

Introducing the voluntary sector



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Introducing the voluntary sector

Introducing the voluntary sector

Introducing the voluntary sector is a free badged course which lasts 8 weeks, with approximately 3 hours' study time each week. You can work through the course at your own pace, so if you have more time one week there is no problem with pushing on to complete another week's study.

There may be several reasons for you studying this course – perhaps you've been thinking about volunteering or working in the voluntary sector and wanted to find out more about it; or you already work or volunteer and are seeking to build on your existing knowledge or skills. You may of course have just have a general interest in voluntary organisations or were looking to develop your study skills for further learning.

You'll start with an overview of the voluntary sector, how it is defined and what the 'distinctive' features might be. You'll then move on to look at values, organisations, functions, stakeholders, power and the role of volunteering. All these aspects will be explained so don't worry if they seem unfamiliar at the moment. You'll use plenty of real-life examples to help with this and you'll get plenty of opportunities to practise your new understanding and skills.

Part of this practice will be the weekly interactive quizzes, of which Weeks 4 and 8 will provide you with an opportunity to earn a badge to demonstrate your new skills. You can read more on how to study the course and about badges in the next sections.

After completing this course you will be able to:

- demonstrate a basic understanding of what is meant by the voluntary sector, its values, contribution and distinctive features
- recognise and use some of the terms and concepts associated with understanding the voluntary sector
- use and apply your knowledge about the voluntary sector to your own work or volunteering experience
- link your learning with your own personal or career goals.

Moving around the course

The easiest way to navigate around the course is through the 'My course progress' page. You can get back there at any time by clicking on 'Go to course progress' in the menu bar. From the quizzes click on 'Return to Introducing the Voluntary Sector'.

It's also good practice, if you access a link from within a course page (including links to the quizzes), to open it in a new window or tab. That way you can easily return to where you've come from without having to use the back button on your browser.

If you enjoy this course and want to learn more about the voluntary sector, particularly in terms of skills for working or volunteering in an organisation, or if you find you are already familiar with most of the material in the course, you might like to take a look at *Working in voluntary organisations* (available soon).

What is a badged course?

While studying *Introducing the voluntary sector* you have the option to work towards gaining a digital badge.

Badged courses are a key part of The Open University's mission *to promote the educational well-being of the community*. The courses also provide another way of helping you to progress from informal to formal learning.

To complete a course you need to be able to find about 24 hours of study time, over a period of about 8 weeks. However, it is possible to study them at any time, and at a pace to suit you.

Badged courses are all available on The Open University's [OpenLearn](#) website and do not cost anything to study. They differ from Open University courses because you do not receive support from a tutor. But you do get useful feedback from the interactive quizzes.

What is a badge?

Digital badges are a new way of demonstrating online that you have gained a skill. Schools, colleges and universities are working with employers and other organisations to develop open badges that help learners gain recognition for their skills, and support employers to identify the right candidate for a job.

Badges demonstrate your work and achievement on the course. You can share your achievement with friends, family and employers, and on social media. Badges are a great motivation, helping you to reach the end of the course. Gaining a badge often boosts confidence in the skills and abilities that underpin successful study. So, completing this course should encourage you to think about taking other courses.



How to get a badge

Getting a badge is straightforward! Here's what you have to do:

- read each week of the course
- score 50% or more in the two badge quizzes in Week 4 and Week 8.

For all the quizzes, you can have three attempts at most of the questions (for true or false type questions you usually only get one attempt). If you get the answer right first time you will get more marks than for a correct answer the second or third time. Therefore, please be aware that for the two badge quizzes it is possible to get all the questions right but not score 50% and be eligible for the badge on that attempt. If one of your answers is incorrect you will often receive helpful feedback and suggestions about how to work out the correct answer.

For the badge quizzes, if you're not successful in getting 50% the first time, after 24 hours you can attempt the whole quiz, and come back as many times as you like.

We hope that as many people as possible will gain an Open University badge – so you should see getting a badge as an opportunity to reflect on what you have learned rather than as a test.

If you need more guidance on getting a badge and what you can do with it, take a look at the [OpenLearn FAQs](#). When you gain your badge you will receive an email to notify you and you will be able to view and manage all your badges in [My OpenLearn](#) within 24 hours of completing the criteria to gain a badge.

Get started with Week 1.

Week 1: What is the voluntary sector?

Introduction

The term 'voluntary sector' covers a wide variety of organisations, ranging from very small self-help groups with no paid staff to large national or international charities managing millions of pounds. Surprisingly, these very different organisations do share some elements in common.

Why have you chosen to study this course and find out more about the voluntary sector? Perhaps you've been thinking about volunteering or working in the voluntary sector and wanted to find out more about it; or you already work or volunteer and are seeking to build on your existing knowledge or skills. You may of course just have a general interest in voluntary organisations, or are looking to develop or refresh your study skills for further learning.

You begin this course by finding out about the nature of the voluntary sector and how it is defined. By looking into the past, you will explore the origins of voluntary and community organisations. You will start to examine what voluntary organisations do and how they contribute to well-being, meeting the needs of different groups and communities (and the environment) by providing services and campaigning for change.

You will also explore how the voluntary sector differs from the private and public sectors, and whether it is distinctive or special. One of the main themes running through the course is how to think about values in relation to the voluntary sector: what its values are and how it is valued. The course moves from defining the sector and its ethos to looking at the components of the sector, what the sector does, how it is funded, the role of stakeholders, power and empowerment, the sector's beneficiaries and finally the role of volunteering in the sector.

There are many differences between countries in terms of how their voluntary sectors have developed and it would be difficult to produce a short course that covered all variations. The focus of this course is on the UK context but international learners should find many points of comparison. Even where the experiences are very different, it is useful to think about why these exist and what different countries can learn from each other.

Start by watching this video in which the course author, Julie Charlesworth, introduces you to Week 1.

Video content is not available in this format.



By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- understand the meaning of 'voluntary'
- explain the differences between sectors
- explain the origins of the voluntary sector
- understand the idea of value and distinctiveness in relation to the voluntary sector.

Before you start, The Open University would really appreciate a few minutes of your time to tell us about yourself and your expectations of the course. Your input will help to further improve the online learning experience. If you'd like to help, and if you haven't done so already, please fill in this [optional survey](#).

1 What is voluntary about the voluntary sector?

What do the following organisations have in common?



Figure 1 Different voluntary organisations

Figure 1 shows leaflets from some very different organisations: the Badger Trust, the Wales Air Ambulance service, a large historic house open to the public, the Bumblebee

Conservation Trust and hospices caring for terminally ill patients. Other organisations defined as charitable or voluntary might include: the British Museum, a scout group, Eton College (an elite boarding school for boys), Neighbourhood Watch, the Red Cross, Greenpeace, The Open University, a community shop with a turnover of £500,000, a football club for children and a youth club.

This is just a snapshot of some of the diverse organisations, groups and trusts that are defined as charities, voluntary or community organisations. Yet, as you can probably guess, they differ hugely in terms of size, reach, purpose, ambition, status, income and power. They also vary considerably in how the term 'voluntary' applies to them. Do they involve volunteers giving their time for free? Is their only source of funding voluntary donations from the public?

Clearly, even without knowing much about all these organisations, you could hazard a guess that Eton College, for example, is not a voluntary organisation in the same way as the Badger Trust! However, Eton is in fact a **registered charity**. Furthermore, the British Museum was established by the government and, although a charity, it is not regulated by the **Charity Commission**.

Some organisations with a charitable status, therefore, would not be included in a definition of 'the voluntary (and community) sector'. For some people, the term voluntary sector means organisations with a focus on **social welfare**. This course includes examples not only of organisations covering social welfare but also those covering arts and leisure, heritage, conservation, the environment, sports and so on. Therefore, the term 'voluntary sector' is used here more as a shorthand way of covering those diverse organisations, large or small, international or national, that operate on a **not-for-profit** basis and offer a wider public benefit. You will look further into the idea of sectors later but first you'll examine what 'voluntary' might mean in relation to these organisations.

Voluntary nature

It would be misleading to think that voluntary organisations only involve volunteers giving their time for free: many also employ a large paid workforce alongside their volunteers. Many organisations have become increasingly **professionalised** too.

To be defined as part of the voluntary sector, organisations must include some aspect of 'voluntary nature', which the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) describes as organisations or groups (2016):

- that are run by unpaid **trustees**
- whose funding comes from donations or grants
- that may be assisted by volunteers.

You will now do an introductory activity, which starts to explore what 'voluntary' means in the context of the voluntary sector.

Activity 1 Understanding 'voluntary nature'

Allow approximately 15 minutes

You will look at different types of voluntary organisations in more detail in Week 3 but to get you started, think about a voluntary organisation you know well or would like to understand better. You can search online to see if the organisation has a website that

explains how it works. Then write notes on the 'voluntary' aspects of the organisation using the NCVO's definition:

1. Does your chosen organisation have a board of unpaid trustees? What do the trustees do?
2. Where does the organisation's funding come from? For example, is it funded by donations from the public, membership fees or grants from government?
3. Does the organisation involve volunteers in running its services?

Provide your answer...

Comment

Hopefully you found the information you were looking for – not all organisations have informative websites. Here is an example using the National Trust (n.d.):

The National Trust is a large charity covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland. They care for historic houses, gardens, ancient monuments, countryside, coastline, villages and more.

Trustees: the National Trust has a board of unpaid trustees who agree plans and hold staff to account for their delivery. They also have a council with elected and appointed members.

Funding: the National Trust's funding comes from membership fees (it has 3.7 million members!), donations, legacies and revenue from their commercial operations (shops, holiday cottages, cafés, etc.). They do not directly receive money from government, whereas many charities do – particularly in the form of contracts for delivering services.

Volunteers: the National Trust involves volunteers right across their operations. They have 61,000 volunteers.

You will come back to these issues in future weeks but this section will have started you thinking about the management of voluntary organisations, how organisations raise funding for what they do and the involvement of volunteers.

You will now look in more detail at the idea of 'sectors' in society and the economy, how to define the voluntary sector and whether the boundaries between sectors are becoming less distinct.

1.1 Defining the voluntary sector



Figure 2 Thinking about how sectors might overlap

The term 'sector' has been used in the context of voluntary organisations and this implies that there might be other sectors. What are these 'sectors' and how does the voluntary sector fit in? Generally speaking, there are three main sectors in the economy and society: **public**, **private** and **voluntary**. As you will see later, this is a simplified version of what is in reality a complex situation but thinking about three distinct sectors helps provide a starting point.

1. The public sector includes organisations that provide basic public services such as armed forces, policing, roads, education and health. These services are provided through income from taxation and, in the UK, national insurance.
2. The private sector includes organisations and individuals that provide goods and services and their primary aim is to make a profit; for example, shops, manufacturers, financial services, etc. Profits are distributed to owners and shareholders as well as reinvested.
3. The voluntary sector is different from the other two sectors because it is 'not-for-profit' and is not government controlled. Traditionally, it has occupied a 'third space' and sits between the public and private sectors (another term for the voluntary sector is the third sector). The third space is one where needs have not been met because the private sector has not seen it as profitable to do so and the public sector has either neglected these needs or not been able to afford to address them.

To add to this somewhat confusing picture, the government as well as voluntary organisations themselves also use a variety of other terms to describe voluntary and community groups:

- **charities** (a catch-all term)
- **civil society**
- **community sector**
- **non-governmental**
- **non-profit**
- not-for-profit
- **third sector**
- **voluntary action.**

You might want to look up these terms in the course glossary if you have not come across them before. You will come back to some of these terms throughout the course.

Overlaps

Returning to the idea of public, private and voluntary sectors, although it is useful to start by considering these sectors as separate and distinct, they are in reality regarded as overlapping. This means that organisations within each sector often operate beyond their own sector's boundaries.

This boundary blurring has become of increasing interest and concern to voluntary organisations and other commentators in recent years as governments retreat from providing some welfare services and look to private and voluntary organisations to pick these up. Yet, on closer examination, the boundaries have always overlapped.

Professor Pat Thane has written extensively about the historical development of voluntary organisations. She highlights how medieval monasteries, for example, provided healthcare and welfare for needy people, sometimes working with government to do so, and in the nineteenth century, voluntary organisations provided schools for working class children but these were funded by government (Thane, 2011).

However, it seems that the boundaries are becoming even more 'blurred' because services traditionally run by government are being run by other sectors. In the case of the UK, think of how private sector organisations are now running services that used to be provided by local authorities or hospitals (for example, cleaning or waste collection). Public sector libraries are often run by volunteers instead of paid staff.

There are also more partnerships between the sectors: for example, a new NHS hospital built using private sector finance, or voluntary organisations working with local authorities to provide social housing or care for children with disabilities.

In the next section you'll look at one specific area with blurred boundaries: social enterprise.

1.2 Social enterprise

One growth area in the economy is **social enterprise**. Although social enterprise encompasses businesses that generate profits, these businesses are specifically set up to fulfil social or environmental goals. This mixture makes it difficult to say which economic sector would be their natural home.

Activity 2 Looking at social enterprise

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Watch this promotional video about social enterprise and answer the following questions:

- What activities do social enterprises get involved with?
- Which elements are private sector-related and which are more like the voluntary sector?

Video content is not available in this format.



Provide your answer...

Comment

The examples of Stour Space, The People's Supermarket and Jamie Oliver's Fifteen illustrate that social enterprises cover a wide range of activities. These examples are of a space for exhibitions and advice to creatives, a supermarket and a restaurant. All three are helping local people whether in terms of advice, providing better quality food or training.

The supermarket example is a particularly interesting one as it is a commercial shop selling food (private sector) but it is also part of the cooperative movement, which has a long history and has always generated benefits for its members. It also provides benefits to the wider community by trying to tackle food waste and promote **social cohesion**.

If organisations are becoming more complex and drawing on characteristics from all three sectors, does this mean that the traditional notion of an independent voluntary sector is disappearing?

One way to explore this question would be to assess data on the voluntary sector, such as the total number of voluntary organisations or the number of volunteers, and whether these have increased or decreased. You will look in more detail in Weeks 3 and 7 at some of this data. This will help you in building your own opinion on the nature of the voluntary sector and how organisations you are interested in fit broader trends.

Despite some concerns that the voluntary sector might be shrinking, suffering from cuts in funding or losing its independence due to changes in government financial support for the **welfare state** in particular, there is still an emphasis on the role of voluntary action in society. In the UK, governments regularly promote the role of the voluntary sector in providing services, and the role of citizens in volunteering.

This section provided an overview of where voluntary organisations might sit in society today. However, in order to understand why there is a voluntary sector in the first place, and how this has influenced its shape and nature today, it is important to look back at the history of voluntary action and organisations in the UK.

2 Where did the voluntary sector come from?



Figure 3 Lady Buckingham selling roses for Alexandra Rose Day in London, a charitable fundraising event that started in 1912

You are now going to take a step back into the past to understand how and why early voluntary organisations were established, particularly those concerned with providing social welfare. This will help to give you a sense of the purpose of the voluntary sector today.

Colin Rochester, one of the founders of the Voluntary Action History Society, suggests that it is important to look at history. Writing in a book exploring historical perspectives on social policy and the role of voluntary organisations, he asks:

[H]ow and to what extent has the nature of voluntary action and its role in society remained essentially the same despite the changing context within which voluntary agencies exist and carry out their functions?

(2011, p. 5)

In other words, Rochester is highlighting aspects of continuity and change: many voluntary organisations emerged in the past because government did not provide for the needy. The UK has had a welfare state for many years and the standard of living and quality of life have improved for many people compared with the past, yet the voluntary sector still exists and is still needed.

Some of the best-known organisations in the UK today have a long history and many were founded by **philanthropists**, religious organisations or other groups of concerned people. They had usually identified a vulnerable group in society needing help, or a particular cause or issue that was not being addressed by government.

The examples in Box 1 give a sense of the history of some of the charities working in the UK.

Box 1 How old?

Barnardo's: the founder, Dr Barnardo, set up a school in 1867 for poor children to receive basic education, and set up a boys' home in London in 1870.

Laugharne Corporation: claims to be the oldest charity in Wales, dating back to 1290. It is a local governing body and one of the last surviving medieval corporations in the UK.

The Red Cross: the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement was established in 1863 by five founding members, including Swiss businessman Henri Dunant.

ScotsCare: the oldest Scottish charity outside Scotland, founded in 1665 to help Scottish people living away from Scotland.

Belfast Central Mission: founded in 1889 by the Methodist Church to help local people in poverty.

2.1 Timeline

There are many documented histories of the voluntary sector, with similarities and differences between the different fields of interest such as health, social policy, environment and education. In general, early initiatives came from faith-based organisations providing almshouses, schools and care of the sick. Even old-age pensions and unemployment insurance schemes were administered by voluntary organisations.

The government gradually became involved, helped or took over some of these services. The ethos of the early twentieth century was 'liberal', in that the government saw its role as working with voluntary organisations to provide vital welfare services (Thane, 2011).

With the establishment of the welfare state in the 1940s, many services previously provided by voluntary organisations became absorbed by government and the voluntary sector was under threat. However, as the decades went by, more gaps in provision were identified, particularly around poverty, homelessness and assisting overseas, which led to

new roles for voluntary organisations. Pressure groups such as those campaigning for women's liberation, gay and disability rights also emerged.

Professor Pat Thane uses the example of the NSPCC to explain how some early charities were set up:

For example, child abuse was not new in the later nineteenth century, but it took the voluntary National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC, founded in 1884 as the London Society) to make a fuss about it, seek ways to rescue and protect children, to press government to make it illegal and punish perpetrators and, eventually, to set up local authority committees to support and care for children. [George Behlmer, *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England, 1870-1908*, Stanford University Press, 1982]. NSPCC was just one of many organizations which established a **model for the future**, by identifying a social problem, seeking viable ways to help the victims, then campaigning for government to adopt these methods, because only the state had the resources to deal on a national scale with challenges beyond the scope of unavoidably limited and localized voluntary action. Far from the state seeking to crowd out voluntary action, it was, often reluctantly, persuaded into action by voluntary organizations. [*bold emphasis added*]

(2011)

In the next activity you'll refer back to Professor Thane's idea of a 'model for the future' by applying it to your own organisation or to one that interests you. You could use the organisation you chose in Activity 1. Applying models or frameworks is a useful skill to learn if you wish to do further study. It can also help you in thinking about the context in which you work or volunteer and in understanding why your organisation was set up.

Activity 3 Using history to understand the present

Allow approximately 20 minutes

First, watch this video in which Matthew Slocombe, the director of The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), based in London, answers these questions about the organisation. The questions are based on Pat Thane's description of the NSPCC as a 'model for the future'.

- When was the organisation set up?
- What was the 'problem' the organisation wanted to address? Has this changed?
- In what ways did the organisation help to protect buildings, then and now?
- Did the organisation campaign or lobby government in the past, and does it campaign now?

These questions will help to guide you in thinking about your chosen organisation's origins.

Video content is not available in this format.



Now note down your answers to these questions for your chosen organisation. If you have chosen a modern organisation (perhaps less than 20 years old) you may wish to select an older one, perhaps from the list of examples in [Box 1](#).

When was the organisation set up?

Provide your answer...

What was the 'problem' the organisation wanted to address? Has this changed?

Provide your answer...

In what ways did the organisation help people (or animals, buildings, the environment), then and now?

Provide your answer...

Did the organisation campaign or lobby government in the past, and does it campaign now?

Provide your answer...

Comment

Hopefully you found the information you needed about your chosen organisation. You will return to some of these issues in later weeks on this course. They are also due to be covered in more depth in another free forthcoming OpenLearn course, *Working in the voluntary sector*.

If your chosen organisation has a long history similar to the examples in Box 1, what do you think has changed over the years? Alternatively, has there been continuity in the organisation?

Think back to Colin Rochester's question at the start of this section – it was about the nature and role of voluntary organisations: has your example organisation remained the same despite the changing context?

These are issues to think about as you move on to the next section on the distinctiveness of the voluntary sector.

In this section you explored the historical context of the voluntary sector, which showed that, despite a changing context with more government-provided services, voluntary organisations are still needed. Even if an organisation you work or volunteer for (or are interested in) was established only in the last few years, you may know of other, older organisations working in a similar field and therefore be able to identify similarities with yours – even if they were set up in different times.

This attention to the historical development of voluntary organisations is being pursued in a wider context now, with a call for voluntary organisations to consider preserving their archives and thus their history. As the Voluntary Action History Society (VAHS) explains:

We cannot write the history of Britain without recourse to the records of voluntary organisations. This will be especially true for those in the future wanting to understand social provision and policy as it operates today, given the increasingly blurred boundaries between public, private and voluntary sectors.

(n.d.)

In the next section, you will move back to the present day to consider whether it is accurate or useful to say that the voluntary sector is distinctive.

3 What is the voluntary sector's distinctive value?

A debate that rages among academics, politicians, other commentators and the voluntary sector itself is whether the voluntary sector has distinctiveness or distinctive value. It could be argued that all three sectors are distinctive in their own way but what are the elements that make up the voluntary sector and make it special, and why does it matter? You will return to this idea throughout the course, particularly in Week 2 where you look at values in more detail.

The word 'value' has more than one meaning: it can relate both to monetary value and to 'giving value for money'. In terms of the voluntary sector, it could be used to assess how staff, volunteers and the services they provide are valued. There is also increasing interest in the concept of **social value**. This refers to value added beyond financial considerations, such as wider benefits for local communities (similar to the examples of social enterprise in Activity 2).

You will use the activity and discussion here as a way of starting to think about the ideas around distinctive value.

Activity 4 What is distinctive?

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Start by thinking about what 'distinctive' means in general terms – you might want to look in a dictionary for help with this. Then write down some key words that could describe what makes the voluntary sector distinctive.

Provide your answer...

Now watch this video in which Martha Lane Fox discusses her understanding of distinctiveness. Martha Lane Fox is Chancellor of The Open University and supports many charities working with human rights, women's rights and digital skills.

Video content is not available in this format.



Finally, compare your list of key words with ours.

- How many of these words also apply to the public or private sectors?
- Is it helpful to try to think of the voluntary sector as different or special?

Comment

Did you have any of these words?

cause	social value
driven	special
feelings	trusted
innovative	value beyond monetary
motivation	value for money
risk taking	values
respect	volunteer

3.1 Is the voluntary sector distinctive?

Rob Macmillan, from the University of Birmingham, published a thought-provoking piece in 2013 about 'distinction' in the voluntary sector. In his work he explored the ways in which others used the idea of distinctiveness in their definitions of voluntary organisations, such as:

- voluntary sector organisations are perceived as more trustworthy
- the people involved in setting up voluntary sector activities have distinctive values
- voluntary organisations have distinctive **governance** and **stakeholder** arrangements.

However, Macmillan (2013) also highlighted past research and commentary where people have concluded that there are many parallels between the public, private and voluntary sectors, which means the voluntary sector is *not* as distinctive as many would believe. Therefore, Macmillan argues that it is more important to explore *why* the sector searches for evidence of distinctiveness rather than looking for evidence to prove its distinctiveness.

This might sound very complex! However, the key issue to take away from this is that for many people, both inside and outside the voluntary sector, being able to argue that the sector is distinctive is a means of giving the sector an advantage over its competitors. This is important when so many organisations from all sectors are competing for funding in a crowded market. Of course, there is also competition between voluntary sector organisations themselves for funding – and each organisation might argue for its own distinctiveness.

If this seems difficult, think about it in practical terms: if you were a funder and had applications from several organisations to consider – and all seemed similar in terms of value for money – would you be more swayed by the one that presented a convincing case around values, being trustworthy and so on?

You will learn more about this in Week 4.

4 This week's quiz

This quiz will help you review your learning on this course so far. You may find it helpful to look back over the week and your notes before you start to remind yourself of what has been covered. You can stop at any time, and come back to the quiz later if you want a break.

Quizzes are only available online and when enrolled to the course on OpenLearn

[Week 1 practice quiz.](#)

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding Ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

5 Summary

This week introduced you to some of the broader issues around understanding the voluntary sector and, in particular, what is meant by 'voluntary'. You have explored some definitions about the voluntary sector. You have read about some examples and how you might compare them. You were introduced to what is meant by 'voluntary'. There was also an overview of the history of the voluntary sector and how taking a step back into the past can help to develop an understanding of the present day environment for voluntary organisations: despite wider changes in society, particularly with the development of a welfare state, there is still a need for voluntary organisations. You were also introduced to the ideas of value and distinctiveness.

