The Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Research Conference 2013
Final paper submission

Full title of paper	Mapping supply of and demand for volunteers in Scotland: what next for Scottish volunteering policy, practice and research?

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150 word abstract for inclusion in the conference programme	The remit of Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS) and local volunteering agencies includes informing mainstream policy relating to volunteering, and to support organisations involving volunteers. To inform this work, VDS conducted research to understand the demand for and supply of volunteers in the Charities sector; findings suggest significant challenges ahead for Scottish Charities, illuminating next steps for policy, practice and research.

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Paper

Policy and practice context for Research

In 2008 Scottish Government with Local Authorities in Scotland launched a localised approach to achieving Scotland-wide outcomes. Delivery strategies included a strong emphasis on partnership working beyond the public sector, performance measured in relation to outcomes, a "*greater devolution of power and decision-making to local government and local partnerships. This enables services to better reflect local priorities and distinctive needs and circumstances*." [1]

This localism agenda is also reflected in the response to funding cuts to public service delivery. Like other areas in the UK, Scotland is facing significant public spending cuts over the next 10 years, with no increase in spending in real terms until 2026. In order to help Scotland cope with this changing landscape, Campbell Christie was asked by Scottish Government to undertake a review of public service delivery, and propose a more appropriate model of service delivery for the new economic climate.

The Christie Commission reported in 2011, and recommended a more localised, collaborative and responsive mode of delivery focused on prevention. The commission proposed better use of "*resources from the public, private and third sectors, individuals, groups and communities*" delivering services "*in partnership, involving local communities, their democratic representatives, and the third sector*"[2].

Continuing: "*active participation of service users and communities, will contribute significantly to making the best possible use of money and other assets. They will help to eradicate duplication and waste and, critically, take demand out of the system over the longer term.*'[3]

Neither of these policy agenda include explicit reference to 'volunteering', however the localism agenda and collaborative and co-production approach to public service delivery assume a (potentially greater) level of participation by individuals, groups and charities operating within local communities. While policy narratives are unspecific about the type of participation envisaged, we can assume that while community empowerment and community-led agendas may assume levels or aim to increase levels of less formal individual and group voluntary participation within communities, public service reform relies on more formal participation with third sector organisations. Volunteer involving organisations in the Third Sector, such as Charities who deliver services, rely heavily on volunteers[4]; current 'formal' volunteers report that they operate largely within the third sector[5].

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[1] Scottish Government (2011) Local Matters: Delivering the Local Outcomes Approach http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/10115335/0 Accessed July 2013.
[2] Christie, C. (2011) Commission on the future delivery of public services. Edinburgh: Scottish Government http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/27154527/0 Accessed July 2013.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Volunteer Development Scotland, (2011) *Volunteering in Scottish Charities 2011* Volunteer Development Scotland www.vds.org.uk/research Accessed July 2013
[5] Volunteer Development Scotland, (forthcoming) *Volunteering in Scotland: Key findings* Volunteer Development Scotland

In Scotland, Volunteer Development Scotland is the national centre to support volunteer involving organisations, including those in the Third Sector, to involve volunteers and develop volunteering, in doing so VDS plays an important role in helping such organisations operate effectively within a new political and economic context. In addition, VDS seeks to inform and influence policy-makers to take into account volunteers experiences in the development of policies which assume a level of individual and group community participation.

At the local authority level volunteering is supported by local volunteering agencies (local VAs). Their exact titles vary, from 'Volunteer Centre' to 'Third Sector Interface'. Some are independent, others merged with Centres for Voluntary Services or equivalents.

Both VDS and local VAs provide services which link those looking for volunteering opportunities with volunteer involving organisations who have available opportunities. VDS host 'www.volunteerscotland.org.uk' which allows users to search for opportunities across Scotland. Local VAs are able to publish opportunities they hold locally onto the national site; national volunteer involving organisations can publish opportunities directly. These linking services are designed to broaden the reach of volunteer involving organisations beyond immediate networks and increase likelihood that they will find suitable volunteers, and that volunteers will find suitable opportunities.

