely run by volunteers, largely those related to the care of victims of crime.

I have also often found that volunteers are not taken seriously. The rehabilitative effect, both in terms of schemes run by volunteers, and by offenders themselves, is doubted by the CJS. I would take issue with this establishment-led doubt. Schemes such as Kensington & Chelsea Volunteer Centre's resettlement programme seem to demonstrate a clear rehabilitative effect. But, broadly speaking, it is also often extremely difficult to demonstrate an immediate impact on re-offending. The effects are often much more long-term, and thus beyond the scope of much current research. A relationship with a volunteer may, in some cases, be the only contact an offender has had with the world outside criminality, with people who are not paid to talk to them. The relationship may encapsulate the first tentative step on the road to reform.

Secondly, I would argue that the focus on public confidence and reducing re-offending prevents a more holistic approach that would bring benefits to broader government objectives, and lead to a more civilised, people-orientated, criminal justice system.

Within this culture, volunteering has not been adequately invested in by the CJS, and any attempt to invest seriously may be viewed with suspicion by paid staff, as a possible way of supplanting paid jobs. I have, however, found examples where the benefits of volunteers are recognised and invested in, and in those cases volunteers have flourished. If volunteers are to have a similar impact in other parts of the CJS, then they also need this investment.

At the other extreme, many services, especially in the area of victims, are almost entirely led on a voluntary basis, by organisations that sometimes do not receive core funding. I have been amazed by the passion and dedication of many of the volunteers in this area, many of whom have personal experience of crime. I would not wish in any way to judge the priorities of the CJS, which is not the meat of this review, but I have been struck by the huge demands placed on volunteers in this area, where they are often not 'adding value', as volunteers are normally supposed to do, but are simply responding to a need that statutory services are not meeting adequately.

There are many benefits to volunteers providing these services, and I am not by any means suggesting they should be replaced by paid staff. Indeed many victims' organisations choose to use volunteers as part of their service delivery, as they can be just as effective as paid staff. Volunteers in this area act with passion, they are doing it for the right reasons, and they provide an independence from 'the system', which is vital, especially when a victim feels the system itself has let them down. However, I have come across cases where these charities receive no core funding, and, as a result, volunteers step into core management roles, to help those who are desperate for help. There are also some instances where volunteers are providing services to address the capacity issues of some statutory services, for example in the area of counselling where health waiting lists can be long. Statutory services seem to be taking these passionate individuals for granted. In this area, it is not a case of volunteers adding value, but of them being totally indispensable.

Taking all of these issues into account, I would like to make a number of recommendations that can be grouped as:

1. High level recommendations for the agencies of the CJS
2. Specific recommendations for CJS agencies
3. Cross-Government recommendations and,
4. Recommendations for organisations outside Government

1a) A ministerial champion should be established for volunteering across the CJS

Whilst I have played a temporary role as volunteering champion for the CJS, whilst conducting this review in my role as the Prime Minister's Champion for Volunteering, I feel that this is a position that should become more permanent. The disparate nature of the CJS, and the recent history of reorganisation, means that there is no current overall push on volunteering. Whilst many parts of the CJS have made concerted efforts to promote volunteering, others have made none at all. A cross-CJS champion might be able to bring about some cohesion.

The Champion should have three main aims:

1. To identify where volunteers could add value, but are not in place at present, and promote volunteering as a policy option
2. To identify where there is a need to increase the quality of opportunities, and to disseminate best practice in volunteer management
3. To act as an advocate for volunteers within CJS focused charities

The Champion will make the case for volunteering to the agencies on the ground. S/he will enable them to see where the barriers are, what the risks are and how they can be overcome.

Early objectives that the champion might want to action over the following two years include:

- Promoting and monitoring the implementation of the other recommendations I have made.
- Speaking appearances at key peer influencing events, such as the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Prison Governors' Association and the Association of Chief Probation Officers.
- Establishing a network of champions across the CJS who can help to disseminate best practice in volunteer management.
- Action to reduce the bureaucratic burdens within the CJS that may be preventing volunteer involvement, especially the barriers that prevent ex-offenders from volunteering.
- Championing an inter-ministerial meeting on volunteering - as so much of the system for reducing offending actually comes via other departments. As so many of the benefits from investment will be felt in other Government departments as well, it makes sense for ministers to

look into how the use of volunteers can be joined up throughout Government.

- Conducting a review on how diversity can be encouraged amongst volunteers in the CJS.

1b) The agencies of the CJS on the ground should invest in volunteering and good volunteer management

It is clear that, if volunteering is to be a success, it should not be imposed on local agencies by top-down central Government. Volunteering flourishes where it has an enthusiastic and influential local champion, not where it is implemented by a tick-box exercise.

Most of my recommendations are aimed at central Government, but a direct plea is needed to the agencies of the CJS that operate on the ground – to courts, police authorities, prison governors, Probation Boards and Trusts, Regional Directors of Offender Management and local authorities. All departments and agencies should have a targeted plan to involve volunteers to enhance their services.

When making decisions around in-house services, and the commissioning of services, they really need to consider the value-added results that volunteering can bring. VIVA impact assessments, such as the one performed by Thames Valley Police, demonstrate that, when invested in properly, volunteering can reap serious dividends, both economically and socially.

I would also urge all those concerned to adhere to good practice guidelines along the lines recommended by Volunteering England. As mentioned previously, there are many good practice guides that have already been published by central agencies. I would encourage those working on the ground to implement this guidance.