In Week 1, you have learned about:

- the different types of voluntary organisations in the UK
- the three sectors – public, private and voluntary
- how the voluntary sector might be defined
- how the boundaries between sectors might be blurring
- the origins of the voluntary sector
- the importance of history in understanding today's voluntary sector
- what distinctiveness might mean in relation to the voluntary sector
- searching online for information about voluntary organisations
- applying ideas and frameworks to your own organisation or other examples.

Next week you will find out more about values – at an individual level as well as for the voluntary sector and organisations.

You can now go to Week 2.

Week 2: Values and beliefs

Introduction

On a day-to-day basis, you are undoubtedly affected by the values of other people. You probably find that there are both differences and similarities among your values and those of your friends, colleagues and your organisation (if you work or volunteer).

Last week you explored the nature and history of the voluntary sector and how it differs from the public and private sectors. You were also introduced to the idea that the voluntary sector is considered to have 'distinctive' value. One aspect of this was that voluntary organisations, although diverse in terms of size and purpose, are perceived to hold distinctive sets of **values**, as do the people who work and volunteer in them. Understanding what these seemingly abstract values might be, is the focus of this week. In the following video Julie Charlesworth introduces Week 2.

Video content is not available in this format.



This week you will explore values and beliefs and their importance to voluntary and community organisations, as well as how personal values might underpin your work or volunteering, and the ways in which you relate to others. The concept of values may seem rather abstract or hard to pin down. In order to understand them better, you will get some experience in thinking what your own values might be.

This week will also demonstrate that values exert a strong influence on people's behaviour and motivation, particularly in choosing to work in the voluntary sector. Values are considered to be at the heart of this sector and guide what voluntary organisations do;

for example, protecting vulnerable people in society, helping people deal with poverty and inequalities, or campaigning to save wildlife or to protect the environment. Other organisations may be set up as an expression of religious, humanitarian or political beliefs.

Furthermore, this week introduces the role played by organisational values in people's work or volunteering. This week also looks at how differences in values can, on occasion, lead to conflict.

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- explain what is meant by values
- understand the different levels at which values are perceived to operate
- reflect on the importance of values in how you relate to others
- explain how value conflicts arise.

1 What are values?

You will start by exploring what is meant by values and beliefs and why they matter in the context of the voluntary sector. You saw in Week 1 how the word 'value' is associated in different ways with the voluntary sector and, although in this week you will focus on one particular meaning, it is useful to recap on how 'value' has been used so far as well as introduce some new meanings. These new meanings will be explored further in future weeks of the course.

The following list covers some of the points and questions you were introduced to last week in terms of how 'value' has been applied to the voluntary sector.

- **Distinctive value:** this relates to whether there is something special about the voluntary sector and why organisations might seek evidence to prove it. This was discussed by Macmillan as a way of demonstrating advantage over competitors.
- **Monetary value:** this relates to income and funding, and assessing the financial contribution of the voluntary sector (you will find out more about this in Weeks 3 and 4).
- **Value for money:** this relates to whether services provided are efficient and effective. This is usually part of contracts between voluntary organisations and other organisations.
- **Social value:** this relates to the 'added value' of organisations beyond financial considerations, such as wider benefits to local communities or environmental concerns, and is now part of contracts with government.

There are two further aspects of value that you will find out more about this week and next week:

- **Valuing the contribution of volunteers:** this can have two meanings. First, organisations appreciate the work and contribution of their volunteers. Many cannot function without the help of volunteers. The second meaning relates to putting a monetary value on the contribution of volunteers. This is often done by working out what the total cost of salaries would be if the volunteers were paid members of staff.

- **The values of staff, volunteers and organisations in the voluntary sector:** What values do people and organisations hold? Can we generalise about values?

1.1 Defining values

Definitions of values are rather complex. Generally speaking, values are deep-seated beliefs about what is right or wrong and about what is important or unimportant. They are principles, standards or qualities that people care about and that contribute to driving people's behaviour. Values held by individuals are also supported by a set of unwritten rules or **norms** about what is socially acceptable behaviour – both personally and within society.

Values incorporate a degree of judgement, and this further implies that people's values are based on *what* is important as well as *how* important it is to them. Therefore, once people have 'internalised' a set of values, it becomes a standard for understanding the world around them, directing and justifying their own actions, sustaining their attitudes and, inevitably, judging others' actions. Values can be abstract, such as freedom of choice, or specific, relating to, for example, hunger, poverty or racism.



Figure 1 Examples of values

Activity 1 Thinking about values

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Figure 1 shows some examples of values. Identify the values you think you uphold, as well as those that go against what you believe in. Can you also identify any values that clash or contradict?

Provide your answer...

Comment

Everyone will have a different answer to this activity due to the nature of values. You may find that you share similar values with your friends or colleagues: values are one aspect of which job we choose, where we work and the people we enjoy spending time with.

In terms of work, if you find smoking unacceptable, you might choose not to work for a tobacco company; if you are passionate about animals, you might choose not to work for a company that tests their products on animals. However, not everyone has a choice in where they work. You will have the opportunity to do more thinking about your personal values in Section 2.

1.2 Different levels of values

Values do not operate just at a personal level but across other levels too: groups, organisations, even societies. These levels are all considered to have sets of shared values, which exert influence across the levels in different ways. The levels are depicted in Figure 2 and include:

- personal
- groups (or teams in the context of work)
- organisational or sectoral (public, private, voluntary)
- societal.



Figure 2 Interactions between values held at different levels

As suggested by the arrows in Figure 2, influence can be both downwards and upwards. For example, this means that individuals vary in the extent to which they support and adopt – and therefore internalise – societal values. In addition, individuals may be able to influence and change the way their organisation acts, while organisations can exert influence on the teams and individuals working within them. Groups may bring about change at a societal level, thereby influencing the set of shared values.

Researchers are often interested in particular interactions; for example, how personal values interact with groups in society (gang culture, different ethnic or religious groups, or clashes between groups). Research focusing on organisations or management would have a particular interest in whether there are shared values in teams and organisations, and where conflict might occur. Teams are important in many contexts: volunteers are often based in teams and need to work together to achieve tasks. Having an **identity** for the team might be important for team members as well as managers.

The World Values Survey (n.d.) measures changes in people's beliefs, values and motivations at a country level. Therefore, it is possible to take research on individual values, collate them and examine whether there are shared values at a societal level and how these might change over time. In research on the voluntary sector, people's motivations to volunteer are often examined through their values.

You will explore these different levels starting with personal values and moving out to organisational and sectoral values. The societal level is beyond the scope of this course

but, if you have time at the end of the week, you could visit the [World Values Survey website](#).

2 Personal values

You will now explore personal values and how these have an impact on your interest in, and choice of, particular types of work and organisation. You will also examine how you work or volunteer, and how you interact with other people who may or may not share your values. Values are just one component in people's behaviour and actions: motivation, abilities, education and temperament also play a part (and are also wider components of an individual's personality).

Personal values stem from our social background, religion (if we have one), ethnic origin, culture, upbringing, education and our experiences of life and work. Personal values are not static. They continue to evolve during our lifetime as we experience new situations and people's behaviours, particularly ones involving conflict or difference, or ones we find surprising or offensive. These encounters provide opportunities to question and rethink our own values. Of course, people may not be fully conscious of the values they hold or of the value judgements they are making when taking particular actions. People are also not necessarily consistent in their behaviour, and there may be a discrepancy between what we say our values are and how we act.

Activity 2 What is important to you?

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Answer the questionnaire on personal values provided below. It is best to do this fairly quickly without thinking about the statements too much, but if you want to spend more time on it – perhaps because the concept of thinking about values still feels strange – then do so. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions – it is designed merely to get you to reflect on your own values and what you hold important. When you have finished the questionnaire, make sure you scroll the bottom of the screen to read our comments on this activity.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Comment

There may be as many values and beliefs as there are people in the world. This questionnaire, however, looked at the following set of values:

- being the best and helping others to achieve
- caring and having compassion for others
- caring for the environment
- doing what is right and proper
- equality
- faith and religious belief
- the importance of being part of a group
- the importance of being part of a community.

Based on your results, you might want to consider:

- how you might work alongside people whose values are quite different from your own

- how your values do or do not correspond with those of your organisation (if you are working)
- what happens when the values that you hold contradict each other
- how values impact on assumptions about, and understanding conflict.

Of course, in an ideal world, you might see all of these values as important, but the questionnaire forced you to make choices. As you work through the remainder of this section, you might want to continue reflecting on what your core values are. These may be quite different from those included in the questionnaire.

When you have to choose:

- What is most important?
- What will you compromise on?
- What is not open for discussion?

2.1 Values and behaviour

Your work on Activities 1 and 2 might have got you thinking about how values could influence your behaviour and actions in the following areas:

- where you work or volunteer
- who your friends are
- how you interact with others
- why you might have been in conflict with another person, your team or your manager (if you have one).

You can build on this by thinking about statements such as 'I like volunteering for the local hospital'. This is considered to be an 'attitude' rather than a value and stems from a desire to do some social good. Other factors may also influence actions: in this example, choosing to volunteer may also be about filling spare time or gaining useful skills for obtaining paid work. Therefore, theorists argue that values are the bedrock for attitudes, which guide people's actions (see Figure 3). A caveat to this statement is that people do not always act in a rational way: human nature can be inconsistent and contradictory.

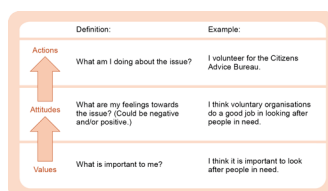


Figure 3 How values drive our actions

Thinking about how values and attitudes influence or drive your behaviour can be important in a work context. Imagine you are asked to carry out a task that does not fit with your values. Would this result in conflict?

For some people in the workplace, there is such a mismatch between their own individual values and what they are asked to do (or something they have witnessed), that they are driven to the practice of 'whistle-blowing'. This means reporting an organisation to the

media. There have been many high-profile examples of this in the health service (poor care, abuse and neglect in Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust) and in technological scandals (Julian Assange and Edward Snowden). Legislation now exists in many countries to protect whistle-blowers and in the UK a charity, Public Concern at Work, provides support.

Activity 3 Values and actions

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Using your work on the questionnaire in Activity 2, choose one of the value statements that was particularly important to you. Use the statement to write out your own version of Figure 3. It could be based on something you have already taken action on or something you would like to act on in the future.

Provide your answer...

Comment

Did you find this activity difficult or straightforward? Sometimes it is difficult to take what might appear to be fairly 'abstract' or general statements and translate them into actions. If you are thinking about volunteering or working in a voluntary or community organisation, you could also use this activity for career planning.

2.2 Challenges

Individual values fit broadly into two types:

- those that are about means – how you think things should be done
- those that are about ends or goals – what you would like to achieve.

Values about means include working hard and being honest, open-minded and forgiving. Values about ends include achieving happiness, prosperity and accomplishments, and treating people with respect.

Being more aware of your own values can help you to understand why you are doing things and whether your own actions are consistent with your values. It can also help you to appreciate the values that others hold and the influence those values have on their behaviour. If you can recognise the differences and tensions that arise from value conflicts, you are more likely to be able to help to resolve them. If you challenge another person's values, you may appear to them to be challenging very personal issues – even the other person's identity – so do not be surprised if they react strongly.

People often feel compelled to express values in public, perhaps by speaking out against an issue, group or person, to protest against injustice and behaviour they perceive to be morally wrong. However, many people do not make big statements about their values. Other people use their volunteering or work to express values or as a basis for which causes they choose to support: they may hear about disasters in the news and feel compelled to donate money – which can be immediate through text donations. Others support charities and causes on a regular basis.

As an individual working or volunteering, you may need to consider how values translate into assumptions and even prejudices. It is difficult to identify our own prejudices because they are often associated with assumptions that are central to our sense of personal security. When our assumptions are challenged, we feel uncomfortable and have to deal with our feelings as well as with the issues that have been raised. It is helpful to develop the ability to listen and to suspend judgement for a while, even to take time to check out an issue with a colleague if it is outside your experience.

The next section develops the work context by examining values at an organisational level.

3 Organisational values and vision

This section builds on your work on understanding personal values and how they work with those of organisations. Two main areas are discussed:

- What are organisational values?
- Why might conflict arise?



Figure 4 Organisational culture

Much has been written about how values contribute to **organisational culture** in organisations across all three sectors (public, private and voluntary). Projecting an image of a strong organisational culture and a sense of shared values has been regarded as a useful marketing tool for organisations (Watson, 1996 cited in Hester et al., 2013, p. 306). In the context of the voluntary sector, voluntary organisations are often perceived to be particularly value-driven.

Organisational values may be similar to the types of personal values you have explored so far this week such as helping others, showing compassion, making a difference and so on. They are usually expressed in a more collaborative way, i.e. 'we believe' or 'our objective is to ...' and so on. Just as personal values are the set of beliefs and principles guiding people's behaviour, this also applies to organisations and how they work in practice.

Values (in theory) guide organisations' activities, services offered, recruitment and management policies. Sometimes an organisation's values might be expressed as more 'aspirational' – this is what we want to achieve but we might not be there yet. Forrest et al. (2012, p. 1) at Cass Business School in London conducted a large-scale survey and detailed **case studies** on values in voluntary organisations. They found from their case studies that the words most frequently used to express values were:

- collaborate
- respect
- compassionate
- excellence
- professional
- creative.

The next activity illustrates how personal values might link with those of organisations.

Activity 4 Do you love your job?

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Watch these two films showing people who work in the Scottish voluntary sector talking about what they love about their jobs. Make notes on what they say about their personal values and those of the organisations they work for.

View at: [youtube:icu4dNiDqbQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icu4dNiDqbQ)

Provide your answer...

View at: [youtube:EH47fMHWAWA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EH47fMHWAWA)

Provide your answer...

Comment

Both Gillian and Elliott seem to express their answers in terms of values – personal values (justice, make a better place) – which suggests these are important and at the forefront of their minds in terms of their work. In terms of their organisations, they refer to the staff being dedicated, enthusiastic and working to the same mission and values.

If you were asked ‘why do you love your job (or volunteering)?’ what would you say, and would you answer in terms of values?

3.1 Communicating values

How do organisations communicate their shared values in a statement that its staff, volunteers and other stakeholders can understand and relate to? The most common approach is through its mission statement, website, social media such as Twitter and Facebook, advertisements for recruiting staff and volunteers, and in fundraising campaigns. Statements of values explain to staff, stakeholders and the public what the purpose of the organisation is and what it stands for or what it feels is important.

The following extract highlights how all organisations (not just those in the voluntary sector) regard statements of values as important.

Box 1 Values-led businesses

Beyond pursuing success and profitability, organisations realised some time ago that their stakeholders needed them to be able to say: ‘This is how we do things here.’

It is hard now to find an organisation of any shape or size, from small NGOs to large corporates, which doesn’t publicly list its values, often quite prominently. Greenpeace International, for example, lists its values as: personal responsibility and nonviolence, independence, having no permanent friends or foes and promoting solutions. While Coca-Cola claims to be

motivated by values of leadership, passion, integrity, accountability, collaboration, innovation and quality.

Similar lists can be found on the websites of virtually all organisations. The challenge is establishing what they mean and how stakeholders can ensure they are being lived and embodied, not just espoused.

(Alfred, 2013)

Activity 5 Mission statements

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Here is a mission statement from Wales Council for Voluntary Action.

Our vision

A Wales where everyone is inspired to work together to improve their lives, their communities and their environment.

Our mission

We will provide excellent support, leadership and an influential voice for the third sector and volunteering in Wales.

Our values

We believe a strong and active third sector builds resilient, cohesive and inclusive communities, gives people a stake in their future through their own actions and services, creates a strong, healthy and fair society and demonstrates the value of volunteering and community involvement.

We are determined to demonstrate ...

- Diversity – being accessible to all
- Fairness – being open and consistent
- Integrity – being honest, and upholding the independence of the third sector
- Accountability – being ethical, responsible and responsive
- Partnership – working with all those who help to achieve our vision
- Sustainability – making a positive impact on people, communities and the planet

(Wales Council for Voluntary Action, 2015)

Using the list below, make notes on how well the Wales Council for Voluntary Action addresses the requirements to make its purpose and values clear:

- who the organisation is
- what it does
- what it stands for
- how it will achieve its purpose.

Provide your answer...

Comment

There is quite a lot here about the values of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action and they give a strong sense of the Council's purpose and ambition. What is often difficult in a mission statement is to give specific detail about how to achieve the organisation's purpose.

In the next activity you will think about the values of your own organisation (if you are working or volunteering) or one that interests you.

Activity 6 Exploring organisational values

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Write down what you think are the most important values that underlie the work of your organisation. If you are not already working or volunteering, choose an organisation that you would like to work for and use their main website or what they put on social media sites to find the information about their values.

Has there been or can you foresee any conflicts that might arise between these different values?

Provide your answer...

Comment

Your response to this task will reflect not only your own observations about your organisation and your colleagues but also your own values and attitudes. It might also have helped you to think about issues and values you had perhaps taken for granted. You may have struggled to find the information you need. Perhaps if you work in (or chose) a small organisation, nothing is written down formally. This might have led you to think about whether that is appropriate and whether it affects staff/volunteer motivation or could impact on fundraising or seeking contracts.

3.2 Conflicting values

Activity 6 introduced the idea that there may often be a mismatch between organisations' published values and how those values are demonstrated in reality. The research by Cass Business School set out to examine whether organisations 'practise what they preach and how they best use values' (Forrest et al., 2012, p. 1). [One of their case studies](#) showed how one organisation realised that as they had grown from two people working in a church hall to a bigger contracting organisation, internal conflict arose over values and objectives. Key points extracted from the case study are shown in Box 2.

Box 2 A values journey

Murray Hall Community Trust, West Midlands

The organisation grew strongly and quickly – the tipping point was when they became a contracting organisation – and so needed systems in place [...] This shift created internal tension – are we a charity or a company?

They went back to basics to examine values and if they'd changed and if so, how?

They consulted staff on this and ensured they were brought along. They addressed the whole of the organisation and their hearts and minds.

[...]

Because they have investigated the tension between business and charity 'pulls' the values exercise has reminded them about what's the right decision for them. The values offer a compass to help decide what they want to do in terms of the work they pick up and do.

[...]

In interviews, job candidates are asked how their values interplay with those of the organisation.

(Forrest et al., 2012, pp. 49–50)

This case study illustrates how the organisation realised that their original values were being affected by becoming a contracting organisation. However, by acknowledging this as a problem and then working on it with their stakeholders, it seems the organisation prevented the situation from getting worse. In fact, the work on revisiting values gave them a stronger focus on being value-driven.

If you are seeking work in a voluntary organisation, it would be important to check before an interview what the values of the organisation are. As this case study shows, you might be asked questions about them at interview.

The next activity guides you in thinking further about where conflict might arise.

Activity 7 Conflict at the charity shop

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Mary Portas, a retail guru based in the UK, worked with charity shops for a television series where she tried to change the shops' image. She put up prices for some items and also refitted a shop to improve how it looked.

Watch the short clip and make notes on the concerns expressed by the volunteers and Mary Portas. How do they express their concerns in terms of values?

View at: [youtube:JaeV85yf6EA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaeV85yf6EA)

Provide your answer...

Comment

A volunteer had left because of concerns that the charity shop was changing and moving away from its core value or purpose of raising as much money as possible for the charity. The volunteers could not understand why money would be spent on

refitting the shop and employing a paid manager rather than given to those in need. Mary Portas was attempting to apply her ideas from the private sector to a charity shop and that investing in improving the shop's appearance would bring in more business. The volunteers give their time for free and perhaps feel their values and contribution are less appreciated.

Fear of change is a difficult issue in all organisations and needs careful management with volunteers. When people are not paid members of staff, they can make snap decisions to leave.

Many people will have examples of conflict from their organisation but we may not always think about how values form an important part of it. Thus, on a day-to-day level, the challenge for people with management or supervisory responsibilities is to try to interpret and understand the different values of their organisation and the people they work with, so that they can cope better with the conflicts that may arise. It is worth exploring with new members of staff and volunteers their perceptions of the organisation's value and purpose. In this way, important value differences can be addressed sooner rather than later.

4 Values in the voluntary sector

Having examined organisational values and how personal values fit with organisations, you will now focus on whether it is possible to identify shared values in the voluntary sector as a whole. This week started by stating that values were at the heart of the sector, but what does that mean given the diversity of organisations within the sector? Many discussions among researchers and voluntary sector practitioners about what is unique or different about the voluntary sector highlight that it is perceived to be value-driven, with staff, volunteers, founders, board members and other stakeholders sharing a set of core values.



Figure 5 Shared values

From working on the activities this week with your own values, you might have started thinking about the values that could be considered common to the voluntary sector as a whole; for example, honesty, participation, democracy, fairness, justice, accountability, equality, equity, compassion, freedom, empowerment, rights, solidarity, dignity, integrity, respect, trust, citizenship and tolerance.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) lists what it regards as the shared values for the voluntary sector:

- a belief in collective action
- social justice and making a positive difference to people's lives
- taking a holistic approach to people's needs
- empowering people and making voices heard
- building social capital and reinvesting financial surpluses for community need.

(NCVO, 2015)

Having a focus on a sector as a whole inevitably involves making some general assertions. Not all these values would apply to all the organisations within the sector but it gives a sense of the main purpose or direction for organisations considered to be part of this sector. Furthermore, having a set of shared values for the sector is perceived to give it an advantage over other sectors, which might be useful in bids for funding and contracts. It also builds an identity and set of goals that organisations, large or small, can share. The NCVO, however, is concerned that the voluntary sector's values and independence are threatened if it works too closely with government.

Activity 8 Values under threat

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read through this list (identified by NCVO) of possible threats to voluntary sector values. In the box below are values that may be threatened. Against each value, type the number of the threat you think corresponds to it. There will be different interpretations on allocating these but think about which ones seem to fit the best and which you are most concerned about. You can use each threat more than once and you can allocate more than one threat to each value.

Threats

1. the 'top-down' nature of the relationship between government and the voluntary sector
2. funders preventing legitimate campaigning, lobbying and advocacy either directly or implicitly
3. funders influencing the activity and direction of voluntary organisations
4. voluntary organisations relying too heavily on one source of funding or contract
5. perceived pressures to become more like a business, rather than more business-like.

Values

A belief in collective action

Social justice and making a positive difference to people's lives

Taking a holistic approach to people's needs

Empowering people and making voices heard

Building social capital and reinvesting financial surpluses for community need

Comment

Table 1 Looking at threats to values

Value	Threat
A belief in collective action	2, 3
Social justice and making a positive difference to people's lives	2
Taking a holistic approach to people's needs	4, 5
Empowering people and making voices heard	1, 5
Building social capital and reinvesting financial surpluses for community need	5

We have suggested some answers but all the threats are equally important and could affect all the values. The part of the voluntary sector in which you work or volunteer, or have an interest in, may have influenced how you perceived the threats: some organisations are very dependent on government contracts and may feel restricted in activities beyond meeting the terms of the contract.

5 This week's quiz

The end-of-week quiz gives you the opportunity to check your understanding and progress. Again, it consists of five questions and will help you to prepare for the longer Week 4 badge quiz.

Quizzes are only available online and when enrolled to the course on OpenLearn

[Week 2 practice quiz.](#)

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

6 Summary

This week you have explored different aspects of values and the different levels (personal, organisational, voluntary sector) at which they operate in the context of voluntary organisations and your work, volunteering or general interest. You have learned that the concept of values is not straightforward and that values play a role in how organisations manage their activities and communicate their purpose to staff, volunteers, beneficiaries, other stakeholders, funders and the public. The idea of a value-driven sector was examined this week by looking at shared values and also the threats to those values. Furthermore, the activities this week should have helped you to reflect on what is important to you and how this relates to your work or volunteering with voluntary or community organisations.

In Week 2, you have learned about:

- how the concept of value has been applied to the voluntary sector
- what values are
- the different levels at which values operate and how they interact
- how to reflect on your own individual values and how they relate to behaviour
- what organisational values are
- how organisational values are communicated
- how conflict over values can arise
- what the values of the voluntary sector are and how they are under threat.