Given the apparent reliance on formal volunteering for future public service delivery, and efforts made by intermediary organisations to support formal volunteering in Scotland, VDS wanted to understand the landscape of supply of and demand for volunteers in Scotland and how to improve efforts to support it. Research was conducted to help VDS and others:

1) inform the development of government policy promoting community participation and service delivery,
2) identify areas where those involving volunteers could be better supported; and
3) identify knowledge gaps which if addressed could better to support policy and practice development.

Description of Research

VDS conducted two pieces of research. The demand for volunteers within the Third Sector was explored through a survey with Scottish Charities; supply of volunteers through 'Volunteering in Scotland Survey, a national Volunteering in Scotland survey, both conducted in late 2011.

Volunteering in Scottish Charities 2011

The Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) Charities Register holds around 23,360 charities, of which 14, 501 delivering activities or services (as opposed to solely distributing grants) and operating locally (their area of operation no greater than two local authority areas). From the 14, 501 charities, we conducted a postal survey with a random stratified sample of 1000, receiving a 59% response rate. The survey included questions around:

- Levels of volunteer involvement
- Future demand for volunteers
- Activities volunteers undertake,

- Challenges in relation to involving volunteers
- Effectiveness of intermediary channels (linking individuals to opportunities such as Third Sector Local VAs and volunteerscotland.org)

Volunteering in Scotland Survey was conducted with a representative sample (1000) across Scotland. This survey identified current volunteers (who were volunteering at the time of the survey) former volunteers (i.e. those who volunteered in the past but had stopped) and non-volunteers (i.e. those who had never volunteered). The survey included questions around:

- Likelihood of increasing involvement, or getting involved
- Activities potential volunteers would like to undertake
- Awareness and use of intermediary channels

Table 1 (below) details how each survey addressed issues of supply and demand and effectiveness of infrastructure to help supply meet demand

Issue	Charities Survey	Volunteering in Scotland Survey
Supply Vs Demand	Changing levels of volunteer involvement Future demand for volunteers	Willingness to volunteer amongst former and non-volunteers. Intention of current volunteers to change amount of time given, or number of organisations they volunteer with.
Supply Vs Demand	Activities on offer	Activities former and non-volunteers would like to undertake.
Awareness, use and effectiveness of linking services.	How charities find suitable volunteers, which methods they find most effective.	Methods current or past volunteers used to find out about opportunities. Awareness of linking services.

Table 1 Addressing issues of supply and demand via two surveys

Demand for volunteers versus appetite for volunteering

All charities who responded to the survey reported involving volunteers in roles other than board trustees. 55% were entirely volunteer run, with no paid staff. Smaller (annual turnover less than £25000) and charities in rural areas were more likely to report having no paid staff.

The majority of charities reported seeing no change in volunteer numbers over the year prior to the survey; 26% of larger charities (annual turnover more than £25000) reported seeing a decrease in volunteer numbers compared with only 8% of smaller charities.

Although this suggests relative stability for charities volunteer involvement, maintaining current levels was reported as a significant issue. The challenge 'keeping suitable volunteers' was the most commonly reported with 51% of charities identifying this as a top three challenge. Capacity issues may contribute to both finding volunteers and maintaining their involvement. 'Providing adequate support to volunteers' and 'lack of time affecting support for volunteering ranked third and fourth respectively, with around 20% of charities reporting these as top three challenges. Larger charities were more likely than smaller charities to report 'lack of funding affecting support for volunteering' as a top three challenge (29% and 14% respectively).

Alongside maintaining current levels of involvement, demand for volunteers was relatively high with the majority of charities (61%) wanting to increase numbers of volunteers. Of those, just over half thought an increase was unlikely.

This pessimism was reflected in charities view on their ability to attract new volunteers. When charities were asked to identify the top 3 challenges they were likely to face in the next 12 months from a list of potential challenges the second most reported challenge was: 'finding suitable volunteers' (47.5%).

Findings from the Volunteering in Scotland Survey suggest this pessimism is justified. Only 7% of current volunteers stated they were likely to increase the number of organisations they were volunteering with; only 19% of non-volunteers and a similar proportion of former volunteers intended to start volunteering.