1c) All agencies of the CJS should have a strategy to engage the skills and time of ex-offenders, to deliver those services alongside professionals.

As with my previous review, I have come to the conclusion that the beneficiaries of services are a wasted potential resource for the actual delivery and design of public services. Offenders and victims have unrivalled knowledge and experience that can be used to help others going through similar situations

By ‘strategy to engage’ I do not simply mean consulting people, though that is of course important. Agencies should go further and ensure that they actually collaborate to produce services from policy design, to commissioning, to actual delivery. For example, schemes that allow offenders to be mentored by ex-offenders demonstrate the unique contribution that service-users can make. I would like to see such schemes rolled out across the country.

1d) Employee volunteering should be rolled out throughout the CJS

There is no better way to understand volunteering and the voluntary sector than to become engaged with it oneself. Many of the issues I have identified within this report have come up as a result of a lack of understanding amongst

policy-makers, who have little experience either of volunteers or volunteer management. Active engagement with projects, such as those described in this report, would break down many of those misconceptions. I am aware that there are existing employee volunteering programmes, but there is a need for greater promotion and consistency in these efforts.

2a) The Office for Criminal Justice Reform should produce guidance and a toolkit for local criminal justice boards on how volunteering can help them meet their objectives.

As the only local bodies with a cross-CJS perspective, it is important that OCJR provide LCJBs with the tools they need to promote volunteering with local agencies. This should include building relationships with local Volunteer Centres and other agencies to promote volunteering at every stage of the CJS, and it should be produced in partnership with the third sector, the Office of the Third Sector and other relevant Government departments.

2b) Guidance should be produced for commissioners in the CJS on how to consider the involvement of volunteers when commissioning services.

Commissioners need information and training about how volunteering can help them meet their outcome targets. They also need to be informed about the value-added that volunteering can bring if it is properly invested in, and to ensure that organisations that include volunteers in their bids will be providing adequate support to them. The Ministry of Justice/National Offender Management Service have made a commitment to develop commissioning guidance through their infrastructure funding to Clinks. I would like to see this guidance developed as soon as possible and rolled-out to other commissioners in the CJS.

2c) Examine how more specific schemes for offenders (and ex-offenders) who want to volunteer could be extended across the country.

During the course of my review I have come across some excellent examples of prisoners, and ex-offenders, taking part in successful volunteering schemes, but there is often a crucial gap in opportunities to volunteer for offenders in the community.

There are a number of barriers that can prevent offenders from accessing the benefits that volunteering can bring, both in terms of being encouraged and signposted to volunteer by the authorities, and in terms of the willingness of volunteer involving organisations to take them on. Projects such as the Kensington & Chelsea resettlement scheme can help to address both of these hurdles, by providing a bespoke service for offenders. They provide an easy referral point for prisons/probation, and they can work with organisations to encourage them to take on offenders. I recommend that departments should consider extending funding for these schemes.

2d) Unemployed people in contact with the Criminal Justice system should be signposted to volunteering opportunities as a stepping stone to entering the labour market.

There is some evidence that employment can reduce re-offending. And, like education and training, volunteering is recognised as a valuable route back into work. However, the role that volunteering can play in helping people back into the labour market is often not recognised by the agencies on the ground.

3a) Government departments and their partners should work to develop a sustainable funding model for victims' organisations, where volunteers are clearly providing a vital service that is not being provided by statutory services. It has become clear that volunteers are often stepping into the unfilled gaps left by statutory victims' services. This is despite the efforts of Government to provide some core funding to victims' organisations and to encourage the commissioning of services at a local level.

This recommendation does not refer to organisations that have specifically chosen to use a service-delivery model that engages volunteers, such as Victim Support. Organisations such as these understand the key strengths of volunteers, and the value-added they can bring, in exactly the way that I would advocate. Instead, it refers to organisations that receive little or no core funding, where volunteers fill in for key management roles or professional counselling services.

The CJS volunteering champion should be involved in the cross-Government group that develops the funding model. It concerns me deeply that many volunteers are having to take on huge burdens of responsibility, and that their concern and goodwill is being exploited.

3b) A coordinated cross-Government initiative to encourage employer support for voluntary roles.

Many individuals are hampered in their ability to perform formal, statutory volunteer roles, such as magistrates and specials, because of the large time commitment required, and the limitations this can place on their career prospects. However, I feel it would be unfair, and perhaps counterproductive, to place more onerous obligations on employers. Previous MoJ initiatives demonstrate that informing and encouraging employers about the benefits of voluntary roles can be very effective. It might be useful to establish a cross-Government initiative to enable employers to see the benefits of the magistracy, and wider voluntary roles. This should be incorporated as a matter of priority into BERR's corporate responsibility strategy.

4) Joint guidance, by the trade union movement and Volunteering England, on the use of volunteers within public services should be published.

This is my second report on the use of volunteers in the public services, and once again one of the key issues that has arisen has been the fear of job substitution. The unions could and should play a full and valuable role in ensuring that volunteers do indeed add value.

I have already come across examples of local union reps working closely with volunteering involving programmes to ensure that they do not perform roles

that should be carried out by paid staff. Guidance would enable other local unions to know that they have nothing to fear from public service volunteers.

In addition, any rewriting of the Compact that comes out of the current Compact debate should make it very clear that volunteers are not a replacement for paid staff, and that they are there to provide additional roles and services.