Next week you will explore data about the contribution of the voluntary sector and also learn about some differences within the sector.

You can now go to Week 3.

Week 3: Structure and functions of the voluntary sector

Introduction

The voluntary sector has a specific place within the UK: it conducts many diverse activities and makes a vital contribution to society. It is important to consider the shape of the sector and how to understand its impact.

This week you delve more into the nature and make-up of the voluntary sector: first by looking at overall information about the sector and its contribution to the economy; second, by focusing on the differences *within* the voluntary sector (rather than *between* the sectors) and finally you will look at an example of research into gathering data (micro-mapping).

Week 1 introduced you to examples of the **diversity** of organisations: how they might differ by size, type of activity, interests and purpose, as well as the different ways in which they fitted the NCVO's description of voluntary nature. This week's work helps you to explore these issues in more depth and to gain confidence in using data. Much of the data this week comes from the *UK Civil Society Almanac 2015* published by NCVO (2015a). In terms of understanding values and valuing in relation to the voluntary sector, this week you will find out what the voluntary sector's monetary value is.

In the following video the course author, Julie Charlesworth, introduces you to Week 3.

Video content is not available in this format.



By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- describe the overall picture of the voluntary sector in the UK
- understand the different activities of voluntary and community organisations
- explain the contribution of the voluntary sector to the UK economy
- explain differences within the sector
- work with data in tables.

1 Data about the voluntary sector



Figure 1 Getting a picture

There are various sources of information about the voluntary sector in the UK but, as you will discover, it can be problematic getting accurate data on such a diverse sector, particularly as much of it involves small, informal organisations. In Activity 1, Karl Wilding, Director of Public Policy at NCVO discusses different types of data.

Activity 1 Collecting data about the voluntary sector

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Watch the following video and make notes on what Karl says about the different types of data the NCVO collects and why they are important.

Video content is not available in this format.



Provide your answer...

Comment

Karl highlights how the NCVO collects data using charities' annual reports, and has a particular interest in finance, the number of people employed and where people work. He also talks about using other surveys such as the **Labour Force Survey**, as well as **qualitative data** (e.g. from interviewing people). NCVO attempts to mesh together all the different information in order to gain an accurate picture of the voluntary sector.

According to Karl, the reasons why it is important to collect the data are:

- Politicians and other commentators have a tendency to forget about the voluntary sector because there is not enough information available on how things might be changing.
- It is difficult to agree on a definition of the sector.
- Providing government with more data helps inform policy debates and develop more relevant policies.
- Voluntary organisations can use the information to assess why they might be different, unique or the same as others.

Building on Karl's last point about using data, there are a number of reasons why learning more about the features of the voluntary sector can help you in your work or learning. First, if you already work or volunteer with a small organisation, such as a residents' group, you may have a very different experience of the sector than someone working for, say, Oxfam (which has well-developed human resource practices and huge funds at its disposal).

Second, locating your organisation within the broader context of the voluntary sector provides a focus for understanding how effective and successful that organisation is (and

what its future may be). This in turn can help you to assess the impact this might have on your role (if you have one) either as a paid member of staff or as a volunteer.

Furthermore, some organisations are not particularly effective at communicating policy or the reasons for decisions. Issues around change are often difficult to communicate.

Examples of change include: an organisation losing a contract, having their budget cut, changing their activities or making staff redundant. If you are involved with an organisation that does not communicate well, then having a broader perspective can help you make sense of the issues that crop up.

If you are not already working or volunteering in the sector but thinking about it, this week will give you a clearer indication of what the sector is like and could help influence your choices and possibly help you at interviews.

If you are interested in doing further learning about the voluntary sector or other similar subjects (perhaps business, management or social sciences) then having skills in understanding and using data will also be useful.

Activity 2 Using data

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Watch the following video and make notes on what Karl Wilding says about how the NCVO data can be used. Highlight which aspects you think would be particularly useful in an organisation you are familiar with.

Video content is not available in this format.



Provide your answer...

Comment

Karl explains how the data is useful in situating your own organisation's context within a bigger picture. He emphasises the role of **benchmarking**, which means comparing one organisation's performance against another's, or looking at best practice. He also

mentions how the data might tell you something about the future of your organisation. Interestingly, Karl further suggests that people should bring the data into everyday usage. In other words, people can tell others surprising facts about how many people are paid staff in the sector or how voluntary organisations contract with government.

As you saw in Week 1, the main defining feature of the sector is its voluntary nature but this week you will look at further features and information about the sector relating to:

- the size of the sector
- its contribution to the UK economy
- the activities carried out by voluntary and community organisations
- the differences within the sector.

2 Size of the voluntary sector



Figure 2 Measuring up

There are three ways in which you might assess the overall size of the voluntary sector:

- total number of organisations in the voluntary sector
- total annual income (what organisations earn)
- total number of people employed or volunteering.

You could also add sector expenditure to this list but you'll be focusing particularly on these three.

NCVO (2015a) data state that for 2012–13 there were more than 160,000 organisations in the UK voluntary sector. These have a total annual income of £40.5 billion, around 820,000 paid employees and an estimated 13.8 million regular volunteers.

In Activity 1, Karl Wilding hinted at some challenges in obtaining data about the voluntary sector and you will build on this further in Activity 3 before looking at differences within the sector.

Activity 3 Understanding the data

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Answer the following questions, which relate back to the total numbers in the NCVO data above.

1. Total number of organisations: what might be problematic about this data?
2. Total annual income: how and where do voluntary organisations get their income?
3. Total number of people volunteering: what might be problematic about this data?

Provide your answer...

Comment

1. **Total number of organisations:** you saw in Week 1 the problems of defining voluntary sector organisations. This means data collectors would need to be clear what definition they are using. The NCVO uses its 'voluntary nature' definition, which relates to 'general charities'. They exclude organisations controlled by government, independent schools and religious organisations. Furthermore, many voluntary organisations are very small and will not be counted in official statistics. The NCVO describes these small organisations as being 'under the

radar'. Not all voluntary organisations are registered charities so they also would not come under the NCVO definition.

2. **Total annual income:** you might have guessed some of the following – donations, interest from investing money, grants from government or other organisations (such as the National Lottery). Remember also that many voluntary organisations engage in commercial activities (for example, sales from charity shops and their own products). Furthermore, as with the point above about the total number of organisations, many small organisations will not have their income counted as they are 'under the radar'. Don't worry if you found this question difficult – you will learn more about funding in Week 4.
3. **Total number of people volunteering:** one of the main problems in assessing how many people volunteer is how to make sense of how often people volunteer. If someone volunteers once a year, should they be counted in the same way as someone who volunteers once a week or once a month? The NCVO figure includes people who volunteer at least once a month. You will learn more about the role and extent of volunteering in Week 7.

This activity should have given you a sense of the size of the sector, as well as the problems of gathering accurate data.

The problem with presenting total numbers is that without comparing them with something else it is difficult to know what is significant about them. So you might find it useful to compare these figures with those from the public or private sectors; for example, you could search online for data about the other sectors. Alternatively, you might want to break down the data further so that you get a sense of how organisations might differ *within* the voluntary sector.

2.1 Different sizes



Figure 3 Does size matter?

You have already come across the idea that voluntary organisations differ considerably by size, although some very small organisations are probably not counted in official statistics.

Table 1 explains the differences between voluntary organisations by size, which range from micro (the smallest organisations), through small, medium and large, to major (the very largest organisations). These groups are defined by their annual income:

- micro – less than £10,000
- small – £10,000–£100,000
- medium – £100,000–£1 million
- large – £1 million–£10 million
- major – more than £10 million.

Within each group, size can be differentiated by several factors: how many organisations are classified as belonging to a particular group and what proportion they take up within the voluntary sector; a group's overall income and its proportion of the overall income for the voluntary sector; and the average income for each group as a whole.

Table 1 Characteristics of voluntary organisations, by size 2011/12

2011/12	Micro	Small	Medium	Large	Major	Total
Number of organisations	82,391	52,815	21,257	4270	533	161,266
Proportion of organisations (%)	51.1	32.8	13.2	2.6	0.3	100.0
Total income (£ million)	228.5	1,856.1	6,544.2	11,821.5	18,798.8	39,249.1
Proportion of income (%)	0.6	4.7	16.7	30.1	47.9	100.0
Average (mean) income (£)	2800	35,100	308,000	2,768,000	35,270,000	243,400

(Adapted from '[Characteristics of voluntary organisations, by size 2011/12](#)', NCVO, 2015b).

Tables provide a neat and concise way of displaying and comparing information that can be referred to quickly, without having to read through large sections of text. If you are not familiar with using tables and would like to learn more, you could do the free badged OpenLearn course, [Taking your first steps into higher education](#) (The Open University, 2015).

If you look at Table 1, you will see some of the important features that are common to all tables of this type:

- a title
- a heading at the top of each column
- different units of measurement such as number of organisations, income and so on
- a source for the data being displayed.

All these elements help you to 'read' the information in the table. The next activity will help you to practise finding information in a table, as it asks you to answer some questions based on the information presented in Table 1.

Activity 4 Working with tables

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Using Table 1, answer the following questions. If you are new to working with data, then don't worry if it takes you longer than the suggested ten minutes. *Hint: you do not need a calculator – you are just reading the table.*

1. Which group of organisations has the largest number of organisations in it?
2. What percentage of the total number of organisations does this represent?
3. What proportion of total income does this group bring in?
4. Why do you think this figure (Question 3) is so small?

Provide your answer...

Comment

1. Micro – at 82,391.
2. It represents 51.1% of the total.
3. It has 0.6% of the total income.
4. Although the very small organisations are the largest group, their total income is very small because small groups do not bring in much money. The voluntary sector by its very nature relies on small organisations even if, in monetary terms, their contribution might be deemed less significant. This is further illustrated by the average (mean) income data – this means a micro organisation has an average of £2800 compared with a major organisation with an average of £35,270,000.

You might be interested in knowing which charities are in the top five in the UK (by expenditure). These are: the Wellcome Trust, Cancer Research UK, The National Trust (England and Wales), Oxfam and the Save the Children Fund.

2.2 The workforce



Figure 4 Working in voluntary organisations

In Week 7 you will find out more about the volunteering 'workforce' but here the focus is on the paid workforce. According to NCVO (2015a):

- 821,000 people work in the voluntary sector in the UK, and this number tends to increase every few years
- 66% of the workforce is female (similar to the public sector but much more than the private sector)
- 20% of the workforce has a disability (similar to the public sector)
- 8% of employees are from black and ethnic minority groups (similar to the public sector)
- 38% of the workforce is over 50 (more than both public and private sectors).

Next you look at the contribution of the sector – which adds to the picture of size but is about its contribution in *monetary* terms. Of course, the sector makes a contribution in other ways – in terms of helping others, building **social capital**, improving quality of life and so on – but these are difficult to measure for official statistics.

3 Contribution of the voluntary sector to the UK economy

A further important aspect of the voluntary sector relates to its contribution to the economy, and is measured as a monetary value. Information is available for all sectors and is measured as **gross value added (GVA)**. In terms of the voluntary sector, NCVO (2015a) reports that in 2012/13 the value of the voluntary sector's output was £12.1 billion, which is almost 0.7% of the GVA of all UK industries.

However, this is not the full picture: what about the contribution of volunteers? GVA is based on paid staff, as well as spending and income. There have been numerous attempts to put a monetary value on the work of volunteers and a key one is to think about the replacement cost, i.e. how much would it cost to replace volunteers with paid staff? The Office for National Statistics ONS (2013) estimates this as £23.9 billion.

Is it helpful to think about the voluntary sector purely in monetary terms? You saw in Week 2 that social value is being introduced to government contracts with the voluntary sector but it is hard to quantify. The following quote is by Kathy Evans, Chief Executive of Children England. She raises concerns regarding always thinking about contributions in terms of money:

Yet to quantify our 'added value' we talk in pounds and pence – the money we raise, the paid equivalent of volunteers' time, the money we save others by helping people in need. How did our sector come to be so defined, and yet poorly described, by money instead of feelings?

(2014)

Some of this overall data may feel a little remote to you on a day-to-day basis in your work, volunteering or general interest in the sector but it is useful to have a sense of how the voluntary sector is valued in monetary terms because that is a reality of being in the sector. The idea of value and valuing comes up time and time again with the voluntary sector and having data – and skills in making sense of it – helps with understanding these concepts.

Next the focus switches to the activities and function of voluntary organisations and this also helps lead into the idea of understanding difference *within* the sector.

4 Types of voluntary activity

The course started with examples of voluntary organisations in order to give you a snapshot of the diversity of the organisations that come with a voluntary, community or charity label. One way to distinguish between the different organisations is by looking at the activity they carry out.

This can be examined from two perspectives:

1. What is the organisation's main function or purpose? Some examples would include:
 - b. Do they fulfil service contracts for local councils and other organisations?
 - c. Do they campaign for a particular cause?
 - d. Do they provide advice?
 - e. Do they support a particular hobby?
6. What is the organisation's principal economic activity (as used by NCVO)?

You will now focus on each classification in turn.

Function

The first classification, based on function, relates to the classic work by Charles Handy (1988) on understanding voluntary organisations. He distinguished between mutual support groups, service delivery agents and campaigning bodies:

- Mutual support groups – 'those organisations [...] created in order to put people with a particular problem or enthusiasm in touch with others like themselves who can give them understanding, advice, support and encouragement'. Examples include hobbies and sports enthusiasts, or local support groups for people with addictions and health problems.
- Service delivery – 'the biggest and most visible of the voluntary organisations' providing services to those in need. They often have many paid staff and operate across the UK. Examples include the RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People) and Citizens Advice.
- Campaigning – some organisations were created to campaign for a cause or to act as a pressure group to represent and fight for a particular interest. Examples include Greenpeace and 38 Degrees.

Many voluntary organisations inevitably fit more than one category: many organisations campaign, even if they have government contracts, while some small mutual support groups might move into campaigning or seek a contract for service delivery. They might have started firmly in one category but, over time, shifted their role.

The world of the voluntary sector has moved on considerably since Handy wrote his book but it does provide a starting point. Furthermore, not all voluntary organisations seek growth, major contracts and so on. They start off small and wish to remain small, often focused on a particular neighbourhood or group.

Economic activity

The second classification to consider is that used by NCVO. They use 18 categories in their classification, focused on principal economic activity. The following list starts with the largest category (by number of organisations) and is in descending order:

- social services
- culture and recreation
- religion
- parent-teacher associations
- grant making
- education
- playgroups and nurseries
- village halls
- health
- scout groups and youth clubs
- environment
- international aid and development
- law and advocacy
- housing
- research
- employment and training
- umbrella bodies.

The biggest of these by number of organisations is social services but the group with the most wealth is the grant-making organisations.

Activity 5 Classifying organisations

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Using the above categories of economic activity, answer the following questions:

1. Choose an organisation you are interested in and try to decide which category it fits into.
2. Are there any problems with fitting organisations into a single category?

Provide your answer...

Comment

1. One example would be a historic garden open to the public and run by the National Trust. This could be put in the category of culture and recreation.
2. Some organisations will straddle several categories but they would need to select their main economic activity for record-keeping purposes. For example, some organisations might cover research as well as grant making.

You probably noticed the category of 'umbrella bodies'. These are organisations such as community and voluntary councils in a town or district. They offer services such as training, advice, volunteer recruitment, sometimes even desk and computer facilities. These services are offered to their members, usually smaller voluntary or community organisations that have limited resources of their own.

Activity 6 Umbrella organisations

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Go online and search for umbrella bodies in your local area. Do they exist? If so, what services do they offer?

Provide your answer...

Comment

Here is an example from an online search typing in: 'Cardiff voluntary umbrella organisation':

Cardiff Third Sector Council (C3SC) is the County Voluntary Council (CVC) for Cardiff – the umbrella infrastructure organisation for the third sector in the City.

C3SC's key role is to provide specialist advice, support, and information to local third sector organisations on issues that affect them, including funding and governance.

C3SC is the voice of the third sector in Cardiff. It facilitates third sector representation on strategic partnerships, including the Cardiff Partnership Board and its Programme Boards and Workstreams. It acts as a conduit for policy information, supporting networks around key themes and areas of interest, with the aim of ensuring that policy and decision makers understand the needs of third sector organisations in Cardiff.

(Cardiff Third Sector Council, 2015)

This concludes the focus on the main overall features (size, contribution and types of activity) of the voluntary sector. This illustrated that there are many differences within the sector and you now build on this further.

5 Understanding differences within the voluntary sector



Figure 5 Differences

So far this week you have considered the voluntary sector overall and the differences within the sector have also been emphasised and are obviously very important. We started by suggesting that if you work or volunteer for a small organisation with limited funds, your experience could be very different from that of people working in a large organisation. However, in reality, there may be more similarities than you would expect. In the following activity, Karl Wilding from NCVO talks about differences (as well as similarities) within the voluntary sector.

Activity 7 Focusing on differences and similarities

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Watch the video of Karl Wilding and list the differences and similarities he mentions.

Video content is not available in this format.



Provide your answer...

Comment

Karl says that the differences within the sector are as noticeable as the differences between sectors. He highlights the different business models – for example, organisations based on fundraising or legacies; income generation or government contracts; paid staff or volunteers. Size is a further source of difference.

In terms of similarities, Karl mentions the source of income for voluntary organisations: most receive donations. **Volunteerism** is also key. However, he also notes that the boundaries between the sectors are blurring – and this is something you will recall from Week 1.

Geographical differences

A further aspect of difference relates to geography and this is an area that interests researchers as well as policy makers. Milligan and Conradson (2006, p. 3) raise various questions about this: how and why does voluntary activity develop in different ways in different places? To what extent do the different social, historical and political contexts within which **voluntarism** is located shape its development?

The geography of the voluntary sector refers to differences by location and place. Issues of interest focus on urban and rural differences as well as regional differences. Even within one town, differences can be uncovered (and you will explore this by looking at micro-mapping in the next section).

Researchers interested in geographical differences explore different elements of voluntary activity, many of which relate back to the bigger data you have examined this week. The distribution of voluntary sector employment (i.e. where the voluntary sector jobs are located) is of particular interest to researchers:

There is also policy and academic interest in the *distribution* of third sector employment. For example, does employment in this sector simply follow the pattern of the private sector of the economy, characterised by the dominance of London with its concentration of corporate headquarters? If so, would such a distribution be appropriate for employment in a sector where many large organisations receive donations from the whole country? To what extent can the third sector help to relieve unemployment in the more disadvantaged areas of the country?

(Geyne-Rajme and Mohan, 2012, p. 3)

Although these authors' research was based on English regions, the questions they raise could apply to all of the UK. In the next section, you explore 'micro-mapping', which brings together issues relating to geography, difference and data.

5.1 Different data: 'micro-mapping'



Figure 6 What voluntary organisations might exist in one street?

You have seen this week the importance of looking beyond the data to consider what might be hidden or problematic about it. Soteri-Proctor and Alcock (2012) discuss the difficulties in getting data on the voluntary sector – in particular finding out more about below-the-radar groups. You saw earlier how there are many very small voluntary organisations, many of which will not be registered charities and may not get counted in many surveys. Yet as an overall group they are important in the voluntary sector. In their review of below-the-radar groups, Soteri-Proctor and Alcock highlight:

- Many surveys use a legal definition of a charity so the only organisations included will be those who have registered and submitted information.
- With devolved administration in the UK, it is difficult to get comparable data across all four countries.
- The need to move beyond formal records for below-the-radar activity, perhaps using 'micro-mapping' (you will find out more about this in the next activity).
- If the data on the voluntary sector does not include all organisations, does this have an impact on government policy affecting voluntary and community organisations?

Micro-mapping refers to measuring all organisational activity within very small areas such as a few streets. This type of approach is helpful if you want to uncover more about geographical differences. You could perhaps compare a few streets in several areas of a town or city, or compare the results of micro-mapping in towns across different regions or countries. Micro-mapping is a **research method** and the following activity is a further way of thinking about different types of data.

Activity 8 Assessing a street

Allow approximately 20 minutes

Read the following description of how micro-mapping has been used in a research project. Then answer the questions that follow.

You might want to read the extract twice to understand it fully.

The purpose of our street-level approach was to provide a micro-map of all organisational activity taking place in two small local areas. The specific commitment was to go beyond the existing records and listings of organisations (the different radars) and seek out activity that might not be listed, that might not have an address or even a name – and that might not see the need for, or want to avoid, membership of or engagement with large national or regional agencies. To do this we chose two distinct neighbourhoods, each located within wider urban conurbations. Tight geographical boundaries were important as it was anticipated that our intensive research would inevitably require access to, and development of, a close knowledge of local people and places [...]

(Soteri-Proctor and Alcock, 2012, pp. 382–3)

1. Note down what you think are the key words or phrases – those that tell you what the researchers were aiming to do.
2. How do you think you would carry out research on one street in order to find out about voluntary organisations or activity? Perhaps think about a street you know well as a way of guiding your thoughts.

Provide your answer...

Comment

1. The key words or phrases that tell you what the research is about are:
 - street-level
 - micro-map
 - organisational activity
 - two small local areas
 - seek out activity
 - intensive research
 - close knowledge of local people and places and activity that might not be listed in existing records.

These words and phrases tell you at what level the research is taking place, how many areas, what the researchers want to focus on and what they might need to know.
2. If you're new to thinking about research you might have found this activity difficult but don't worry about this. The idea is to get you thinking about how to find out information. Some ideas could include:
 - walk up and down the street to see if there are any organisation signs
 - observe any activity on the street
 - look at noticeboards

- go into the library or local council (if there is one).

Alternatively, you could visit the local 'umbrella organisation' – such as a community and voluntary council. As you saw in Activity 6, these are very locally focused and would inevitably know a lot about local small organisations.

The authors of this research used these methods:

- Solo walks – looking at notice boards, shop windows, etc.
- Walking interview – walking with a local knowledgeable person.
- Visiting buildings and open spaces where people might meet – for example, community centres, faith-based buildings, leisure centres, libraries.
- Conversations, emails, interviews with local knowledgeable people.
- Online searches for information.

(Soteri-Proctor and Alcock, 2012, p. 385)

They highlight that in order to understand very small groups, as well as the nature of the voluntary sector in a small area, then micro-mapping is very useful. If you work or volunteer for an organisation that has a local focus, you might find micro-mapping of particular relevance. You could use the approach to do some research to uncover more about voluntary activity in your area or to do some comparisons with other areas – perhaps linking up with organisations in other areas.

6 This week's quiz

Well done, you've just completed the last of the activities in this week's study before the weekly quiz.

Quizzes are only available online and when enrolled to the course on OpenLearn

[Week 3 practice quiz.](#)

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

7 Summary

This week you have examined an overall picture of the voluntary sector and considered why this might be important if you work or volunteer in the sector. You also explored different dimensions to assessing the size of the voluntary sector in terms of the total number of organisations, income and the paid and volunteer workforce. There was also discussion about monetary value and the monetary contribution of the sector – which will be developed further in Week 4. You explored the different types of voluntary activity and how to classify them. You then moved on to a discussion of differences within the sector by size, workforce and geography – and the week concluded with a focus on how to use micro-mapping.

In Week 3, you have learned about:

- why it is useful to examine an overall picture of the main features of the voluntary sector
- how to assess the overall size of the voluntary sector
- what the problems are in obtaining accurate data about the sector
- the contribution of the voluntary sector in monetary terms
- the different types of voluntary activity and how to classify them
- the differences within the sector by size, workforce and geography
- how to use micro-mapping
- how to read tables and work with numerical data.

You can now go to Week 4.

Week 4: Who funds voluntary and community organisations?

Introduction

Organisations need resources to grow and develop, as well as to provide services and conduct different activities. For many voluntary organisations, securing funding and other resources is a constant challenge. Last week you explored the monetary value and contribution of the voluntary sector. This week you will learn where funding for voluntary organisations comes from.

Every voluntary organisation needs resources in order to fulfil its mission. 'Resourcing' organisations refers primarily to money, as this is needed to buy other resources like staff, premises and materials. However, some resources come in kind, such as volunteers, loans of staff or gifts of refurbished office furnishings. Most organisations will be reliant on different sources of funding, including government contracts, grants, donations and income from their own trading activities or investments.