These figures suggest a challenging picture for charities wanting to involve more volunteers, so what can the data tell us about how charities needs align with what people want to do, and how easily charities can find interested volunteers, and interested volunteers find charities?

Activities charity volunteers currently undertake versus those interested in volunteering would like to undertake

The Volunteering in Scotland survey asked former and non-volunteers interested in volunteering what activities they would like to undertake. Charities also reported on the types of activities their volunteers carried out.

In terms of activities on offer, 79% of charities involved volunteers who were 'generally helping out', 74% helping to organise and run events, 61% doing whatever is required, 56% raising money and 52% of charities involved volunteers in 'committee work'.

The top five activities which people who were interested in undertaking (as new volunteers or volunteers who wanted to do more): 'generally helping out' (27%), 'raising money' (26%), 'visiting, buddying or befriending people' (17%), 'helping to organise or run events or activities'(17%) and 'education or training or coaching' (16%).

Table 2 below details the extent to which the top 5 activities for charities and interested volunteers align:

How charities currently involve volunteers	Activity	What people would like to do
1	Generally helping out	1
4	Raising money	2
2	Organising events and activities	3=
-	Visiting, buddying or befriending someone	3=
-	Education training or coaching	5
3	Doing whatever is required	(6)
5	Committee work	-

Table 2: Top five activities which Charity volunteers currently undertake compared with top five activities people are interested in undertaking

Findings from both surveys highlight the issue of board membership. 22% of charities reported recruitment of board members would be a challenge; a similar proportion identified recruiting board members with the right skills. 'Committee work' was not identified by many potential volunteers as an activity they were interested in undertaking.

Misalignment occurs in relation to individual motivation to undertake more specific tasks: visiting, buddying or befriending someone, and education coaching or training and the need of charities for volunteers to undertake committee work.

Otherwise, there was reasonable alignment between what Charities were offering and what people were interested in doing. Yet charities are reporting a mismatch between supply and demand, even larger charities who are more likely to offer more specific tasks such as befriending, were also more likely to report a decline in numbers of people approaching them to volunteer.

How charities and volunteers find each other and effectiveness of linking services

In terms of how volunteers and charities were finding each other, there appeared strong alignment in methods. Both used networks (word of mouth) and directly asking (or being asked) for help as the primary method. These methods were also identified by Charities as the most effective way to find suitable volunteers and for current and former volunteers as the most effective way of finding suitable opportunities. There was very limited use of websites or social media by Charities as a way of finding volunteers.

These findings suggest that methods of engagement may contribute to difficulties in finding volunteers. While networks and direct contact are proving effective, it is not effective enough to tap into a wider pool of people interested in volunteering.

As discussed above, linking services should in theory help alleviate capacity issues for Charities by making recruitment easier, increasing the number of suitable volunteers approaching the organisation by broadening reach beyond established networks.

Use of these linking services were relatively low amongst Scottish charities, 19% using local VAs to find suitable volunteers (smaller charities, those in rural areas and those with no paid staff were less likely to use Local VAs). The Charities survey asked about use of websites generally to find volunteers, only a fraction reported using this method. Similarly only a fraction of Charities identified Local VAs or websites as the most effective way of finding suitable volunteers.

Awareness of local VAs and volunteerscotland.org was relatively low amongst all respondents to the Volunteering in ScotlandSurvey, awareness was lower amongst those not currently volunteering (58%). This may suggest that volunteers become aware of these linking services after becoming involved with the organisation, but that they are not using them to find out about opportunities. While survey respondents were unaware, webstats from the site suggest relatively high engagement (approx 30,000 average visits per month).

Discussion

The findings suggest challenges for Scottish charities in terms of being able to develop volunteering beyond current levels, or to sustain adequate support of volunteers they currently involve.

Amongst the Scottish public, although huge numbers give their time freely to organisations and groups, a much larger proportion are not interested in re-starting or starting volunteering. Of those who are, many want to carry out tasks which appear suited to the needs of Scottish Charities, but few are aware of services which could link them to those opportunities.