This week you will find out about the different types of funding available to voluntary organisations and the degree of freedom they have in how to spend this money. You will explore who funds voluntary organisations: the funders can be public, private or other voluntary organisations, as well as individuals. You will also explore what issues might arise if funding is cut or if organisations rely too much on one source of funding.

You can also attempt the first compulsory badge quiz this week.

In the following video, the course author, Julie Charlesworth, introduces you to Week 4.

Video content is not available in this format.



By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- outline the different types of funding organisations in the voluntary sector
- understand the most important sources of funding
- describe the potential impact of government spending cuts on voluntary sector income
- find the information you need about funding in the voluntary sector.

1 What is funding?



Figure 1 Donations are important elements of funding

If you are involved with a very small organisation you may already have a good idea of how your organisation is funded and where the money comes from. You might have direct experience of running fundraising events or writing bids for funding from government or grant making trusts. Even if you're not currently working in the voluntary sector or volunteering, you have probably seen people shaking their collecting tins or attended events run by organisations trying to raise money. In bigger organisations it may not always be so apparent where the funding comes from. You may know how the project you work on or support is funded but not be sure how the money is raised for everything the organisation does.

Although exploring 'how to do' fundraising is beyond the scope of this week's study, it is useful to bear this in mind to provide a context for the rest of this week. There are many different methods that organisations might use to raise funds, such as street collections, small local events as well as national ones (e.g. Comic Relief or Children in Need television nights), sponsored runs, crowd funding, national campaigns for donations by text, phone, online, charity shops selling donated items as well as the organisation's own products, and so on.

Some of these methods might generate only small total sums but for a small organisation these might be vital to their survival. Organisations may also raise funds through bidding for contracts to run services or by applying for grants but these are perhaps less visible outside the organisation – unless they are successful of course.

Activity 1 Out of the Blue

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Read the following example of fundraising by Helen & Douglas House (H&DH), an Oxford-based organisation that cares for terminally ill children, young adults and their families. 'Out of the Blue', a group of singers from Oxford University, released a single in 2014, [Hips Don't Lie – Charity Single – Shakira – Out of the Blue](#), with all the profits going to the charity.

Out of the Blue Shakira medley

The fantastic Out of the Blue have recorded a medley of Shakira songs and all proceeds from the sale of the single come to H&DH, supporting hospice care for children and young adults.

We have been amazed by the popularity of the video, after Shakira herself posted it to her Facebook page, and sent a Twitter message to the Out of the Blue boys! Hundreds of thousands of people have watched the clip, so please watch and click through to buy the single, & support H&DH!

(Helen & Douglas House, 2014)

Now consider the following questions:

The charity single eventually raised £10,000.

1. How significant is that sum of money for an organisation that had an income of £10.41 million in 2014?
2. Why do you think it is important for voluntary organisations to get involved with this type of activity?

Provide your answer...

Comment

The sum of £10,000 is obviously a very small amount for this organisation – around 0.1% of their total income. Although you do not have all the details here, it is possible that H&DH do not have to get very involved with the singles – it is probably the group's choice to make the singles and donate the money. Therefore receiving £10,000 for minimal effort is worth doing.

It is all good publicity for H&DH (and Out of the Blue): their cause was probably brought to the attention of people who were unaware of them before. The organisation would hope to gain more donations and also new volunteers from this. The organisation has 220 employees but 1250 volunteers, so volunteering is important to them.

Out of the Blue have a strong Oxford identity. Therefore, the charity (although Oxford-based it also operates across southern England and parts of the Midlands) is also making a local connection and hoping to draw on more local support. Furthermore, H&DH rely almost entirely on donations. This illustrates that seemingly small initiatives like this have a wider application than funding, by potentially generating publicity, interest and more donations, and all therefore adding to the picture of sustainable resources for organisations.

For some voluntary organisations, however, receiving £10,000 could be significant funding, which enables them to keep going for another year. As you will see later this

week, income from individuals forms the largest proportion of funding for every size of organisation (NCVO, 2015).

Many organisations try to obtain resources from different funders so they are not reliant on just one source. This has become particularly important in recent years as government funding to voluntary organisations has been cut. However, having different sources of funding creates challenges: in addition to all the work needed to apply for funding, numerous external relationships then have to be managed, as well as completing all the reports and complying with any monitoring required, when funding is through contracts and grants.

2 Looking at funding through annual reports



Figure 2 Annual reports provide funding information

One key method of finding out about funding is to look at an organisation's annual report, which (if it is a charity) by law it has to lodge every year with the appropriate charity regulator for the part of the UK in which the organisation operates. Annual reports generally highlight the organisation's main activities, achievements and challenges for the year, as well as information on funding received from grants, contracts, donations and income from investment and trading activities. Annual reports are useful ways to inform stakeholders about the organisation's work. The following two activities are based on using annual reports to focus on sources of funding.

Activity 2 How many funders?

Allow approximately 5 minutes

In this activity you will look briefly at one organisation to get a sense of the myriad funding possibilities and relationships. The organisation is [Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid](#) (2016), which provides support, help and emergency accommodation for women and children affected by domestic violence.

The following extract from their annual report lists the organisation's funders for 2013.

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR FUNDERS

Thank you to our partner agencies listed below and to all the dedicated individuals, organisations and companies who supported our work against Domestic Violence so generously during the year.

- Belfast City Council Community Safety
- Belfast Health & Social Care Trust
- Big Lottery Fund – Improving Futures
- Big Lottery Fund – Reaching out – Connecting with Older People
- Children in Need
- Comic Relief
- Department of Education – Early Years Fund
- Department of Justice
- DHSS&PS
- Down Safer Communities Partnership

- East Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership
- Health & Social Care Board
- Lisburn Policing and Community Safety Partnership
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive – Supporting People
- Nutricia Ltd
- Police Service Northern Ireland
- Probation Board Northern Ireland
- Public Health Agency
- South Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership
- South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust
- Tesco

(Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid, 2014)

1. Read through the list and for each funder note whether they are public, private or voluntary sector.
2. Which funder is most prominent? If you do not recognise the names of the organisations, you could quickly search for them online.
3. What might be missing from this list of funders?

Provide your answer...

Comment

Table 1 Funders of Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid

Public sector	Private sector	Voluntary sector
Various community safety partnerships	Nutricia Ltd	Big Lottery Fund
Health & Social Care Trust	Tesco	Children in Need
Department of Education		Comic Relief
Department of Justice		
DHSS&PS		
Health and Social Care Board		
Northern Ireland Housing Executive		
Police Service		
Probation Board		
Public Health Agency		

Were you surprised by how many funders there were? This is partly due to the nature of this organisation: it spans policing, community safety, housing, education and health issues, therefore one source of funding would not cover everything the organisation seeks to achieve. Many organisations, such as women's aid groups and others in health and social care, often work in **multi-organisational partnerships**, some of which can have quite complex arrangements. The majority of the funding for this

organisation appears to be from the public sector. However, this is a list of organisations and does not tell you how much funding each has given (or what restrictions might be placed on the funding).

What is missing from this list are the names of individuals who might have donated money. Much fundraising results in small amounts, which together can add up to a significant sum and contribute to the running of organisations. Much of this would also be anonymous giving.

You might also want to think about the challenges of managing these relationships and what different funders might give money for – is it for one-off or long-term activities? These are important issues to be discussed further this week.

2.1 Further sources of funding information

Annual reports are usually available on organisations' websites – as in the example in Activity 2. As mentioned earlier, another way to find financial information on voluntary organisations is through charity regulator websites. The list below shows some sources of information within the UK.

- [Charity Commission \(England and Wales\)](#) (UK Government, n.d.)
- [Charity Commission \(Northern Ireland\)](#) (2014)
- [Guidestar UK \(England and Wales\)](#) (2011)
- [Scottish Charity Regulator](#) (n.d.).

Some small organisations do not have to submit returns, but it is still likely that they will produce a financial report for their members and other stakeholders.

Activity 3 How much funding?

Allow approximately 10 minutes

In this activity you will look at the financial information from two annual reports: the first is for Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid and is presented below.

Table 2 Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid incoming resources

Incoming resources 2013/14	£	%
Supporting people	863,073	39
Floating support	546,174	25
Trusts	160,254	7
Grants	397,280	18
Housing management	150,330	7
Donations	38,685	2
Investment income	35,587	2
Rental income	12,744	1

Utilities income	4548	<1
Training	6769	<1
	2,215,444	100

Note: Floating support and supporting people are housing support programmes provided by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and also funded by health and social care and probation services.

(Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid, 2014)

The second set of financial information you will seek out for yourself. Look for the annual financial report for an organisation you are familiar with or interested in. You could search the organisation's own website or one of the regulator websites listed above to find the relevant information about incoming resources.

Look at the income for the two organisations and then answer the following questions:

1. What are the different sources of funding that the organisations have?
2. What are the implications of these sources for them?

Provide your answer...

Comment

For Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid, you already know from Activity 2 which organisations funded them during this time period. What this information now gives you is the form that the funding took: trusts, grants, donations, as well as investment and other income.

What is less clear from these accounts is who is providing the grants, for example. Also, 'trust' can refer to an organisation providing funding, so in these accounts 'trusts' probably means funding from organisations that are trusts.

The biggest sums are from supporting people and floating support, which are public sector programmes. Many voluntary organisations, like Women's Aid, are also able to raise money from investments and rental income. General donations are important, although for this organisation they are just 2% of the total. You will look at these different sources in more detail in the next section.

Therefore, it seems that this organisation is primarily dependent on government funding, which could create problems for its projects, activities and general operation if there are cutbacks in public spending. In fact, in their report (p. 4) they highlight:

Our challenges ahead remain sustaining services amidst government cuts and imminent procurement and tendering processes.

(Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid, 2014)

In your own example report, the organisation might have distinguished between restricted and unrestricted funding. Restricted funding means that it can *only* be spent on the specific project for which the money was intended and the organisation has little flexibility in how this may be used. An example of this can be seen in the annual report of the Women's Aid Federation in Northern Ireland (2014, p. 74). This is an overarching group

supporting women and children who are victims of domestic violence. Their unrestricted funds were £80,576 and restricted funds £761,309 – which is quite a difference.

For Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid, although the main accounts do not distinguish between restricted and unrestricted funding, they mention in their written review of the year (p. 2) that they received funding from the Big Lottery to make one of their centres more energy efficient. This money would of course be restricted to this particular project and they would inevitably have to provide feedback on how it has been spent and the success of the project.

If you are new to looking for and making sense of financial information, hopefully it was not too difficult. Getting to grips with annual reports is an important skill but also increases your knowledge about sources of funding and the possible dependence – and therefore vulnerability – of organisations on particular sources.

Organisations are required to make this type of financial information freely available in order to be more **transparent** and ultimately more **accountable**. As you will see in Week 5, an organisation's stakeholders need to know how money raised is being spent or invested appropriately – irrespective of whether this involves large or small sums. This is something that might interest you if you work or volunteer for an organisation, or if you support one as a donor, member or beneficiary. You will now move on to focusing on individuals' funding of voluntary organisations.

3 Income from individuals



Figure 3 Individuals provide substantial sums

There are really only four main sources of funding for the voluntary sector:

1. individuals
2. foundations
3. public sector
4. private sector.

Overall, individuals and the public sector are the biggest sources of income. In terms of how funding is actually given to voluntary organisations, it is generally through three main methods:

1. donations
2. grants
3. contracts.

There are various sources of information about 'giving' to the voluntary sector, in particular the NCVO's *UK Civil Society Almanac 2015* and the annual Charities Aid Foundation's (CAF) UK Giving Survey (2015). The information in this section is primarily from the NCVO (2015).

As noted earlier, income from individuals provides the largest proportion of income for the voluntary sector – 46% of total income. However, it is most important to the smallest organisations – those classified as micro and small – where it forms 56% of their total income. For the largest organisations – major – it is 44% of their income. Within the sector, some organisations such as parent-teacher associations are very dependent on income from individuals, where it forms 88% of their income.

Donations include voluntary income (donations and legacies) and earned income (sales of products and fees for events, etc.). Donations and legacies account for 37% of the total income from individuals. In terms of earned income, the majority of money comes from charitable trading (fees, training courses, admission charges or membership). The main causes supported by individuals are medical research, children and young people, hospitals and hospices.

Donations can be restricted or unrestricted but organisations need a balance of both, given that core costs need to be covered. Regular giving is valued by organisations as it gives some predictability. Donations are not necessarily restricted to individuals – organisations also donate money for specific projects or make one-off donations.

Activity 4 How to choose a charity

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Imagine you have £100 you want to give to a charity. Which charity would you choose and why?

In the box below is a list to guide your thinking. Next to each item type in a number from 1 to 4 to rank the reasons in their order of importance to you.

1 = the most important reason

2 = important reason

3 = not very important reason

4 = unimportant

The cause interests or appeals to me
Personal contact with someone helped by the charity
The charity works with people in need
The charity has a good campaign (TV, social media, etc.)

Comment

You might, of course, have had other reasons or ideas that did not fit with the list provided. The choice of reasons in this list was based on research by Beth Breeze (2013). She conducted a study with 60 donors and asked them about how they decided which charities to support and why. Breeze concluded that 'donors often support organisations that promote their own preferences, that help people they feel some affinity with, and that support causes that relate to their own life experiences' (p. 180). She also found that people did not do much research themselves on which causes to support and were often influenced by the latest campaign on television and in newspapers or what came in the post.

Other reasons might be that you already volunteer or support the organisation, or that the organisation works locally. It is certainly difficult at times to choose between organisations: I support two charities on a regular basis because they did a 'hard sell' on me in the street. They fit very well with everything I believe in but of course there are many more similar charities that I could have chosen.

4 Income from government



Figure 4 Governments provide funding through grants and contracts

The second biggest source of funding for many voluntary organisations is from government although, as you saw earlier, some organisations such as Helen & Douglas House receive no income outside of donations. Income from government is either voluntary income (grants) or earned income (contracts or fees). Local government is the main provider of this funding but central government, the European Union and NHS trusts provide large sums too.

According to NCVO (2015), the voluntary sector received £13.3 billion in 2012/13, most of which was earned through contracts or fees. The NCVO data show that more than a third of the funding for major organisations comes from government, whereas for micro and small organisations, it is 16%. The reasons why the smallest organisations have less government funding are two-fold: first, small organisations may not actually need government funding if they are operating in fields that are more locally or hobby-based; second, micro and small organisations may not have the resources or knowledge required to take part in lengthy and complex negotiations and writing applications.

At the time of writing in 2015, a key feature of UK government funding is that it is on the decline: since 2009/10 income has fallen every year and this is in line with government cuts across public spending. This is likely to continue to do so. Furthermore, there is an increasing shift from grants to contracts, making funding more restricted.

The differences between grants and contracts

A **grant** is usually a gift or a donation that can be either restricted or unrestricted funding. Often the organisation has a lot of scope in determining what is in a grant application. For example, Glasgow City Council gives grants to local community and voluntary organisations to stimulate local community activity as part of its objectives for 'area partnerships'.

A **contract** is a legally enforceable agreement, tightly specified by the public sector, with strict monitoring requirements. Often voluntary organisations are subcontractors to business organisations that are the primary contractor – making the contracts complex arrangements. For example, [Guideposts Trust](#) (2015) (an English health and social care voluntary organisation) has various contracts with local councils to run holiday and after-school clubs for children with learning or physical disabilities.

Activity 5 Grants versus contracts

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Think about the following questions and make some notes:

- What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of grants and contracts?
- What would be your preference if you were involved with fundraising in a voluntary organisation?

Provide your answer...

Comment

The advantage of grants and contracts at a simplistic level is that they both provide funding, which is what organisations need to function.

The disadvantages common to both are the amount of work involved in writing applications for grants or tenders for contracts.

The main advantage of a grant over a contract is that the organisation decides what to apply for and how it will use the money. Some grants will be monitored and evaluated, so they are not effort-free once awarded.

One advantage of a contract is that it may enable an organisation to provide a vital service. However, contracts do involve a considerable amount of work through the tendering process and the organisation has to ensure it is able to deliver according to the tightly specified terms of the contract. A disadvantage is that when the contract comes to an end, an organisation may have to end the service and possibly make staff redundant or transfer them to the new contract holder.

Therefore, if you were involved in fundraising, you would need to think carefully about the advantages and disadvantages created by these types of funding. The context is also important: one type might be more common or appropriate in your organisation and, of course, it depends what your organisation needs the money for – for example, a one-off project or something it wants to run long term.

One concern for voluntary organisations is that a heavy reliance on government contracts or other major funders might compromise the organisation's independence and its ability to campaign. The [Panel on the Independence of the Voluntary Sector](#) (n.d.) was established in 2011 (with a particular focus on England) to investigate concerns about independence. It has published various reports exploring risks and challenges to the voluntary sector.

4.1 Social value

An increasingly important aspect of contracts in the UK is that they require organisations to specify their 'social value'. Compact Voice, talking about the English experience, describes social value as:

the **additional value** created in the delivery of a service contract which has a wider community or public benefit – this extends beyond the social value delivered as part of the primary contract activity. For example, a homelessness

organisation funded to provide hostel space for the homeless may create additional value by providing routes into employment and training for its service users.

This is a move away from awarding contracts based on lowest cost, and is of particular significance given the increasing pressure on public spending.

(2014, p. 2)

In theory, this move might enable voluntary organisations to win more contracts. But this needs to be weighed against the restrictions, and the additional workload and effort of contracts, as well as concerns about the loss of independence for the organisation.

5 Income from other sources



Figure 5 The National Lottery gave the voluntary sector £1796.8 million for the year ending March 2015

Voluntary organisations also receive funding from other parts of the voluntary sector, private sector organisations, the National Lottery and from income earned on investments.

You have already read about donations by individuals but donations are also given by private sector organisations. For example, every Waitrose branch gives £1000 each month to three local causes and since the scheme started in 2008 the company has donated £14 million. Waitrose gives the money but customers choose which one of the three local causes receives the most by allocating tokens in a box (Waitrose, 2015).

Although each organisation receives only a small amount, the organisations themselves are usually small too and a few hundred pounds can make a difference.

Philanthropy by individuals and organisations is nothing new, although it is now organised more formally, for example with organisations (such as the Institute for Philanthropy) specialising in giving advice to philanthropists. Research by Moriarty (2014) in Ireland concluded that philanthropy foundations are important funders of 'hard-to-fund' cases: those organisations that struggle to achieve government funding or to receive individual donations. Considerable media attention is also given to high-profile philanthropists, such as Melinda and Bill Gates.

Activity 6 Family foundation philanthropy

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Watch this video from 2011 in which Professor Cathy Pharoah from Cass Business School and Charles Keidan, Director of Pears Foundation, talk about philanthropic giving by **family foundations**.

Make notes on the key features of family foundations.

Video content is not available in this format.



Provide your answer...

Comment

Family foundations are charitable trusts but tend to have members of one particular family on the boards of trustees. They employ professional staff so that they can improve the effectiveness of their giving strategies. Family foundations appear to be an important source of funding, given that the amounts they give are increasing, whereas individual and corporate donations have slowed down. Keidan argues that family foundations are increasingly important in helping difficult issues that require a longer-term approach.

So far this week you have seen that there are consequences for voluntary organisations in terms of funders' expectations of a return on their contribution, depending on which kind of funding the organisation pursues. Essentially, the more specific the purpose for which funding is given, the greater the degree of control and accountability the funder will usually expect. Many sources of funding come with 'strings attached' that may place limitations on an organisation's freedom of action. So there may be trade-offs that have to be made when deciding whether to accept this funding. Organisations need to decide whether the trade-off will compromise their mission too much. This is a decision that needs to be taken consciously rather than by default.

6 Funding challenges



Figure 6 Campaigning against funding cuts

You saw earlier that UK government funding to voluntary organisations decreased in recent years as part of the review of public spending in 2010. The impact of this has been felt particularly in England, although many charities across the UK have had to cut jobs and services. In the next activity you will look at a case study of a voluntary organisation that has had to manage cuts to its funding.

Activity 7 Headway

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Headway (2015) states that it aims to 'promote understanding of all aspects of brain injury and provide information, support and services to survivors, their families and carers'. The organisation ran a campaign in 2014 to draw attention to how their service users were being affected by funding cuts.

Watch the following video about Headway in the West Midlands. Make notes on how the organisation is experiencing cuts to its funding and how its service users are affected.

Video content is not available in this format.



Provide your answer...

Comment

The news report initially focuses on an individual's story, which makes the film hard-hitting but also explains who the organisation is trying to help. One clear theme from the report is that it is not just cuts to Headway's services that are important but also cuts across public services. So, even if Headway can provide a service, someone whose benefit has been cut leaving them with no money for transport, or whose eligibility criteria for funding has changed, would not be able to access Headway's service. The spokesperson also highlights how cutting one smaller service might lead to a bigger drain on health and social care services in the long term.

The video illustrates many of the issues highlighted this week around the complexities of different funding sources.

Now all that is left for you to complete this week is the first badge quiz.

7 This week's quiz

Now it's time to complete the Week 4 badge quiz. It is similar to previous quizzes, but this time, instead of answering five questions there will be fifteen.

Quizzes are only available online and when enrolled to the course on OpenLearn

[Week 4 compulsory badge quiz.](#)

Remember, this quiz counts towards your badge. If you're not successful the first time, you can attempt the quiz again in 24 hours.

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

8 Summary

Congratulations on reaching the end of Week 4 – you are now halfway through the course. This week has focused on an overview of the main sources of funding for voluntary organisations and some of the issues and challenges that may arise. You now have a basic knowledge and understanding of funding opportunities and challenges, which you could apply to further research on funders suitable for organisations you are particularly interested in.

There is more on the practicalities of doing fundraising in another free badged OpenLearn course, *Working in the voluntary sector*, which will be available in 2016.

In Week 4 you have learned about:

- the types of organisations that fund voluntary organisations
- how funding is given to voluntary organisations – as donations, grants and contracts
- what the differences are between restricted and unrestricted income
- how to use annual reports and websites to find information on funders and types of funding
- the challenges of having contracts with government to deliver services.

You can now go to Week 5.

Week 5: Introducing stakeholders

Introduction

In your work or volunteering – or other areas of your life – you may have noticed that some individuals and groups have quite a lot of power in how your organisation is run or how services are provided. Power means the potential to influence but whether people use this power will depend on what interest they have in influencing the organisation.

Some people have little power but a lot of interest in how the organisation is run and what it does. These individuals or groups could be service users, volunteers and employees, funders, the general public or the media, to name a few. These are some of the many stakeholders of an organisation, and they can be very influential in how an organisation meets its mission, how it's viewed in the community, whether it receives funding, or how well it provides its services.

Last week you were introduced to the idea that an organisation needs to be transparent and accountable, and how the use of annual reports provides a way for an organisation to set out its financial position, as well as its achievements and challenges. Many of the people who need to know this type of information are an organisation's stakeholders. This week you will explore the role and contribution of stakeholders to voluntary organisations.

There are many reasons why it is important not to neglect stakeholders: ensuring that people are consulted can help less powerful groups have a voice in decision making but equally, some groups may decide to campaign against a decision made by staff or trustees. These groups may be powerful enough – or rally enough support – to reverse decisions or to prompt resignations. A recent example of this is a community shop in south-west England where the community argued against the management committee's decisions and all the committee members felt they had to resign.

This week you will think about the stakeholders of an organisation with which you are familiar, and you will explore the different perspectives they hold and the amount of power each has to influence how the organisation fulfils its mission. You will also learn about some of the ways in which voluntary and community organisations work and communicate with their stakeholders.

In the following video, Julie Charlesworth introduces you to Week 5.

Video content is not available in this format.



By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- describe the meaning of the term 'stakeholders' in the context of voluntary organisations
- identify primary and secondary stakeholders using different examples
- understand the competing interests in organisations
- identify how stakeholders may influence decision-making processes
- describe some methods for communicating with stakeholders in voluntary organisations.

1 Who are stakeholders?



Figure 1 Voluntary organisations have many stakeholders

The stakeholder approach to looking at an organisation's priorities originated with business and management theories in the 1960s. The term stakeholders encompasses many different people and groups who have an interest in how well an organisation is run, including a business's shareholders who obviously want a return for their investment. When we apply the term stakeholders to voluntary organisations, it has a similar meaning but the stakeholders are different.

Therefore, stakeholders are individuals or groups that have a 'stake' in, are affected by or can have an effect on an organisation. In the context of the voluntary and community

sector, this often means those who have an interest in how well an organisation addresses the needs of its clients or service users – a key stakeholder group. However, if you look at the concept of stakeholders more closely, you will be able to identify other organisational stakeholders inside and outside the organisation: volunteers, board members and employees, for example, as well as donors, funders and policy makers. Stakeholders will often have different perspectives on an organisation – what its main priorities should be and how effective it is, for example.

1.1 Stakeholders in voluntary organisations

As you learned in Week 2, voluntary organisations and their missions are underpinned by values – values that you might assume are shared among an organisation's stakeholders. However, this is not necessarily the case. Take a look at Figure 2. These are just some of the stakeholders you might be able to identify for a particular voluntary organisation.

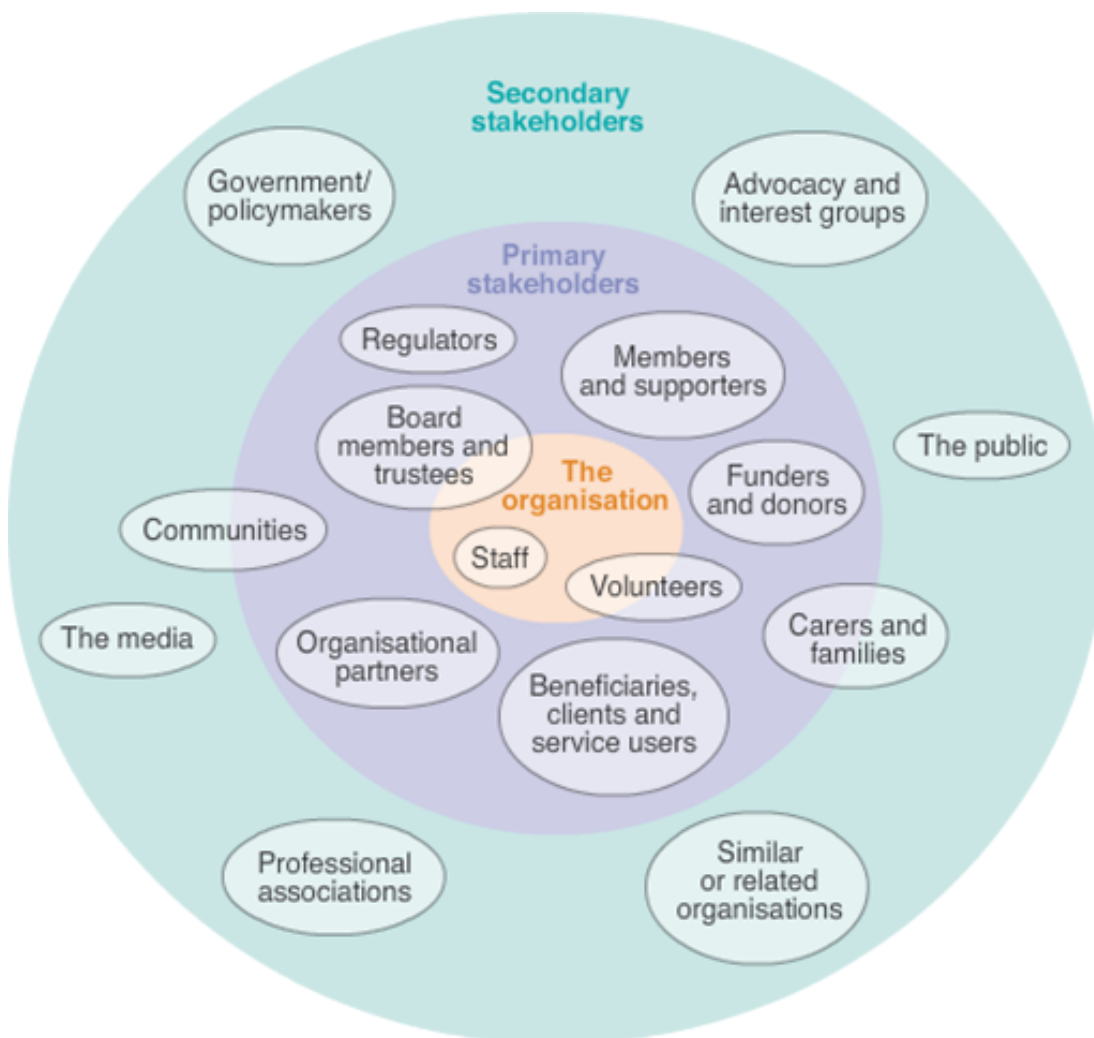


Figure 2 Illustration of a voluntary organisation's stakeholders (Source: adapted from Figure 1.1, Freeman et al., 2007, p. 7)

The inner circle of the diagram – directly circling 'The organisation' – depicts the primary stakeholders. These are individuals and groups that have a direct, specific interest in how the organisation is run, its mission, its effectiveness and other day-to-day issues.

The outer tier depicts the secondary stakeholders, who may also have an interest in the organisation but perhaps not as directly or as specifically as those in the inner tier. Of course, secondary stakeholders can also take a direct interest – for example, in the case of organisational partnerships, the partners will want to ensure that partnership commitments are being upheld by the organisation.

Activity 1 Mapping stakeholders

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Watch this video of Matthew Slocombe, Director of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), talking about his organisation's stakeholders. Make notes on who the stakeholders are and then decide where they will fit on Figure 2.

Video content is not available in this format.



Provide your answer...

Comment

Matthew talks about the members being the core stakeholders so these would be put in the 'primary stakeholders' circle. Members pay their annual subscription and many actively participate. Although Matthew does not specifically mention staff, volunteers or trustees, these would be categorised as primary stakeholders.

Matthew also identifies local planning authorities, building professionals and the general public as stakeholders. In some cases, these groups approach the SPAB for information; in other cases, it is the SPAB who is targeting groups as part of campaigns to get the conservation message across. Local planning authorities and building professionals probably fit onto the boundary between the primary and secondary stakeholders. The general public are secondary stakeholders.

Activity 2 Mapping *your* stakeholders

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Make a list of the primary and secondary stakeholders of an organisation with which you are familiar. This can be an organisation where you work or volunteer, or one that you have come into contact with in your community.

You might like to create a stakeholder diagram, similar to Figure 2 and Activity 1, to depict the stakeholders you identify.

What similarities and differences with the SPAB did you note and why?

Provide your answer...

Comment

You probably found both similarities and differences – depending on the size of the organisation you chose, as well as what field it is in (e.g. health and social care, environmental, hobby or sports and so on). You might also have found that Figure 2 made you think more widely about the people who might have an interest in your organisation.

These activities will have helped you think about who the stakeholders are in voluntary organisations. Next you will look at the power and influence different stakeholders have.

2 Stakeholder power and interest



Figure 3 Not all stakeholders have the same amount of power

Organisations depend on a number of stakeholders for their success and effectiveness. Funders, for example, have substantial power in determining how well an organisation can meet the needs of its clients and service users. Funders will also have a keen interest in how their funds are managed and in the effectiveness of the programmes they fund. As you saw in Week 3, some funding – particularly through contracts – is tightly controlled and monitored.

Activity 3 Keeping stakeholders happy

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Read the following short extract from an article by Emma De Vita, a senior section editor on *Management Today*. While reading, think about how your chosen organisation responds to the interests of its stakeholders. Is it similar to the approach advocated by the author of this article?

As a manager of a stakeholder organisation, you have a responsibility to make everyone feel part of the decision-making process.

In practice, humans are often far too self-interested to make this happen in any meaningful way. Some stakeholders will be far more powerful than others, and it's your job to work out who they are and butter them up to keep them happy. Then you'll have those stakeholders who have little power or influence but who tend to be the most vocal. Keeping them happy is a headache in itself.

Charities, whose causes engender far more public interest than those of businesses (everyone cares about a homeless dog, but who has strong feelings about vacuum-cleaner production?), have a harder time putting [stakeholder theory] into practice. Public attention is the lifeblood of voluntary organisations, but it tends to make the number of concerned stakeholders skyrocket.

Keeping all of them happy would lead every charity chief executive to the edge of a breakdown. Better instead to console yourself with the axiom that, although all stakeholders are equal, some are more equal than others. Keep the most important people (those with the money) happy and placate the rest with free pens and newsletters.

(Source: edited from De Vita, 2007)

Provide your answer...

Comment

Emma De Vita's perspective on stakeholders may be cynical in one sense, but it fails to recognise the importance of secondary stakeholders. At the heart of stakeholder theory is the idea that organisations must make relationships with their stakeholders – both primary and secondary.

Speaking from a business and management perspective, theorist Freeman, et al. (2007) argued that even if a primary stakeholder (such as a funder) was satisfied, secondary stakeholders (such as an advocacy group) could still influence the relationship between an organisation and its primary stakeholders. In this case, a stable primary relationship could be jeopardised (or enhanced) by another relationship. Nevertheless, organisations will often need to choose how they engage with different stakeholders – most organisations do not have the resources to relate to them all.

It should also be pointed out that there may be different stakeholders related to different projects within an organisation, and that one of the challenges organisations face is to manage the different stakeholder needs and wants across various projects in the organisation. For many charities and organisations within the sector, the primary stakeholders are not necessarily funders. For example, for some membership organisations, members are the primary stakeholders. For many charities, service users are the primary stakeholders.

Moreover, many primary stakeholder groups (for example children) have little power in terms of getting their issues addressed, so organisations must be aware of the voice they give to certain stakeholders. Finding the right balance between competing interests and the level of power of each stakeholder group can be challenging.

2.1 Understanding power

A method used to depict the relationship between a stakeholder's interest in the organisation and the power they have to influence it is a matrix (see Figure 4). On this matrix, large-scale funders, for example, would be placed in the high interest/high power category. Similarly, an organisation might have stakeholders that have a high degree of power but little interest in the success of the organisation (for example policy makers). This might apply to some of the secondary stakeholders you identified in Activity 2. What about those with a high degree of interest but low power? Service users and staff in the organisation will often fall within this category, but not always.

		Level of interest	
		Low	High
Power	Low	e.g., general public	e.g., service users, staff (often)
	High	e.g., policymakers	e.g., funders, members

Figure 4 Power and interest of stakeholders (Source: adapted from Johnson and Scholes, 1999)

Activity 4 Power in practice

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Create your own version of Figure 4 and use it to allocate the different stakeholders from the organisation you chose in Activity 2 to the different parts of the matrix.

Provide your answer...

Comment

This type of stakeholder mapping can be used for thinking about how organisations engage with their stakeholders. Allocating different groups within the matrix helps organisations to think about who has power and who should have more. Empowering groups, particularly service users and beneficiaries, is discussed in Week 6.

3 Working with stakeholders



Figure 5 Volunteers are stakeholders too

Working with stakeholders can be a complicated process. As noted earlier, stakeholders can have competing perspectives on a voluntary organisation's mission or how it does things, and it can be difficult to negotiate the differing levels of power and interest.

You can use the matrix in Figure 4 to think about possible strategies on how to work with stakeholders: this is depicted in Figure 6.

		Level of interest	
		Low	High
Power	Low	Monitor and inform	Inform and consult
	High	Keep satisfied	Engage and influence

Figure 6 Power and interest and strategy (based on NCVO Stakeholder analysis power/interest matrix, n.d.)

Looking at the boxes now, you can start to think about methods of engagement:

- High power – high interest people must be fully engaged. This group is the one that organisations will work with closely.
- High power – low interest people need to be involved.
- Low power people with a high interest need to be kept well informed and consulted.
- People with low levels of power and less interest should be monitored but they may not want to become heavily involved in the organisation's work.

Stakeholder theorists have identified a number of ways to manage the sometimes competing perspectives and interests of organisational stakeholders. Some of these strategies, identified by Mistry (2007), include:

- Addressing certain stakeholder perspectives adequately rather than in the best possible way (what is often termed 'satisficing', a blending of the words 'satisfy' and 'suffice').
- Addressing stakeholder issues over a period of time – rather than right away – in order to conserve resources (called 'sequencing').
- Balancing the needs of one stakeholder group with another's so that both achieve at least partial success (what are known as 'trade-offs').

Managers and executives in the voluntary sector will often take a relative approach to dealing with stakeholders. Those who are the most crucial will receive the most attention, and as Emma De Vita stated in the extract you read earlier, 'Keep the most important people (those with the money) happy and placate the rest with free pens and newsletters' (2007). In the sometimes chaotic environment of the voluntary sector, an

organisation may not have the time, staff or resources to pursue anything but this type of strategy.

However, other theorists argue that to focus on the needs of only the most powerful stakeholders is a poor strategy for overall effectiveness. In the business world, this means that business organisations need to focus on not only 'creating value' for their shareholders but also for other stakeholders (e.g. their employees and the community). In the context of the voluntary sector, where external stakeholders can play a much more powerful role, the organisation must balance the needs of its different stakeholder groups with the ability to address these needs amidst a scarcity of resources.

3.1 Managing stakeholders in the voluntary sector

As with many organisations, charities and other types of voluntary sector organisation will practise similar strategies to those just outlined. Certain groups' needs can be addressed with minimal resources and services while the primary target communities will be supported with additional resources. A project may be designed to address one particular need among many, with partners providing ancillary or support services. Organisations may be dependent on other organisations in the sector to address stakeholders' needs they are unable to meet – thus balancing their own independence with a wider range of services.

Activity 5 Brixton Splash

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read the following example of a street festival. Make notes on who you think the stakeholders are and what strategies (satisficing, sequencing, trade-offs) the organisers might have used when they first set up the organisation and to get the festival going.

Brixton Splash is an annual free street music festival in Brixton, London, which started in 2005. It is organised by a community organisation and uses volunteer stewards on the day. It currently has funding from the Arts Council and has had funding from Lambeth Council in the past. Its aims are:

- To promote and celebrate African-Caribbean heritage and culture, and its influence in the local area and beyond.
- To promote equality and diversity for public benefit through an inclusive festival that will foster understanding and harmony between people of diverse backgrounds.
- To advance education in music, arts, heritage and culture through a festival and outreach programme that will bring people of diverse backgrounds together for the appreciation and celebration of African-Caribbean culture and Brixton.

We celebrate our community's diversity, its progress through the years and the fusion of numerous ethnic groups that now call Brixton home, by creating a cultural explosion proudly specific to our location and history. We successfully balance welcoming those who are just discovering Brixton with those who have always believed in Brixton's unique identity, throughout the years. We remain loyal to and proud of our Afro-Caribbean heritage which

has defined our community since the Windrush generation of the late 1940's and 1950's.

The Festival is a celebration of community cohesion, vibrant inner city living and Brixton's contribution to the wider world. Brixton is currently the go-to area in London to enjoy everything culinary and creative with big name businesses moving to the high street and entrepreneurs developing the markets.

Lambeth is one of the most diverse boroughs in the country, with over 130 languages spoken. Brixton sits in the heart of the borough and is a bustling hive of activity. There is a strong history of music and the creative arts and numerous cultural groups are based in the area.

Our Festival is free for everyone, operates between midday and 7pm on the first Sunday in August every year and has become a premier event in the London Events Calendar.

Each year we improve and enhance the content of our event to build on its success and broaden its appeal.

(Brixton Splash, 2015)

Provide your answer...

Comment

The stakeholders include:

- the local community
- local businesses
- volunteers and staff
- Lambeth Council
- the police
- visitors to the event from outside the community
- sponsors.

Clearly, organisers of events like this must have to deal with a lot of competing interests. You may have thought of some of the following issues:

- **Satisficing strategy:** as live music is a major part of the festival, it might be that some local residents would not appreciate the music as much as others. These community members are still important stakeholders and so organisers need to limit the hours that live music is played during the day and into the evening – or where it is played – in order to avoid inconveniencing these residents.
- **Sequencing strategies:** these have probably been used as the festival has grown over the years. Available resources in the first years might have limited the number of stalls or services provided, and as resources grew, these services and events during the festival could grow too.
- **Trade-off strategy:** the organisers would need to collaborate with the Lambeth police and, in fact, in the early days of the festival the police trained the stewards. This would help to address a number of stakeholder interests: the community would be engaged in ensuring the event was safe, and local police would be able

to ensure safety without a large police presence. Community members would see friendly local people if any problems emerged. In the early days of the festival, the organisers were keen to see the event move the community forward from its 'infamous' reputation of the 1981 Brixton riots.

As in this example, you might find that one or two of the strategies are particularly useful while others are best used at a different time or with a different set of stakeholders. However, it is useful to think about the different approaches you might take when working with a given set of stakeholders.

4 Communicating with stakeholders



Figure 7 Balance your stakeholders' needs

A crucial strategy for engaging with, and managing stakeholders, is communication: among staff, managers and the board, between the organisation and its stakeholders and between the organisation and its funders. Such communication can help to coordinate work within the organisation and to build consensus on what makes the organisation effective.

Some common ways in which such communication is implemented are:

- annual reports and other publications provided to the public
- reports to funders
- periodic meetings with stakeholder groups (such as community meetings)
- regular meetings with and training of staff and volunteers
- annual meetings with members (such as in associations)
- fundraising events
- including stakeholders in the organisation's strategic planning activities
- website and social media
- press releases
- service user and other stakeholder representatives on boards
- guest speaking engagements at meetings
- participation in collaborative project teams and task forces
- public testimony in government venues (such as local councils)
- conducting case studies with service users and beneficiaries of the organisation.

Some of these communication methods are more participatory and engage with stakeholders in a way that empowers them and gives them a voice. Other strategies are simply a means of communicating the main values and activities of the organisation and are less powerful. However, all of these activities are ways in which the organisation can communicate with its stakeholders, and manage its stakeholder relationships and the expectations of its stakeholder groups.

Each of the listed communication methods may address a different set of stakeholders. This is why managing stakeholders can be a very time-consuming process for organisations, and particularly for smaller organisations with few resources and staff time to spare. Nevertheless, managing stakeholder relationships and expectations is an important activity for voluntary organisations, which are often held accountable by their stakeholder groups for the services they provide.

Activity 6 Communicating with stakeholders at the SPAB

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Watch Matthew Slocombe, Director of the SPAB, talking about communicating with stakeholders. Make a note of which methods the SPAB uses for which groups.

Video content is not available in this format.



Provide your answer...

Comment

Matthew highlights the need to use different methods depending on the group he is trying to reach. He mentions formal letters for local planning authorities as these are often used in the public domain (e.g. in planning inquiries or disputes): these would fit under the 'public testimony' category in the list above.

Matthew says seminars and conferences draw people in and staff attend events or meetings with people. He also discusses the problem of a 'hard to reach' group – the builders – who are often too busy to attend. The SPAB is trying different initiatives, such as involvement with colleges, so that they can provide information to trainees.

Activity 7 Good communication

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Think of two different stakeholder groups for the organisation you are interested in. Then look at the different communication methods in the list above. Select two methods and investigate to see if and how they are used to communicate with the stakeholders. For example, you may wish to access the organisation's annual report (if available), take a look at its website or follow it on social media.

If you had more time available, you could attend a staff meeting or a meeting of volunteers and take notes on how stakeholders are involved or their needs addressed. Another possibility would be to attend a community meeting held by the organisation. During your investigation, take note of the following:

1. How do you think the organisation seeks to manage the stakeholder relationships and expectations through the different communication methods?
2. Which stakeholder expectations do you think are not addressed by the different communication methods?

Provide your answer...

Comment

You possibly found that a range of communication methods was used for each stakeholder group and these methods probably varied depending on the context. Social media, for example, is obviously very important for providing instant access to news stories, campaigns, announcements about meetings and so on. It can also be combined with other methods: for example, Calgary Zoo in Canada put their 2012 annual review on Instagram (Amar, 2015). However, if an organisation is looking to consult in depth, then face-to-face meetings might be particularly important but could be combined with generating discussion online.

In terms of not managing to meet stakeholder expectations, the context or specific examples you focused on will vary. Many people do not use social media so they may feel excluded and unable to participate.

5 This week's quiz

Well done, you have just completed the last of the activities in this week's study before the weekly quiz.

Quizzes are only available online and when enrolled to the course on OpenLearn

[Week 5 practice quiz.](#)

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

6 Summary

This week you have learned about the different ways in which voluntary organisations address the needs of their stakeholders and that organisations often need to make difficult choices about how intensively they work with their various stakeholders.

Stakeholders can have differing levels of interest in a particular issue and widely differing levels of power to influence an organisation or project. Because voluntary organisations are often much more publicly accountable than organisations in the private sector, they often find it a challenge to balance the needs of their many different groups of primary and secondary stakeholders. Many organisations have scarce resources too, which adds to problems in communicating with all the groups. Organisations have a wide range of methods they can employ when communicating with their stakeholders in order to better manage their relationships and expectations. In Week 6 you build on the concept of power introduced here and examine a stakeholder group in more detail – service users and beneficiaries.

In Week 5, you have learned about:

- who stakeholders are
- the differences between primary and secondary stakeholders
- how to map stakeholders
- how power and interest can be mapped for different stakeholders
- some theories and methods of managing stakeholders' competing interests
- methods of communicating with stakeholders.

You can now go to Week 6.

Week 6: Power, engagement and empowerment

Introduction

Charities and voluntary organisations are established to benefit the public in some way. Yet many of those who benefit do not hold much power and are less able to participate in voluntary organisations.

In Week 5, you were introduced to the role of stakeholders and how groups hold different amounts of power and influence in organisations. You also considered different methods of communication with stakeholders. This week you will build on this work by examining the sources of power in organisations. In particular you will consider the role of one large stakeholder group: beneficiaries. Ensuring you have an accurate picture of beneficiaries is important in the context of understanding power and empowerment, particularly in terms of whose voice is not being heard or represented in organisations.

You will explore how beneficiaries can be engaged and 'empowered' to participate more in the decision making and other activities of voluntary organisations. Empowerment is a much-used term and so its various meanings will be examined. You will look at the ways in which service users in particular can be encouraged to contribute more to organisations and how their services are run. This is of particular concern to organisations in health and social care but the principles of empowerment can also be applied more widely.

This week begins with an overview of what constitutes power and a consideration of how these elements relate to your own experience.

In the following video, Julie introduces you to Week 6.

Video content is not available in this format.



By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- identify different sources of power
- describe the beneficiaries of an organisation
- explain engagement and empowerment and why they matter
- describe ways of improving beneficiary involvement and expanding it more widely
- apply ideas and methods of empowerment to an organisation you are familiar with.

1 What is power?



Figure 1 Power over others

As you saw in Week 5, stakeholders hold varying amounts of power in organisations. Power is a complex term and usually refers to influence, control or domination. Power is the potential to influence, which may or may not be exercised. For example, a police officer has a number of powers but whether these are exercised and how they are exercised depends on circumstances. Power can be perceived as both positive and negative, depending on how that power is used – power can be harnessed for good! It is useful to think initially about power in society before examining power within organisations.

Activity 1 Who has power in society?

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Look at the following images and note what they make you think about in terms of power: does the person have power? Is the image a negative or a positive depiction of power?



Figure 2 Depictions of power

Provide your answer...

Comment

Some people would see the image of the politician as doing good – others would have a different view. People working in banks or other major corporations are often perceived as having too much power. Bill Gates has enormous power derived from his wealth and commercial success. Yet he and Melinda Gates are also philanthropists. Having established a major grant-giving foundation, they use their power and wealth for good causes. People without work or homes probably feel they have no power in society due to their **socio-economic** position.

Activity 1 starts to illustrate that power is one of those controversial topics that frequently evokes strong views and feelings. It also raises many awkward questions, such as:

- Is it acceptable to have power or does power corrupt?
- Is power just a question of what position you occupy?
- Does everyone have some power or is it just the preserve of a few?
- What, if any, power do I have?
- Can power be exercised responsibly?

Bear these questions in mind as you work through this week.

1.1 Defining power

Power involves degrees of influence and authority. These concepts can be defined as follows:

- **Power** is the potential or capacity of a person or a group to influence other people or groups.
- **Influence** occurs when a person or a group affects what another person or group does or thinks.
- **Authority** is a particular kind of power. It is the power that is formally given to an individual or to a group because of the position or role that they occupy within an organisation. For example, managers will have certain authority over their groups or departments; a management committee will have authority to make certain decisions for its organisation.