This research has useful application in terms of VDS and others' who support the development of volunteering related policy and practice.

1) *Informing the development and implementation of policy involving community participation and service delivery*

These findings suggest that policy agendas which rely on Scottish Charities to extend their involvement in delivering services will be of limited success unless they are able to increase the number of hours current volunteers are giving and/or attract new volunteers. The level of success may also differ between urban and rural areas.

The success of such policies also rely on individual motivation to give time to an activity which responds to specific needs within a community, and assumes Charities – or other groups and organisations - respond to needs identified within a community (as opposed to reflecting external drivers such as areas of activity which attracts funding).

For VDS and others to help pinpoint how best to support volunteer development in particular sectors, communities and types of organisations those developing community-led policies could work to establish what types of participation they expect to support or encourage through these types of policy agendas.

2) *Identifying areas where practice could be better supported, informing how VDS and other intermediaries could better support Charities.*

The findings suggest that while linking services are used by some Charities, they do not consider them effective in terms of finding suitable volunteers. Their use of social media to broaden reach to potential volunteers is also very limited.

Enhancing the effectiveness of such channels requires greater awareness amongst the public to encourage use, whilst simultaneously feeding back information to Charities and other volunteer involving organisations on a continuous basis. Information about what types of opportunities people are searching for (for example) can help Charities and others tailor opportunities to better

suit needs of potential volunteers. In addition, given the apparent alignment between what charities offer and what people want to do, other characteristics of the opportunity which may act as barriers to attracting suitable volunteers - location, level of time commitment, flexibility and so on - need further explored and addressed.

The specific issue of board membership and finding board members with the right skills is also reflected in evidence collected by OSCR [6]. This is a significant issue which may also hamper the development and sustainability of Charities and the services they provide. Specific initiatives to better understand how charities need to plan for board turnover and to build skills capacity should be developed.

3) *Identifying knowledge gaps which if addressed could better to support policy and practice development.*

While research such as this gives some indication as to the likely challenges faced by those attempting to implement policy and improve practice, it also highlights limitations of this research.

The relationship between Third Sector activities and shrinking public services needs further explored. Mapping voluntary activity in particular communities or sectors, shifts in public service delivery and how the two sectors connect in particular locations will help to further pinpoint to what extent needs of communities will be met.

Understanding the nature of participation in urban and rural communities, and to what extent individual motivations to participate tally with the needs of a changing service landscape is also critical to ascertain how likely it is communty needs will be met.

Exploring external drivers behind more formal volunteering – such as to improve employment prospects – may be important to understand how Charities and others can better harness individual motivations. Passion for a particular cause may be overshadowed by the need to gain experience in a particular sector or develop particular skills via specific tasks.

In addition to motivations, increasing understanding around pathways to formal volunteering – such as exploring to what extent voluntary participation is pre-meditated or planned (therefore more likely to seek out opportunities) or happens by chance through conversations for example, would help communication strategies to improve use of linking mechanisms. For example, increasing planned and proactive searching amongst potential volunteers via public campaigns.

Often, formal volunteering – such as figures from Scottish Household Survey – or other surveys using similar questions – is used as a proxy for community reslience, empowerment[7] or levels of social capital[8] . Given that we know the nature of participation is far broader than just formal

[6] Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (2011) External Stakeholder Research
http://www.oscr.org.uk/publications-and-guidance/external-stakeholder-research/ Accessed July 2013
[7] Scottish Government (2013) Community Empowerment. Edinburgh
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/engage Accessed July 2013.
[8] Jochum, V. (2003) Social Captial, Beyond the Theory NCVO http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/uploadedFiles/NCVO/What_we_do/Research/Social_Capital/SocCapital%20BeyondTheTheory.pdf
Accessed July 2013.

volunteering[9] future research should critique and develop means of describing, identifying and measuring levels of participation to give a more holistic picture of how Charities, individuals and groups offer services to those who need them.

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[9] Woolvin, M. (2011) Placing informal volunteering: helping, deprivation and the lifecourse in Scotland." PhD Thesis, University of Dundee