There are many different sources of power or 'power bases', as they are commonly called in organisations. This week's focus is on the following sources of power.

Position power

The position or role that a person holds in an organisation entitles them to do certain things, such as giving instructions to others, authorising expenditure, organising work or calling certain meetings. Ultimately, position power is backed up by the rules, regulations and resources of an organisation. It confers on an individual or a group the authority to undertake certain delegated responsibilities with the formal support of the organisation.

Resource power

All organisations depend for their continued existence on an adequate supply of resources, such as money, personnel, materials, technology and clients. Control over any of these resources, particularly if they are scarce, can be an important source of power both within and between organisations. If you depend on another person for a particular scarce resource, then that person can probably exert considerable influence over you. If the resource is not scarce and you can obtain it elsewhere, then the other person's power is diminished.

Money is a key resource so it is not surprising that so much of organisational politics revolves around budgeting and the allocation of financial resources. People are another vital resource. If you control how people are deployed this provides some power, but you also have some power because of your ability to control your own labour. For example, you might seek to influence a colleague by threatening not to cooperate with them, or by giving only the minimum of effort.

Expert power

Expert power depends in particular on the relationship between the parties involved and on the context of their relationship. A person's claim to expertise is only 'legitimate' when it is recognised by those over whom it is exercised. The recognition of expertise is often a matter of reputation and demonstration. If you go into a group with a good reputation, or if you have developed one in the group, your expertise is more likely to be recognised. If you are new to a group, then recognition will probably grow if you can demonstrate that you know what you are talking about. Of course, it is usually best to stick to things you do actually know about! Furthermore, you may influence what other people or groups believe or do when they perceive you to be more expert than they are.

Information power

Without some degree of expertise you cannot judge what information is relevant or important. Access to information is often a result of a person's position and their wider connections. A person's position may give them access to important committees and other meetings. People who occupy key positions in the information networks of organisations are often called '**gatekeepers**' because they can control the flow of information. Gatekeepers are in a position to shape knowledge in a way that favours their interests, by opening and closing channels of communication and selectively filtering, summarising, analysing and timing the release of information.

1.2 Your own sources of power

You have just considered the following sources of power:

- position
- resources
- expertise
- information.

In Activity 2, you will consider how these sources of power relate to your own experience.

Activity 2 What power do you have?

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Power varies depending on the context: for example, your expertise may be recognised in one situation but not another. Consider your own sources of power (as listed above) in the following situations (if applicable) and make notes on each aspect.

Situation A – a group or an individual over whose work (paid or unpaid) you have some formal authority.

Situation B – a manager, group or management committee that has some formal authority over your work (paid or unpaid).

For each situation rate your different sources of power on a scale from one to five, where one is low and five is high. Compare the two situations. What differences do you notice?

Provide your answer...

Comment

One key issue to remember is that your sources of power will vary according to the different situations you face. If you were able to explore situation A, you probably found that your position and control of resources were more important in situation A than in situation B. You will be more likely to be in a position to control information flowing down the organisation in situation A, and up in situation B.

If you do not work as a manager, you may feel that you do not have a large amount of power and authority, but you may have identified one or two areas where you do feel you have some power (or **autonomy** at least). Volunteers are often given responsibilities similar to managers or supervisors, perhaps coordinating the work of other volunteers or interviewing new recruits.

Not everybody has formal power in their work or volunteering – or wants it. From examining these interrelated sources of power, hopefully you will see that there may be situations where you do have power, perhaps through your knowledge or control of information. The following activity should help you think more broadly about power and the issues raised in Activity 2.

Activity 3 Does power corrupt?

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Make some notes in answer to the following questions:

1. Does everyone in organisations have some power or just a privileged few?
2. Do you think that power corrupts (and what does this mean) or can it be exercised responsibly?
3. Are some forms of power more acceptable than others?
4. What power do you have?

Provide your answer...

Comment

1. Everyone has some power even if it is just the power that comes from other people's dependence on your goodwill or labour, which you may withhold. Of course, power does vary greatly between people and some are definitely more powerful than others.
2. This generalisation is too sweeping. A more accurate version might be 'high concentrations of power tend to corrupt' – it is very tempting to get your own way without carrying people with you. Alternatively, if the responsible use of power involves accountability, another version would be 'power without accountability corrupts'. Of course, some people with high concentrations of power do also empower others to do positive things.
3. The forms of power and influence that are regarded as acceptable will vary depending on the values and norms that are held within a particular group or organisation. People often view expertise and persuasion strategies as legitimate forms of power and influence.
4. The power that you have will vary depending on who it is you are trying to influence and the context of your relationship. The tasks in this activity should have helped you recognise the sources of power you may have beyond authority or position power.

2 Who are beneficiaries?



Figure 3 Beneficiaries of an organisation

You have focused so far on different sources of power and started to think about these in the context of the degree of power and authority you have in your own work or volunteering. You will now look at beneficiaries and the power and influence they might have.

As Week 5 suggested, power tends to be limited for service users. Consequently there has been a growing interest in the voluntary sector (and public services more widely) to ‘empower’ beneficiaries to take a bigger role in their organisations. So this section starts by looking at who beneficiaries are and your experience of working with them or being a beneficiary yourself.

What do we mean by beneficiaries? Generally speaking, these are the people who benefit from or use organisations but, as you will see, this is not confined to the people who use services directly. In health care, for example, beneficiaries might also include the families of patients with health problems.

Activity 4 Problems of definition

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Read the definition below. Note this definition refers to charities but the discussion could be applied to a range of voluntary and community organisations.

Using this definition, identify the beneficiaries of an organisation you are familiar with.

Defining beneficiaries and service user

[A beneficiary is] anyone who uses or benefits from a charity's services or facilities, whether provided by the charity on a voluntary basis or as a contractual service, perhaps on behalf of a body like a local authority. 'User' will mean different things to different charities, and a number of people around the person directly receiving a service will also often benefit from the service. For instance, in a charity that undertakes research into a particular medical condition, the 'user' could be the person with that condition, his or her carers, medical and educational professionals offering advice on the condition and so on. Even if support is not provided directly to relatives, guardians or carers, they might have a clear and direct interest in how the charity is run because of their relationship and responsibility, sometimes financial or legal, for the actual users.

(Charity Commission, 2000)

Provide your answer...

Comment

This definition encompasses people beyond the actual person directly receiving the service. Other examples could include:

- employers, if you are involved with an organisation that helps people find work
- the local or wider community that benefits if your organisation works on wildlife, environmental, faith, heritage or regeneration issues
- political campaigning organisations could also include citizens and communities
- a sports club run for local children – the relatives could be seen as beneficiaries as they benefit from having healthier children.

For charities working in overseas aid, beneficiaries include:

- those benefiting directly from the funding or help
- those who should have benefited but were not reached
- the health professionals and civil servants in the countries affected who receive training
- the communities benefiting from the training.

An issue that may also have arisen as you worked through Activity 4 is the term you used for the person directly receiving the service. Terms used may include patient, service user, mental health survivor, client, customer, consumer, member, resident, citizen and so on. In health and social care, the use of language to define the direct users of services has

become quite a contested terrain and people have objected to being labelled in a particular way by professionals.

Peter Beresford (2004, 2010) is a long-term user of mental health services and has written extensively about the problems of terminology around beneficiaries, for example, the term 'service user'. He is concerned about how thinking about people in terms of their use of services might not be how they would define themselves. Other terms such as 'the blind' or 'the disabled' are also controversial. This is important because 'labelling' a person often has negative connotations.

Beneficiaries are increasingly acknowledged as having extensive knowledge about services because they are on the receiving end of them, so therefore they can make a contribution to service improvement. The success of many services is also often dependent on how the service user responds to the service. In health, for example, the success of a treatment will depend not only on the skill of the doctor but also on how well the patient follows the treatment. The service is therefore co-produced by the doctor (and other health professional staff) and the patient.

Having identified who beneficiaries are, you will next look at how organisations seek to give them more power. This is done through engaging and empowering them.

3 Engaging and empowering



Figure 4 Empowering people

Engaging and empowering employees, volunteers, communities and beneficiaries is seen to be a 'good thing'. Although the two processes are interrelated, engaging generally refers to getting people interested or 'on board' and providing information and encouragement. Empowering is the next step whereby people can be enabled to have a voice. Furthermore, empowerment is embedded in wider views of the world and theoretical ideas about citizenship, rights and responsibilities, democracy, political participation and creating a better society. Crucially, though, the term means different things to different people. For example:

- 'Send your staff on our course to empower them to meet your objectives' proclaims a leaflet advertising a high-powered course.
- A volunteer coordinator says, 'empowerment has changed how we work and we've seen people really grow'.
- An activist committee member says, 'we are not true to our principles unless our service users are empowered and given a voice on the committee'.

Even these few quotes illustrate how the same word is used with quite different meanings. *The Collins Online Dictionary* (n.d.) defines the verb 'to empower' as follows:

To give or delegate power or authority to

To give ability to; enable or permit.

This definition contains an ambiguity often present in discussing empowerment – that is, it is not clear whether power is transferred absolutely or is simply 'on loan' and can be taken back.

A definition from an advocacy organisation gives a greater sense of how the term can be used in voluntary organisations:

Empower – we will work in an empowering way that enables people to develop their skills and confidence, stand up for their rights and regain control – creating a culture of enablement not dependency.

(POhWER, 2014)

In this context, the term 'dependency' is about not being dependent on professionals. This differs from how it is often used by politicians to mean dependency on the state. Empowerment is not necessarily a straightforward process and involves various challenges as illustrated by Activity 5.

Activity 5 What are the challenges?

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read the case study below and make notes on the challenges for empowerment.

Case study: Challenges of empowerment

A UK arts centre has *members*, who pay an annual subscription and elect half of the management committee and *users*, who include all paying customers and also patrons of rehearsal facilities and the coffee bar. The arts centre's Memorandum of Association states that its objective is to benefit the public (i.e. its beneficiaries) of a specific geographical community, regardless of age, gender, race or religion. The social and demographic profile of the centre's beneficiaries differs sharply from that of its members or users. In addition to these three groups, there are the public and private funders of the arts centre, and its staff. Within each of these five groups of stakeholders, there are opposing views on what the arts centre should be doing, and many who have no strong view.

The arts centre's new director was committed, politically and philosophically, to the concept of empowerment: he believed those without power should gain it at the expense of establishment elites, who he perceived as holding power in society. He saw the arts centre in the same terms.

However, he found it very difficult to put these beliefs into practice. Public grant funders wanted to retain their say in what the centre put on and what it charged. Some private financiers threatened to end their support if they lost certain controls: they wished to consider the centre's programme before they consented to adding their logos.

The wider population's views about and interest in the centre proved difficult to ascertain without expensive survey work and long-term community arts development projects. Users' power seemed to lie in their purses: if they thought the programme and the facilities represented good value, they came. If not, they didn't.

The results of a members' questionnaire proved very different from the views expressed by the majority of members who attended an open meeting: the meeting proposed that elected member representatives should have an overall majority of places on the management committee. This

would have been at the expense of 50 per cent of the committee places reserved for trusts and staff.

After six months of turmoil, the new director quietly dropped his interest in empowerment. He then spent much of his time rebuilding relationships of trust with members of various stakeholder groups.

Provide your answer...

Comment

The challenge thrown up by this case study is about empowering internal and external stakeholders. Different people place different emphases on who is to be empowered. Some may understand empowerment primarily as internal empowerment, and may be concerned about the skills, abilities and enthusiasm of staff, and about what say they have in their jobs and in the running of the organisation. Others may be more concerned about external empowerment – that is, the power of those whom the organisation is supposed to serve.

In this example of the arts centre, the issue of internal empowerment is a relatively small aspect of a much bigger and very complicated arena for the question of empowerment to be addressed. The experience of empowerment was negative in this case, but this should not persuade us that empowerment is unachievable. Different ways of going about things, and building more on what was there with a longer time frame in mind, may have produced much more positive results.

4 Empowering service users



Figure 5 Handing over power

If we accept the premise that empowerment is ‘a good thing’ and that empowering service users can improve quality of life for service users and add value to an organisation, then it is important to think about how organisations can engage with the process. Clearly, empowerment should not be perceived as a process that is top-down – that is, a method is decided by the organisation and then imposed on service users. It should be regarded as two-way, participative, nurturing and ‘co-produced’: empowerment is not something that is ‘done’ to people.

4.1 Arnstein’s ladder of participation

One much-cited approach to understanding empowerment is Arnstein’s ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969), which highlights the different forms that empowerment can take. Although originally designed to describe a wider form of participation than empowering service users in organisations, it can still be applied in this context. Box 1 contains an extract from an article in which Arnstein describes how the ladder of participation works.

Box 1 Extract from ‘A ladder of participation in the USA’ by S. Arnstein

2 Types of participation and “nonparticipation”

A typology of eight levels of participation may help in analysis of this confused issue. For illustrative purposes the eight types are arranged in a ladder pattern with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens’ power in determining the end product. (See Figure 2.)

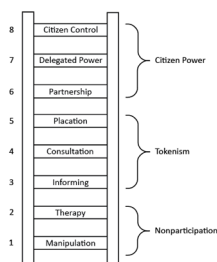


Figure 2. Eight rungs on the ladder of citizen participation

The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1) Manipulation and (2) Therapy. These two rungs describe levels of “non-participation” that have been contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable powerholders to “educate” or “cure” the participants. Rungs 3 and 4 progress to levels of “tokenism” that allow the have-nots to hear and to have a voice: (3) Informing and (4) Consultation. When they are proffered by powerholders as the total extent of participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to insure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. When participation is restricted to these levels, there is no follow-through, no “muscle,” hence no assurance of changing the status quo. Rung (5) Placation is simply a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise, but retain for the powerholders the continued right to decide.

Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout. Citizens can enter into a (6) Partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders. At the topmost rungs, (7) Delegated Power and (8) Citizen Control, have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power.

Obviously, the eight-rung ladder is a simplification, but it helps to illustrate the point that so many have missed – that there are significant gradations of citizen participation. Knowing these gradations makes it possible to cut through the hyperbole to understand the increasingly strident demands for participation from the have-nots as well as the gamut of confusing responses from the powerholders.

Though the typology uses examples from federal programs such as urban renewal, anti-poverty, and Model Cities, it could just as easily be illustrated in the church, currently facing demands for power from priests and laymen who seek to change its mission; colleges and universities which in some cases have become literal battlegrounds over the issue of student power; or public schools, city halls, and police departments (or big business which is likely to be next on the expanding list of targets). The underlying issues are essentially the same – “nobodies” in several arenas are trying to become “somebodies” with enough power to make the target institutions responsive to their views, aspirations, and needs.

2.1. Limitations of the Typology

The ladder juxtaposes powerless citizens with the powerful in order to highlight the fundamental divisions between them. In actuality, neither the have-nots nor the powerholders are homogeneous blocs. Each group encompasses a host of divergent points of view, significant cleavages, competing vested interests, and splintered subgroups. The justification for using such simplistic abstractions is that in most cases the have-nots really do perceive the powerful as a monolithic “system,” and powerholders actually do view the have-nots as a sea of “those people,” with little comprehension of the class and caste differences among them.

It should be noted that the typology does not include an analysis of the most significant roadblocks to achieving genuine levels of participation. These roadblocks lie on both sides of the simplistic fence. On the powerholders’ side, they include racism, paternalism, and resistance to power redistribution. On the have-nots’ side, they include inadequacies of the poor community’s political socioeconomic infrastructure and knowledge-base, plus difficulties of organizing a representative and accountable citizens’ group in the face of futility, alienation, and distrust.

Another caution about the eight separate rungs on the ladder: In the real world of people and programs, there might be 150 rungs with less sharp and “pure” distinctions among

them. Furthermore, some of the characteristics used to illustrate each of the eight types might be applicable to other rungs. For example, employment of the have-nots in a program or on a planning staff could occur at any of the eight rungs and could represent either a legitimate or illegitimate characteristic of citizen participation. Depending on their motives, powerholders can hire poor people to co-opt them, to placate them, or to utilize the have-nots' special skills and insights. Some mayors, in private, actually boast of their strategy in hiring militant black leaders to muzzle them while destroying their credibility in the black community.

(Arnstein, 1969)

Activity 6 Ladder of participation

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Bearing in mind what you have just read about Arnstein's ladder of participation, make notes on how this relates to the 'methods' of empowerment used by an organisation you are familiar with and how useful you found the model.

Provide your answer...

Comment

The ladder is, of course, a relatively straightforward framework for understanding empowerment and participation but it can be a useful starting point for thinking about how your organisation works with service users. One useful distinction to consider is between passive and active methods of involvement rather than a linear/ladder model. Methods such as attendance at meetings, consultation, monitoring, evaluation and so on are often regarded as 'passive' and may not lead to full empowerment. However, much depends on whether or not the consultee, for example, makes a contribution to meetings. Furthermore, if the consultee makes comments that are not acted upon, this is also not passive.

4.2 Real-world examples

The ladder of participation provides a theoretical framework but some real-world examples are needed. The following activities will help you to experience and understand some of these.

Activity 7 Empowerment in practice

Allow approximately 5 minutes

The following is a list of practices and arrangements that can all be seen as empowering individuals or groups in one way or another. Consider these practices and note one or two concerns you might have about each one.

1. The introduction of service users onto the management committee in an arts organisation for disabled people.

2. The production of a set of service standards that any service user can expect of the organisation and a means of redress if these standards are not achieved.
3. A campaign to improve the conditions and rights of people in prison.
4. Involving young people on interview panels for staff in a children's charity.

Provide your answer...

Comment

Your answers will depend on your understanding of what empowerment is.

1. A concern might be the extent to which this is a true empowerment – that control of resources and power by service users is real rather than apparent. Also, to what extent can a few service users represent or reflect the views of all service users?
2. This should clarify what is expected of staff as well. One view could be that this is more of a formal contract relationship than a form of empowerment. Also, who defines the standards and do service users have an input into the process?
3. This appears to empower (depending on the amount of input by prisoners and their families) but requires a major effort and campaign to influence change.
4. This would not always be appropriate but has been used with some success in schools and would be empowering for young people to have that degree of involvement in decision making.

Activity 8 An empowering example

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Read [Polly Mehta's experience](#), from *The Guardian* website (2014), of being empowered by Shift.ms. This organisation helps people with multiple sclerosis (MS) talk to experts. (Tip: open the article in a new tab or window by holding Ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link.)

Make notes on:

- how Polly felt empowered and why
- how this approach compares with an organisation you are familiar with.

Provide your answer...

Comment

Polly clearly found the process very positive. She found she was more proactive and less of a passive recipient of information. She felt less of a victim. She also praised the organisation for opening itself up to interaction with its service users and 'handing back power'.

You probably have various examples of how service users and other beneficiaries are involved in your organisation. For example, perhaps your organisation identified a need for greater understanding about how one part of your service worked so you

consulted service users or beneficiaries; or your organisation wanted to change a service and it was considered crucial to ask service users how this would affect them. A key issue to consider: empowerment is a process as well as an outcome. For example, you can introduce a means by which service users are consulted or invited to participate in meetings but that does not mean they have been empowered. For this to happen, service users may need to build confidence and skills in order to engage with the organisation effectively. The organisation needs to take notice of what the service users say and demonstrate that they have acted on their input or explain why they have not.

Achieving empowerment is not always plain sailing: there can be barriers and resistance. Some people may respond to the issues raised this week by saying: 'but they don't want to be empowered'. The danger with such a response is that it saves us examining our own fears and anxieties about intervening and seeking to change relationships towards empowerment.

Activity 9 Barriers

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Read the short example below and list what you feel might be the barriers to empowerment in this situation:

A day centre for single homeless people introduced consultation meetings for service users and staff. It was six months before the meetings became regularly attended by service users.

Provide your answer...

Comment

The service users probably first had to develop trust that staff would listen, respond to and, where possible, implement their suggestions. People often expect 'tokenism' when power is 'given away'. Service users had to find out that staff were really open to influence. However, some service users may have felt they did not have the confidence, expertise, skills or time to participate. Some may also have not been interested. Investing resources in developing volunteers' capacity to participate is extremely important if empowerment is to work.

Wider issues about resistance may include:

- Previous experience where empowerment has been a ruse by which people have been asked to take on more work and responsibility with no extra support or reward.
- There might be a difference between the management team's and an individual's views about the goals of the organisation.
- The empowerment on offer might be seen as tokenism. People may recognise the limitations of empowerment on the basis of increased representation and may choose not to collaborate in something that they perceive has little real effect on the way power is exercised. It may take time for people to recognise that an

empowerment initiative is genuine. People need support, training, help and reassurance if they are going to be able to take and use power effectively.

- For some people, the issue they are being asked about may not be important or they may not have time to be involved. It is not possible to participate in everything.

5 This week's quiz

You've nearly reached the end of another week of study. Now it's time for the weekly quiz. This week's quiz won't count towards your badge, so only has five questions.

Quizzes are only available online and when enrolled to the course on OpenLearn

[Week 6 practice quiz](#)

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding Ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

6 Summary

This week covered a range of issues relating to power and empowerment. Empowerment does not take place in isolation from the wider environment; for example, government policy can encourage (or perhaps, hinder) it. Whatever your organisation's intentions, there are forces, constraints and uses of power in your external environment that may limit any empowerment towards which you may be working. However, the examples this week – and your own work reflecting on your organisation's attempts at empowering beneficiaries – should help you in understanding the possibilities for real involvement and empowerment, which go beyond tokenism.

In Week 6 you have learned:

- what power is and whether it is a 'good' thing
- how to distinguish between different sources of power
- to explore who has power – and how it is used – in an organisation you are familiar with
- how to identify the beneficiaries of a voluntary organisation – including your own
- what the different methods of empowerment are
- what the challenges are in empowering service users.

You can now go to Week 7.

Week 7: The role of volunteering

Introduction

Throughout this course, the crucial role of volunteers has been emphasised. You saw in Week 1 how the involvement of volunteers is one of the defining features of a voluntary or **community** organisation and each week of the course, their role and contribution has been mentioned in different contexts. This week they are centre stage.

Volunteers might be **trustees**, board or management committee members or front-line workers fulfilling numerous roles. The importance of volunteering has long been recognised, particularly by organisations themselves – many of which would not exist without unpaid help and some vital services could even collapse.

This importance is also recognised by governments promoting the role of volunteers in service delivery, an increasingly controversial area, particularly where volunteers replace paid staff – such as in some libraries. Thus, the value of volunteering in society holds considerable value. It is often difficult to quantify this value and consequently some organisations try to put a monetary value on volunteering as often this is the most direct way to get others to understand its importance.

Although this course is about the voluntary sector, volunteers have traditionally been involved in other sectors too: for example, volunteers in hospitals do fundraising, run cafes and visit patients; government heritage agencies (e.g. Cadw in Wales or Historic Scotland) involve volunteers as guides in historic homes. Furthermore, many private sector organisations promote and support volunteering with their employees (known as **employer-supported volunteering (ESV)**).

You may be a volunteer yourself or work in an organisation that involves volunteers on an extensive basis. This week aims to help you understand the role of volunteers at both a personal and an organisational level as you explore the nature of volunteering and, in particular, who volunteers and why.

In the following video, Julie introduces you to Week 7.

Video content is not available in this format.



By the end of this week, you will be able to:

- explain what is meant by volunteering
- develop a profile of who volunteers
- outline the reasons why people volunteer
- describe the types of volunteering activities supported by your organisation or in an organisation with which you are familiar.

1 What is volunteering?



Figure 1 Volunteering at the London 2012 Paralympics

It might seem straightforward to ask: 'What is volunteering?'. However, the roles that volunteers fulfil are diverse, and the amounts of time that people give vary substantially, so it is not easy to pin down an answer. You saw in Week 3 that many small voluntary organisations are 'under the radar', so it stands to reason that many acts of volunteering and many volunteers will never be counted or appear in surveys or official statistics.

Many definitions of volunteering are used by government and voluntary organisations, but one that probably captures most people's definitions of volunteering is given by Musick and Wilson (2008, p. 1). They describe volunteering as an altruistic activity, which has the goal of providing 'help to others, a group, an organisation, a cause, or the community at large, without expectation of material reward'.

The idea that all volunteering is 'altruistic' will be explored later, but certainly the main defining feature of volunteering is considered to be that a person's time is given for free. Interestingly, the Scottish Government (2013) adds to their own definition, 'it is a choice undertaken of one's own free will'.

There is also a difference between formal and informal volunteering. Formal volunteering relates to people giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations. Informal volunteering relates to people giving unpaid help as an individual to other people who are not relatives, such as getting an elderly neighbour's shopping, clearing snow from the streets and so on. Informal volunteering is less likely to be recorded in surveys as people may not think of it as volunteering.

1.1 How many people volunteer?

Given that volunteering covers a wide range of activities, it is useful to know how many people actually volunteer. It is difficult to get an accurate picture of how many people volunteer on a regular basis and there is little consistency between surveys of volunteering, even within the UK. In Scotland, 29% of adults said they had volunteered in the past 12 months, with half of those volunteering for 1–5 hours per week (Scottish Government, 2013).

In England in 2012–2013, 29% of adults had formally volunteered at least once a month in the previous year and 44% had volunteered at least once in the previous year. In Wales, it is estimated that 931,000 people were volunteering in 2013–2014 (Wales Council for **Voluntary Action** (WCVA), 2014).

From survey results, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) (2015) estimate that across the UK 13.8 million people volunteer at least once a month and 21.1 million volunteer at least once a year.

Surveys are generally aimed at adults, so figures would be higher if children were included. Organisations usually have a starting age limit of 16 for volunteering independently but many children volunteer alongside their parents and many organisations actively promote family volunteering, for example the National Trust.

Activity 1 Thinking about volunteering

Allow approximately 5 minutes

What experience do you have of formal and/or informal volunteering – either you personally or what you know about your friends' or relatives' experience? If you volunteer, what are people's reactions to this when (if) you tell them?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Many of us will do informal volunteering, perhaps without even thinking about it. Formal volunteering often involves more of a commitment, with a regular time slot and a specified number of hours. Most importantly, it often involves completing an application form and being 'recruited' to a role, being inducted and trained – in a similar way to a paid job.

Organisations can offer some flexibility to their volunteers but many cannot function without them and need to devise work rotas in similar ways to those for paid staff. The main difference between a volunteer and a paid member of staff is that the organisation knows that many of their volunteers wish to work for only a day, a week or a month.

One exception to this is the role of '**intern**'. These are often full-time unpaid roles for a specified amount of time and are perceived to be useful in gaining training and more work experience, particularly for graduates. However, they have been criticised as exploitative.

People's reactions to volunteering vary substantially: some people never volunteer, as they wish only to work for a salary and may struggle with the concept of giving their time for free. Others might say, 'Why do you have to volunteer today? It's not a job'.

However, for most regular volunteers it is like a job, one with a strong commitment and sense of obligation and they feel they would be 'letting people down' if they did not do their shift. Other people might struggle with the concept of their friends or relatives volunteering in roles that used to be paid jobs, such as in some libraries.

The role of volunteering gained much more attention during the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, and the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, where volunteers were very visible as helpers and participants in the opening and closing ceremonies.

This section has given a sense of what volunteering is in general. In the next section you will explore what types of role and task volunteers might take on.

2 What do volunteers do?



Figure 2 Garden volunteers at work

You'll now explore what types of role and activity volunteers take on, as well as which 'industries' (arts, leisure, health and social care and so on) have the most volunteers.

As you might expect, formal voluntary work is diverse: in terms of skills, it can range from simple, repetitive jobs to highly skilled tasks requiring decision making. In other words, formal voluntary work is very similar to paid work, with the same variety of jobs and subject to the same 'hierarchies' between skilled and unskilled workers (Musick and Wilson, 2008).

In England, the top activities are:

- fundraising
- handling money
- organising or helping at events
- leading or managing a group
- giving advice
- information and counselling
- other practical help.

(Cabinet Office, 2013; NCVO, 2014)

In Scotland, 'generally helping out' is the main volunteer activity, followed by raising money, organising events and 'doing whatever is required' (Scottish Government, 2013).

In Northern Ireland, a survey of a sample of households found that fundraising and events are the most popular, together with volunteering for church or other religious organisations (Department for Social Development, 2015). In Wales, the various surveys illustrate the difficulty of pinning down exact activities and many volunteers will fulfil several roles within the same organisation.

Some types of organisation attract more volunteers than others: in England, sports organisations have the most volunteers (55% of volunteers) and in Scotland, health, disability and **social welfare** groups have the most (22%).

The next activity will help you get a sense of the variety of roles and activities volunteers can take on – and, if you are looking for one, you may even find a volunteering role you would like to apply for!

Activity 2 Focus on volunteer roles

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Do-it is a UK-wide organisation that promotes volunteering and advertises volunteering vacancies. Go to their [website](#) and search for opportunities in your home town. Note how many vacancies come up and look through the variety of roles as well as the types of organisation (i.e. health and social care, a museum, a conservation charity, and so on). You won't be able to examine all of them so just scroll through and get a sense of what's available.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

A search on 'Glasgow' (August 2015) showed 263 opportunities and a diverse range of roles that included:

- fundraising
- massage therapist
- family support
- outdoor event helpers
- health and social support
- advocacy roles
- mentoring
- tutoring
- charity shop helper.

The roles ranged across one-off events, regular volunteering and even some full-time roles. The types of organisation included animal **charities**, children's play schemes, health care and medical charities. Health and social care provided the most opportunities for volunteering.

Of course, Do-it is advertising actual volunteering vacancies – some organisations may not need to advertise as they have a steady stream of applicants. Some big city museums, for example, may never need to advertise because they are extremely popular with retired people, as well as with younger people looking for experience in order to boost their CVs for paid work.

Many organisations usually have a section of their website dedicated to volunteering, giving information on the types of roles available and the commitment level they would like. Local 'umbrella bodies' also advertise opportunities – for example, [Volunteering Wales](#).

2.1 Volunteers in specific organisations

In the next activity, you will think about your own organisation (or one you are familiar with) and consider what volunteers do.

Activity 3 What do volunteers do?

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Thinking about the volunteers in an organisation, club or group you are familiar with, what activities do they carry out? The list of activities in Table 1, which are in order of the most common activities (based on volunteering in England), will help you. You might like to copy out [Table 1](#) or download it and fill it in.

Add in any other activities you have identified that are not included in this list.

Alternatively, you could apply the list to yourself if you are a volunteer.

If you don't have an example of an organisation, you could choose a local museum and look on its website: there is usually a section called 'get involved' that will give an indication of what its volunteers do.

Table 1 Volunteer activities

List of activities	Yes/No
Fundraising	
Helping to organise an event	
Other practical help	
Leading, steering, managing	
Giving advice, information, counselling	
Visiting people	
Provide transport, driving	
Befriending or mentoring people	
Representing	
Secretarial, administration, clerical	
Campaigning	
Any other help	

Discussion

You may have found it difficult to find the information if you are not working or volunteering in an organisation. As an example from my own volunteering, I know that volunteers are involved with all of these categories except visiting people, transport and befriending. This is mainly due to the nature of the organisation, as it is not involved in those activities.

2.2 Volunteering case studies

Surveys of volunteering activities are useful, but overall percentages or quantities do not provide much information about the extent of variation in a volunteer's work or exactly what these activities entail. **Case studies** and interviews can help to illustrate this and give a sense of what volunteers think about the work they do. In the next activity, you will watch a video featuring volunteers talking about their roles.

Activity 4 Spotlight on volunteers

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Watch this video in which four volunteers talk about their volunteering roles. Make some notes on the activities the volunteers participate in. Also think about whether you get a sense of the impact or value that volunteering has on them. If you are a volunteer, how do their experiences compare with your own?

Video content is not available in this format.



Provide your answer...

Discussion

You probably noted the range of tasks these volunteers carry out and perhaps gained a sense of what volunteering means to them. The tasks included running Sunday school sessions and discussion groups, organising and fundraising for a Bravery Box scheme for children's hospital wards, helping in a library and helping at a food scheme for homeless people.

This section has given you an overview of the types of activities and roles that volunteers take on. In the next section you will explore who volunteers.

3 Who volunteers?



Figure 3 Volunteering at the London Olympics 2012

You will now explore ‘who’ volunteers are. Organisations are often concerned about the composition and **diversity** of their workforce or volunteer pool. Composition in this context usually refers to age, gender, ethnic origin, religion, disability and so on. For volunteers, organisations might be interested in their employment status too, i.e. whether they are unemployed, employed, retired and so on.

The reasons why organisations are interested in this information is that they endeavour to have a diverse and representative workforce of paid and unpaid staff. For example, if an organisation offers services to people experiencing mental health problems, it might want volunteers with similar direct experience. Alternatively, if an organisation is based in an ethnically mixed community, it might want these different groups represented through its volunteers, thereby increasing its appeal to the people it is trying to help.

National organisations, based in one locality but working across the country, might want volunteers from different areas so that there is more representation by geography. Above all, organisations strive to offer equal opportunities in work and volunteering.

Of course, not all voluntary organisations collect data on their volunteers. They might not have access to it or might have concerns about data protection and confidentiality; they might not have the resources to collect data; or it might not have occurred to them to collect data on volunteers.

There are various surveys about the composition of the volunteering workforce within the UK and there are differences between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Here are a few general points from NCVO (2015):

Rates of regular formal volunteering do not vary between men and women.

People of all ages volunteer (16–75+).

Rates of regular formal volunteering among young people are at their highest since 2003.

Rates of volunteering vary according to where people live.

The employment status of volunteers does not impact on rates of regular volunteering.

Activity 5 Thinking about volunteers in an organisation

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Think about the points made above:

Rates of regular formal volunteering do not vary between men and women.

People of all ages volunteer (16–75+).

Rates of regular formal volunteering among young people are at their highest since 2003.

Rates of volunteering vary according to where people live.

The employment status of volunteers does not impact on rates of regular volunteering.

Now think about the volunteers in your own voluntary organisation or a voluntary organisation you know well.

- Do you think the volunteers you know reflect this data? In other words, are there approximately equal numbers of men and women volunteers; the volunteers vary in age, but quite a few are young people; the number of volunteers depends on where the local offices are based; the volunteers' employment status doesn't affect their commitment to regular volunteering?
- If the volunteers you know don't reflect this data, what are they like?
- Is the profile of volunteers similar to what you know about the local population?
- Are there any implications for your organisation? For example, are the volunteers representative of the people your organisation helps?
- How would your organisation benefit by having a diverse group of volunteers?

Make some notes about the volunteers you know.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You will have specific findings and ideas about what your observations mean for your organisation. The following extract provides a useful summary of the benefits of encouraging diversity in a volunteer workforce:

By encouraging diversity in volunteering your organisation will:

- benefit from new ideas and fresh approaches generated by people from different backgrounds and experiences
- help ensure that your work is relevant to and impacts on all kinds of people in society
- present a more welcoming face to volunteers, client groups and the general public
- have more volunteers
- be better equipped to respond to the needs of your community or service users
- attract new clients or service users.

(Volunteer Now, 2005)

You should now have an overview of the profile of volunteering in a broader context as well as in an organisation you are familiar with. This will help you to understand the nature of volunteering and the voluntary sector, as well as why organisations are interested in gathering data about their volunteers. If you recall, in Week 3 Karl Wilding emphasised the importance of such data to policy making and understanding changes and trends in the voluntary sector.

Understanding why people volunteer is one of the biggest topics of interest to policy makers, organisations and researchers. If politicians and policy makers want more people to volunteer, then they need to know what motivates people to give their time for free. Equally, organisations may use this information in terms of their own recruitment and retention policies.

Much discussion on people's motivation at work has traditionally focused on paid staff (viewing pay as an important incentive to work), which may not be that helpful in understanding volunteers' motivations. Is there something different about volunteers' motivations and does this mean working with, and managing, them also needs to be different? If you are a volunteer yourself, this section should help you explore your own motivations and your role in your organisation.

Activity 6 Why volunteer?

Watch the following video featuring the same volunteers you met in Activity 4. Write notes on why they volunteer.

146
of 182



Provide your answer...

Discussion

What you might have noticed is that some of the volunteers use what they get out of volunteering as part of their explanation of why they volunteer.

So, for example, Louisa talks about learning new skills and being in a different environment. Lisa's motivation for helping with the Bravery Box scheme came about because her friend had a seriously ill child and started the scheme as a way of helping children on oncology wards.

Bernard volunteered because he enjoyed attending discussion groups and saw the benefits for his own children from attending Sunday school. Both Bernard and Lisa were asked to help, which is a common reason why many people volunteer in the first place but, of course, the person asked has to identify an interest or concern in the cause.

Sas volunteered for three organisations doing very different tasks. He felt these activities were so different from his day job that they were almost therapeutic for him. However, at the same time he was aware that volunteering with homeless people was a very important role and one that might not appeal to everybody because it is emotionally challenging. As Sas highlights, some of the reasons for volunteering sound selfish but that is quite common as people often need to see benefits for themselves when giving their time for free.

4.1 Making sense of reasons for volunteering

Surveys are frequently carried out to find out why people volunteer. If you volunteer, you might have been asked why you volunteer, perhaps at an interview or on an application

form. Theorists use this data to develop models of volunteering, and policy makers use it to inform initiatives to encourage more volunteering.

Box 1 outlines three perspectives on volunteering, which Rochester et al. suggest can be used to understand why people volunteer.

Box 1 Perspectives on volunteering

Volunteering as service: this is perhaps the dominant perspective, where volunteering is seen as an altruistic act, i.e., it is the 'gift' of a person's time (similar to the gift of money as in philanthropic acts). People volunteer in order to help others in need. This type of volunteering is most common in social welfare and in large, formal organisations such as charities or hospitals. Volunteers are frequently managed in the same way as paid staff, and they are recruited and trained for specific roles.

Civil society/activist: in this perspective, motivation is based on self-help and mutual aid and people working together to meet common needs. Volunteers may work in small, informal self-help groups that may not have any paid staff. Volunteers may fulfil several roles including leadership as well as front-line work. They are not necessarily recruited for a specific activity: their role tends to evolve and develop over time. Volunteers also get involved with bigger campaigning organisations such as Greenpeace or political parties such as The Green Party.

Volunteering as serious leisure: this implies a much more committed attitude to volunteering. Volunteers have enthusiasm, knowledge and skills in a specific area and tend to be involved in arts and culture or sports clubs. The organisations offering these opportunities can range from large national organisations to small, local clubs or societies. Roles may include coaching, teaching, administration and so on.

(Source: based on Rochester et al., 2010, pp. 10–15)

Activity 7 Understanding why people volunteer

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Reread the overview of the different perspectives in Box 1 and note down which perspective fits with your view on why and how you volunteer. If you do not volunteer, try to relate the perspectives to volunteers in an organisation you are familiar with or look back at the volunteers in [Activity 6](#).

Provide your answer...

Discussion

These perspectives can be used to help us understand volunteering in a general context and you may have found it difficult to 'fit' yourself to one (and you probably wanted more information on each anyway). Rochester et al. highlight that in reality the situation is complex and people's reasons for volunteering do not necessarily fit into neat categories, as you saw with the volunteers talking in Activity 6.

4.2 Further motivations for volunteering

As you have seen, motivations for volunteering can usually be divided into those that address a person's own needs and interests and those that relate to the needs and interests of others. The relative importance of these differs, for example, by gender, age, income and so on (Musick and Wilson, 2008, pp. 54–80).

One issue raised about surveys of volunteering is that often people are asked to choose from a list of statements, so they feel compelled to choose the one that seems to fit and they may not actually put much thought into analysing why they decided to volunteer.

People who have been volunteering for, say, 20 years or more may also have forgotten why they started! Many people will also give 'because someone asked me to' as a reason.

So why is motivation important? Organisations need to function efficiently and effectively, therefore staff and volunteers need to work with energy and enthusiasm. Managers of the organisation have a responsibility to provide staff and volunteers with work they find satisfying and rewarding, which they are unlikely to do if the managers do not understand what people really want and expect from their work.

Understanding the motivations of volunteers is important: they are not dependent on the organisation they work for to meet their basic needs and volunteers are not tied by a formal employment **contract**. As a result, volunteers are usually more free than employees to pick and choose the organisation to which they give their time and efforts. If organisations do not provide an appealing environment and motivating work, they are likely to experience problems with recruitment and retention.

Furthermore, there has been considerable attention in recent years on the benefits of volunteering and how it can contribute to health. Based on a survey of the research, Harflett (2015, p. 5) summarises the potential benefits as:

- improved mental and physical health
- increased life expectancy
- improved physical health and happiness
- enjoyment and pleasure
- positive well-being
- increased self-confidence
- social inclusion
- **empowerment** and increased employability.

Obviously, the context of the volunteering is important: where someone volunteers, what they are doing and whether the volunteering is likely to be stressful. Not everyone can expect these benefits.

5 This week's quiz

This week's quiz is your last opportunity to practise before the final badge quiz next week.

Quizzes are only available online and when enrolled to the course on OpenLearn

[Week 7 practice quiz.](#)

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding Ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

6 Summary

Your work this week should have given you a broader context in which to understand the role and activities of volunteers in organisations, as well as your own role if you are a volunteer. You have examined what volunteering is and what activities it involves. There was also discussion about who volunteers and the reasons why people volunteer.

If you are interested in learning more about what it is like to work for a voluntary organisation, for example how they deal with recruitment and management issues, then you might be interested in studying the badged open course, *Working in voluntary organisations*, which will be available in 2016.

In Week 7, you have learned about:

- what volunteering is
- the role of volunteers in voluntary organisations
- what activities volunteers do
- the reasons why people volunteer
- the benefits of volunteering.

You can now go to Week 8.

Week 8: Next steps for working and learning in the voluntary sector

Introduction

Congratulations on reaching the final week of the course! Hopefully you will have developed an understanding of the voluntary sector and gained useful insight into how your own experience fits with the issues covered.

This week you will have an opportunity to consolidate your learning and think about your next steps in working or volunteering in, or other engagement with, voluntary organisations. You will reflect on what you have learned and think about what your next steps might be in terms of working, volunteering and learning. You will also find out about how to learn from experience and, in particular, how a 'learning cycle' can be applied to your work or volunteering experience.

In the following video, Julie introduces you to Week 8.

Video content is not available in this format.



By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- reflect on what you have learned on the course
- make plans for what you would like to do next in terms of further learning, work or volunteering
- understand the benefits of volunteering
- identify ways of finding a job or volunteering experience
- understand the learning cycle approach and apply it.

1 Reviewing your learning



Figure 1 Thinking about what you have learned

It might have been one of several reasons why you chose to study this course – perhaps you've been thinking about volunteering or working in the voluntary sector and wanted to find out more about it; or you already work or volunteer and are seeking to build on your existing knowledge or skills. You may of course just have a general interest in voluntary organisations or are looking to develop your study skills for further learning.

Whatever your reasons for doing the course, it is useful to review what you have learned, which will then help you decide on your next steps. These steps might be applying for a job or volunteering role, looking for a new course to study or considering how to enhance your promotion prospects at work. Or you might simply want to make more of your current job or volunteer role.

Throughout the course, you have had a lot of practice in applying the key course ideas to your own experience. This has two purposes:

1. It helps you to develop your understanding of the course ideas.
2. It provides you with the opportunity to *reflect* on what you have learned and what you know about your own experience.

Reflection is an integral part of learning (whether this is through formal study or in the workplace) from both good and bad experiences. You will look at reflecting on learning in the workplace in Section 5.

You may already have questions you want to think about further or made a note of topics that particularly interested you while doing the course. If you haven't, then there is the opportunity this week to go back over the topics and activities to remind yourself of what you found particularly interesting or relevant to your situation. There may even have been some topics you found challenging that you want to revisit.

1.1 Review and reflection

It is useful to give yourself space to review what you have done on the course, and to revisit any aspects that you need to complete or about which you want to think more deeply. The following activities give you the chance to do so.

Activity 1 Reviewing the course topics and activities

Allow approximately 20 minutes

Table 1 is provided to remind you of the topics you have covered in each week. Identify those you feel confident about and those you would like to learn more about. You might want to revisit the activities associated with each topic to remind yourself of whether you were able to apply it to an example of your own.

If you wish, you can [download the table](#) and fill it in.

Table 1 Topics covered

Week	Key topics	I am confident about these	I would like to learn more about these
1	1 What is voluntary about the voluntary sector? 2 Where did the voluntary sector come from? 3 What is the voluntary sector's distinctive value?		
2	1 What are values? 2 Personal values 3 Organisational values and vision 4 Values in the voluntary sector		
3	1 Data about the voluntary sector 2 Size of the voluntary sector 3 Contribution of the voluntary sector to the economy 4 Types of voluntary activity 5 Understanding differences within the voluntary sector 6 Different data: micro-mapping		
4	1 What is funding? 2 Looking at funding through annual reports 3 Income from individuals 4 Income from government 5 Income from other sources 6 Funding challenges		
5	1 Who are stakeholders?		

	2 Stakeholder power and interest 3 Working with stakeholders 4 Communicating with stakeholders		
6	1 What is power? 2 Who are beneficiaries? 3 Engaging and empowering 4 Empowering service users		
7	1 What is volunteering? 2 What do volunteers do? 3 Who volunteers? 4 Why volunteer?		

Discussion

Completing this table will have given you a sense of what you have achieved so far. You might have noted some topics that particularly interested you and that you might want to study further or discuss with colleagues (if you are working). Next, you'll develop these thoughts further and formulate your thoughts into action points.

Activity 2 Identifying areas for further study

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Now identify three areas that you would particularly like to learn more about through further study or through where you work or volunteer.

Try to make your ideas quite specific about what you want to do. So, instead of writing 'look again at annual reports', for example, write something like 'practise interpreting annual reports' or 'revisit my organisation's annual report to see if I can make suggestions on making it clearer for stakeholders'.

Also, note whether you think this could be something you can do now and practise further through your organisation and/or whether you want to take another course.

Table 2 has been partially filled in to show the kind of information you need to capture. You can either copy the table and fill it in or, if you prefer, use the [word document](#) we have provided.

Table 2 Priority areas

Priority area	Why?	What do I want to do?	Work or further course
Practise interpreting annual reports	To make sure I understand the information they contain	Progress to a management role	

Alternatively, you could fill in the boxes below.

Priority area:
Why?:
What do I want to do?:
Work or further course:

Priority area:
Why?:
What do I want to do?:
Work or further course:

Priority area:
Why?:
What do I want to do?:
Work or further course:

Discussion

When you know your priorities, you will be in a good position to decide what your next steps will be in terms of your job, volunteering or further learning.

2 Your next steps



Figure 2 Steps to take next

Having reviewed what you've learned about the voluntary sector and identified areas you'd like to learn more about, now is the time to clarify your thoughts before deciding on your next steps. If you did this course just for personal interest, you may not have any 'next steps' – you may be happy with your current situation and not wish to do any further learning or make any changes. If, however, you would like to do further work, volunteering or learning about the voluntary sector then the next activity will help you work through some decisions.

Activity 3 Clarifying your thoughts

Allow approximately 20 minutes

Read through the list of questions below and make some notes. The questions are divided into topics related to learning, working and volunteering. They are designed to prompt your thinking but do not feel constrained by them.

There is quite a lot to think about here, so you might want to write detailed notes and reflect on them before moving on to the next stage in your decision making.

Learning

- Did you enjoy learning online? What were the best aspects and what did you find challenging?
- Did you enjoy learning about the voluntary sector?
- Which topics did you want to learn more about (revisit Activity 1 if necessary)?
- Were there topics you wanted to know more about that were not covered by this course? What were they?
- Do you want to do another course? If so, which subject area?

Provide your answer...

Working

- If you are already working, do you want to stay in your current role?
- If you are already working, what do you like best and what do you like least about your role?
- If you want to stay in your current role, what would improve it?

- What do you need to do in order to get a promotion (if that is what you are looking for)?
- Do you want a new or different job? If so, what?
- What skills or knowledge do you need to acquire?

Provide your answer...

Volunteering

- If you are already volunteering, do you want to stay in your current role?
- If you are already volunteering, what do you like best and what do you like least about your role?
- If you want to stay in your current volunteering role, what would improve it?
- Do you want a new or different volunteering role? If so, what?
- What skills or knowledge do you need to acquire?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Reflecting on these questions should have helped you clarify what you want to change or how you want to progress. Alternatively, you might find that you now realise that you are happy with your current situation and do not wish to do any further learning or make any changes.

However, if you would like to do further work, volunteering or learning about the voluntary sector then the next activity will help you make some decisions.

Activity 4 Making a decision about your next steps

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read through your notes again and express them as statements of action, such as:

'I would like to apply for a volunteering role.'

or

'I want to get paid work in the voluntary sector.'

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You might have a lot of ideas about what to do next – which might seem stressful! Just think about one at a time. Also be realistic about what time you have available to plan and implement any changes – there is no need to rush in. Your plans will probably be a mix of short-term and long-term goals. You may also need to do further research if you are interested in more study or looking for a new job or volunteering role. The next sections will help you with planning some of these steps.

Having reviewed what you have done over the past few weeks, and taken a bit of time to clarify your ideas, you are now in a good position to think about how to achieve what you want to do next.

In the next section, you will look at how to get your first, or a different, volunteering role. Even if you are certain you do not wish to volunteer or change an existing role, you will still find this section useful.

3 Do you want to volunteer?



Figure 3 Short-term volunteering may become long term

In Week 7 you explored the various reasons why people choose to volunteer. For many, volunteering has an altruistic element but they also need to derive satisfaction and interest from the role, otherwise they will not continue to volunteer no matter how committed they are to the organisation or to the people involved. If you do not enjoy something or see it as worthwhile, why would you turn up again and again?

Volunteering can also offer other benefits. For example, volunteering is believed to be good for your mental and physical health – giving people the opportunity to make new friends, keep busy and feel appreciated. Some roles are physically active, such as gardening. Some volunteer roles are short term, such as for one-off events or while between jobs or other commitments. Other roles are long term – although many people probably do not think about the length of time they intend to spend volunteering.

The next activity illustrates the benefits or positive outcomes of volunteering for both individuals and society.

Activity 5 Benefits of volunteering

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Read this blog entry about the positive features of volunteering and note down those that appeal to you, whether you are considering volunteering for the first time or currently volunteering.

[10 things I learnt during Volunteers' Week](#)

Posted on June 8, 2015 by Justin Davis Smith

As another hugely successful Volunteers' Week draws to a close I thought I would look back and reflect on 10 new things about volunteering I learnt over the past seven days.

Over a third of us would be interested in volunteering for the NHS

A new [survey by ICM for RVS](#) has found that 40% of adults would be interested in volunteering for the health service, with the most popular activities being helping out in a shop or café, taking patients out on social visits, hospital visiting, or assisting on the ward.

Volunteers play an important role in strengthening democracy

A new report from CDF, [Trust in Democracy: how community groups bridge the gap between people and politics](#), reveals that volunteers are almost 50% more likely to feel they have an influence over local political structures. And many people involved in community activity use it as a grounding to go into more formal political roles.

Volunteering will impress future employers

According to a study from the [employment consultants Universum](#) employers are less impressed by your qualifications and which university you went to and more taken with the skills and experience you have learnt through volunteering and work experience.

Volunteering is one of five lifestyle choices guaranteed to make us happier

According to [Professor Paul Dolan who was speaking at this Year's Hay festival](#). The others are listening to a favourite piece of music, spending five minutes with someone you like, going outdoors, and having a new experience. It got me thinking that someone volunteering at Glastonbury *for the first time with* a friend might be able to clock up all five at the same time? Prof Dolan leaves us with the following natty sound-bite: 'helping other people is a very selfish thing to do. It's a good source of happiness for you. Just randomly help someone and see the difference'.

Young people who take part in volunteer projects are more willing to participate in volunteering again....

.... but less likely to donate to charity, according to a new study published by the Cabinet Office.

We are getting better at recognising the contribution of volunteers

There were 187 recipients of the [Queens Award for Voluntary Service](#) this year, up 60% on last year, recognising the contribution volunteers make in all walks of life, from helping us remember Britain's worst mining disaster to a volunteer rescue boat service on Loch Lomond.

Employer-supported volunteering is on the rise

According to latest figures from the Community Life Survey featured in this year's [Civil Society Almanac](#) published by NCVO today. However, although volunteering remains strong, with 27% of adults in 2013/14 (the latest year for which figures are available) having taken part at least once a month through an organisation and 41% at least once a year, participation has dipped slightly from the previous year's figures of 29% and 44% respectively.

The new influx of MPs seem to have got the volunteering bug

61 Members signed up to an [Early Day Motion](#) welcoming Volunteers' Week and celebrating the value of volunteering and '*the promotion of civic democracy based on the principles of freedom of expression and association*' which '*supports and enhances life in the communities of the UK*'. As of Sunday 7 June this was the best supported EDM this Session. Oh and worth noting that 41 of the 61 signatories came from the Scottish National Party, so further work to do with our parliamentarians in the rest of the UK.

More than a billion people volunteer globally

So says the latest [State of the World's Volunteerism Report](#), published by the United Nations. The report praises some governments such as Peru, Mozambique and Norway for developing a 'supportive environment' for volunteering, but criticises others for failing to acknowledge 'the immense potential of volunteers to help them chart a more successful development path'.

And finally

Volunteering is more popular than 'Britain's Got Talent'

Well on Monday Volunteers' Week was trending number two on Twitter, ahead of Britain's Got Talent Final 2015, making the point perhaps that volunteering is the greatest demonstration of the UK's talent. At one stage during the Week we were trending at number one in London and Birmingham, number two in the UK and an incredible number eight in the world!

Thanks to everyone for your contribution to the Week and the biggest thanks of course to the brilliant volunteers.

(Smith, 2015)

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The idea of feeling happy due to volunteering is certainly appealing. For many, the possibility that it will help in getting paid work is also positive. Many people will continue to volunteer even if they have paid work and, as the article highlights, employer-supported volunteering is on the rise.

3.1 Volunteering and employers

Employers are reported to be impressed by voluntary work. Research carried out by Reed Recruitment agency for the charity Timebank (OU Careers, n.d.) found that:

- 73 % of employers would employ a candidate with volunteering experience over one without
- 94 % of employers believe that volunteering can add to skills
- 58 % of employers say that voluntary work experience can actually be more valuable than experience gained in paid employment
- 94 % of employees who volunteered to learn new skills had benefited either by getting their first job, improving their salary, or being promoted.

There is clearly little doubt about how employers see the benefits of volunteering experience. Although all volunteering can be interesting to them, there are some careers where relevant volunteering experience is a prerequisite. Teaching, law, environment/conservation, heritage and social work are common examples but there are many others. Positions in the arts, media, publishing, development and charitable sectors are often difficult to enter without a network of contacts, direct practical experience of the industry and enormous enthusiasm.

Internships – which are lengthy periods of unpaid work – are important in many industries. However, they have attracted criticism in the media and from candidates seeking work as not everybody can afford to take them on. Furthermore, it is argued that they should be offered as unpaid work experience, for example doing a one-off project or shadowing staff, and with training, rather than being essential jobs that were once paid positions. In other words, some industries are using internships appropriately whereas other organisations are perceived as exploiting volunteers.

3.2 Looking for a role

Many people are unaware of just how much they could offer the community or a good cause, and underestimate their strengths and experience.

You need to assess your skills, experience and interests, and then balance all of this against your practical circumstances and any possible constraints.

You might like to try accessing websites such as Do-it or the websites of any of the major charities. They describe the personal qualities needed for their vacancies, e.g. being non-judgemental, patient, flexible. These sites will also say if there are any specific skills required for a post, such as IT, driving, etc. and give an idea about practical considerations, like time commitment.

Activity 6 Where to find volunteering opportunities

Allow approximately 20 minutes

Use the websites below to help you match your interests, experience and personal circumstances to actual vacancies. Insert your personal specifications into any of the following websites using their drop-down menus. You do not need to visit every website – just pick one or two to explore.

1. [Do-it](#)

You can insert preferred geographical area and availability, and from drop-down menus select your type of interest and the kind of activity you would like to do, e.g. befriending, buddying, driving, legal work, artistic, etc.

2. [Volunteering England](#)

[Volunteer Scotland](#)

[Volunteer Ireland](#)

[Volunteering Wales](#)

These sites list the main categories of voluntary work, such as animal welfare, arts and heritage, community development and campaigning, and health and social care (including sections relating to young people, elderly, disabled, etc.). There are also subcategories, e.g. for campaign volunteering. These include discrimination, human and civil rights, environment and conservation, and political parties. The Volunteering England site also contains volunteer blogs.

3. **Charities** Websites of many charities also have drop-down lists of skills or interests, commitment level, location and preferred role type, e.g. [Sue Ryder Care](#) and the [RSPCA](#) (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). Other charities such as [Volunteering Matters](#) provide a range of activities to select from, for example supporting an at-risk family or helping at a local school.

Most charity websites are very informative and user friendly. They also widen your horizons about what type of work you can do. Many people never think beyond the fundraising aspect but at the RSPCA, for example, volunteers can walk dogs at the local shelter, home-visit prospective adopters or do home-based computer work (updating the website or databases, etc.).

4. **Other organisations** [Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland](#) (RIBI or Rotary) provides many opportunities to volunteer both locally and internationally. The members and volunteers plan and tailor projects to specific communities. Rotary has 1800 clubs across the UK and 50,000 members and volunteers.

5. **Volunteer centres** You can visit your [local volunteer centre](#) to talk about what you might like to do: the centre will know all the opportunities in your area.

Discussion

Hopefully you have found something you might want to apply for or perhaps looking at the opportunities has helped you work out what might interest you. Opportunities come up all the time, so even if there was not much of interest or in your location you will know which websites to return to at a later date.

3.3 Making the most of your volunteering

If you already volunteer, you may wish to include your volunteering experience as part of your CV – and many job application forms do specify to do this. The next activity gives you some suggestions on how to think about this. Even if you are not planning a job application, it is still useful to do this activity as it gives you a chance to reflect on any experience you have. If you want to learn more about creating a CV, you might want to take a look at another badged free course on OpenLearn, [Succeed in the workplace](#).

Activity 7 Putting volunteering on your CV

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Make notes on the following (you could also incorporate the first three aspects into a practice CV):

- What did you do while volunteering and what have you achieved?
- What did you learn and what skills did you develop?
- What training or induction did you receive?
- How do you want to improve from here?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

It is often not till you try to incorporate volunteering into your CV that you realise how many different skills you have learned or what valuable experience you have gained. Things like working in a team, working with customers, clients or visitors, organising an event, using social media to promote an organisation, writing a newsletter, mentoring new volunteers, chairing a meeting, and so on are all important skills and experiences. Not all volunteers receive formal training or an induction, although this is likely to be important (and relevant to a CV) in health and social care volunteer roles, especially if you work directly with service users.

You may know that you would like to be paid to work in the voluntary sector but are unsure what you would like to do. To begin by volunteering will give you the opportunity to explore different roles and to find out about different organisations. You may not get a sense of what the more specialist or senior roles are like but you would get to meet different staff members and talk to them about their jobs. Also, it is useful to know what it is like to be a volunteer and be managed by paid staff. Then, if later on you are in a position of managing or supervising volunteers, you will have experience of the 'front line'.

4 Finding paid work in the voluntary sector

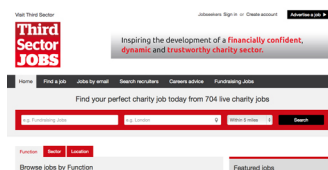


Figure 4 Using websites to find work

As you might imagine, there are many different places in which to look for a paid job in the voluntary sector. Most big charities advertise paid jobs nationally, for example in [The Guardian online](#). There are also dedicated websites for those seeking charity jobs – try looking on [Charity Job](#) or [Third Sector Jobs](#). These websites often have careers advice sections too.

As with volunteering opportunities, many local councils for voluntary action or service also advertise voluntary sector jobs, usually for small local organisations. Furthermore, there are many websites advertising specific roles, such as fundraising, that cut across sectors, perhaps in heritage or health and social care.

4.1 Tips on how to get your first job in the voluntary sector

Here are some useful tips from National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) (2015) on what to do or not to do when seeking a job in the voluntary sector.

How to get your first job in the voluntary sector

Given how tough the jobs market is right now, it is perhaps unsurprising that NCVO received hundreds of applications for two trainee positions recently.

In the process of sifting applications and doing interviews, I met many great candidates, often looking for their first break into the voluntary sector. Almost everyone told us how hard it is to find paid, entry-level roles in the sector – so here are a few tips for anyone in this position.

1 Before applying: Think beyond the “household name” charities

When people first think about working in the voluntary sector, it's often the big charities which spring to mind. But most voluntary organisations are smaller, focused on their particular communities and keen to recruit great staff and volunteers.

2 Before applying: Get to know the sector

Most charities will be glad to tell you a bit about what they do, so check out their websites or give them a quick call. This should be exploratory, getting ideas about the types of organisation you might apply to and the work they do.

Remember that many charities rely on volunteers or will have very busy staff, so don't take up too much of their time with questions or send them your CV without doing your homework first – see below.

To get an overview of the charity sector, you can look around [NCVO's website](#) [...] .

3 Applying: Do your homework – what does this charity need?

If you're applying to work for an organisation, do your homework first.

You should know about the organisation's work and aims, and anything else you can find out. You should think about what the organisation needs to do its work and how this particular role fits in. This will give you the basis for a much more compelling application.

4 Applying: Write about the charity in your covering letter or application

Based on your research, you should demonstrate your understanding of the organisation's needs in your application.

For example, you might be applying for an admin role, but should still demonstrate that you know about the organisation's overall aims...

e.g. 'The ABC Charity already supports 220 local people to develop their skills, and aspires to reach 150 more people over the next year. The ABC Administrator must therefore support the organisation's staff to work as efficiently as possible and have good systems in place to support expansion.'

5 Applying: Communicate what you have to offer, that will meet their needs

You can then go on to talk about your story and what you can contribute.

Always give examples of what you've done, to match what it is the charity needs from this role.

Beware a common pitfall: talking too much about your longer-term personal ambitions. While it's great to know where you're going in life, it can make employers nervous about your commitment. For example, if you're applying for an entry-level job, say in a charity's fundraising team, but saying that your long-term plans are to do research abroad.

6 Interviewing: Be positive about the charity and what they do

One of the best ways to distinguish yourself from other candidates is to demonstrate real knowledge and enthusiasm for the charity's work. It really shows when someone has done their homework and cares about supporting the charity, not just their own personal goals.

7 Interviewing: Use examples, not assertions

Another common pitfall to watch out for is using assertions.

Interviewers often ask questions like, 'How would you manage your time?' This can make it sound like you should answer with an assertion 'I would develop a to-do list and...'

Whereas, it's usually better to give examples of what you've done before, as this will distinguish you from other candidates: 'I've managed my time effectively, for example when I helped arrange a fundraising event at the local school. I developed a to-do list and...'

It also means you can demonstrate results: 'Because of all the planning that went into the event, it ran like clockwork on the day and the Headteacher thanked me personally.'

8 Interviewing: Follow-up

The jury is out on whether it's a good idea to send a follow-up letter or email, after an interview. Some people think this is a good opportunity to restate your interest and key points. My own view is that writing afterwards won't affect your chances of getting the job – this is decided in the interview – but that it is good manners to thank your interviewers for their time and consideration.

You will now move on to thinking about reflective learning in the workplace.

5 Reflective learning



Figure 5 Reflecting on your learning

Why is there a section about learning at the end of the course? To a large extent, you have reflected on learning throughout the course through being asked to apply the ideas in the course to your own experience. However, here you will think about reflective learning beyond courses such as this one.

Learning may come from learning situations such as seminars, training courses, studying for educational qualifications or other types of course. This learning is sometimes called formal learning because it is formally taught in classrooms, training venues or online, away from the sites where the knowledge gained is put into practice, i.e. where you work or volunteer.

What often gets missed is that learning also happens, perhaps in smaller, less recognisable ways, all the time through our experience of the world. This type of informal learning often takes place in the workplace (or where you volunteer or interact with others), alongside colleagues and managers, and is usually associated with solving problems or doing something new. This learning depends on your ability to reflect on and draw learning from these experiences (this is often referred to as experiential learning). The next activity asks you to practise reflecting on your experiences.

Activity 8 Learning from work and other experiences

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Reflect on your earliest jobs, volunteering or responsibilities and document your thoughts on two or three things you learned from those that you still put into practice today.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You will have learned numerous things over the years, perhaps particularly from your first job or volunteering role. Many people start working while still at school: for example, working in a shop provides experience of working with customers, cash handling and understanding how to take direction from managers. Learning to be managed and to work with other people who may be very different from you often takes some getting used to.

For some, reflection is quite a natural process but for most of us it is a skill that has to be learned and developed. It is a useful skill to have and you can use it when building your CV for job or volunteering applications, or when seeking promotion. Even if you are not looking for work or a volunteering role, it can help you to relate to others or to help family or friends with career planning or improving their work or volunteering experience.

There are various frameworks that can help you to reflect effectively on your experiences or learning. One of these is Kolb's cycle of learning, which you will explore in the next section.

5.1 Kolb's cycle of learning

The educational theorist David Kolb (1976) developed a theory of learning in which he argued that learning from experience necessarily involves four stages, shown in Figure 6, and that each of these stages draws on different skills and characteristics.

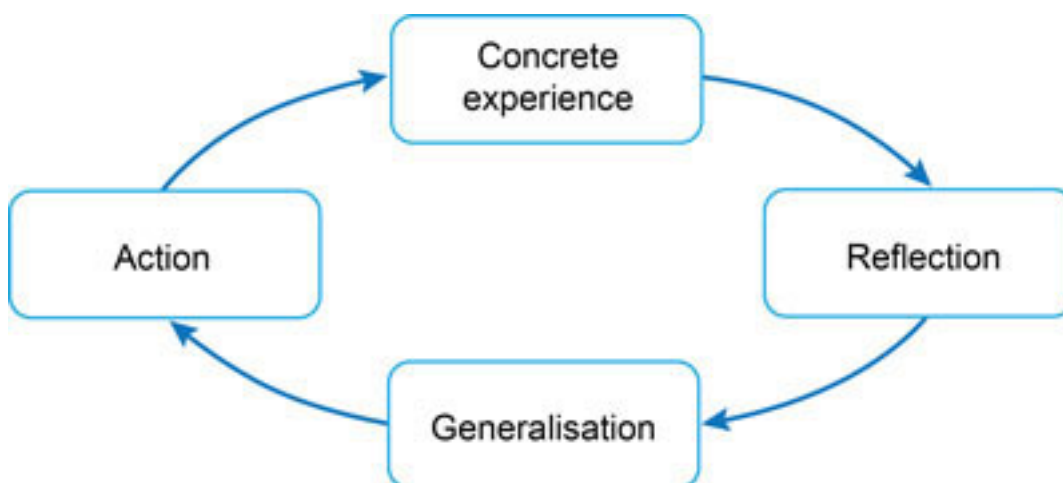


Figure 6 Kolb's experiential learning cycle (adapted from Kolb, 1984)

The different elements include:

- Concrete experience – an actual experience, situation or sequence of events. What happened? Who was involved? The experience or event is usually something that you feel could have been handled differently.
- Reflection – thinking about why something happened and how it happened.
- Generalisation – what was the impact of this event?
- Action – how to change our future behaviours – what will you do differently?

So the cycle shows that learning from experience is about more than just acquiring experience (concrete experience) and thinking about what happened (reflection). It means developing a more general understanding that can be applied to other situations (generalisation) and finding ways to try out this new learning (action). Kolb argued that in practice, most of us are stronger in one or more of the stages of the cycle than in others and that this presents challenges to people who want to learn effectively from experience (Kolb, 1976).

Kolb's cycle gets you to consider the action you have taken as well as the consequences, and consider what might have been done differently. In doing so you create knowledge that is new to you and which you can apply in future situations. In the process, you learn more about your own thinking, which enables you to improve it. For example, you might recognise that you had knowledge that you didn't apply or that you needed more knowledge or information, or that your feelings, personal beliefs or expectations influenced your thinking without you realising it. Thus, the next time you act you are much less likely to repeat past mistakes or oversights.

Activity 9 Applying the learning cycle

Identify a difficult work, volunteering or life situation you have experienced. Now make notes on it using the different elements of Kolb's learning cycle.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Hopefully this will have given you a sense of what you learned from the event and how you might act differently if a similar situation arises in the future.

5.2 Get into the habit

To get into the habit of reflecting on learning from work or volunteering, you could keep a Learning Log. Box 1 explains how to do this.

Box 1 Learning Logs

A simple but effective way of getting to grips with the idea of reflection is to set ten minutes aside each week to write a Learning Log – every Friday afternoon, for example. A Learning Log is a bit like a diary or portfolio, but it has set headings that encourage you to record key events/experiences since the last log, your reactions to them, and then reflect on them to

draw out conclusions about what happened and determine any subsequent actions you should take.

Here are four things to record in a simple Learning Log:

1. the experience/situation/event
2. your initial reactions to the experience/situation/event
3. what you did
4. what you learned from the experience/situation/event.

Tips for using Learning Logs

- Make sure you keep your learning logs in a file or folder, so you can reflect on them again at a later stage. Reflection is better if it is a cumulative process.
- They may be very useful when compiling a Personal Development Plan or CV, preparing for an interview, or for informing future assessment strategies based on your performance so far.
- Your perspectives change over time. What is really interesting is to go back and look at your observations once the dust has settled. You may identify patterns of thinking or behaviour, or come to different conclusions with the benefit of hindsight.

(Source: The University of Manchester, n.d.)

Activity 10 Keeping a learning log

Allow approximately 10 minutes per week

Using the guidelines in Box 1, complete a Learning Log once a week for the next few weeks. Then discuss your reflections with a friend or colleague. You are almost at the end of the course so this might be something you'd prefer to take forward over the coming months.

Discussion

Reflection is useful on your own but you will probably find you get even more from it by talking it over with a friend or colleague. It helps you distance yourself from the situation a little and explore different perspectives.

6 This week's quiz

You are now ready to take the final quiz for your badge. This quiz is another 15-question quiz, like Week 4, but as with all the other quizzes, you still have three chances to answer each question.

Remember to take your time reading the questions, and answer options if given, to give yourself the best chance to show your full knowledge and understanding. Good luck!

Quizzes are only available online and when enrolled to the course on OpenLearn

[Week 8 compulsory badge quiz.](#)

Remember, this quiz counts towards your badge. If you're not successful the first time, you can attempt the quiz again in 24 hours.

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding Ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

7 Summary

During the past eight weeks you have been finding out about the nature of the voluntary sector and, if you are new to it, you might have been thinking about whether you would like to work or volunteer in the sector. You have been encouraged to apply ideas to your own situation, and to reflect on your experiences. Remember to include this course on your CV as it will be relevant to jobs and volunteering in the sector.

In Week 8, you have learned:

- how to reflect on your learning
- how to start planning for your next steps
- the benefits of volunteering
- how to start looking for a volunteer or paid role in the voluntary sector
- what the learning cycle is and how to apply it to your work or volunteering.

There are other free courses from OpenLearn that may be relevant to you, for example, *Working in voluntary organisations*, which builds on this course. *Succeed in the workplace* will help you in crystallising your thoughts further on looking for a new job or volunteering. [The Open University](#) offers many formal qualifications relevant to the voluntary sector, for example in business and management, health and social care, development studies, the environment, arts and education, and so on.

If you've gained your badge, you'll receive an email to notify you. You can view and manage your badges in [My OpenLearn](#) within 24 hours of completing all the criteria to gain a badge.

Now you've completed the course, we would again appreciate a few minutes of your time to tell us a bit about your experience of studying it and what you plan to do next. We will use this information to provide better online experiences for all our learners and to share our findings with others. If you'd like to help, please fill in this [optional survey](#).

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Further reading

You will find interesting and relevant information about the voluntary sector on the various national volunteering websites:

[NCVO](#)

[Volunteering England](#)

[Volunteering Wales](#)

[Wales Council for Voluntary Action](#)

[Volunteer Scotland](#)

[Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations](#)

[Volunteer Now \(Northern Ireland\)](#)

[Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action.](#)

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Activity 7 video: BBC West Midlands Today

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Week 7

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Week 8

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Activity 5: Smith, J. D. (2015) '10 things I learnt during volunteers' week', *NCVO blog*, 8 June [Blog]. Available at blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2015/06/08/10-things-i-learnt-during-volunteers-week.

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