

TIME WELL SPENT

DIVERSITY AND VOLUNTEERING

Research Report
December 2020



NCO

FOREWORD

For the great majority of people volunteering is a positive experience, however some volunteers are less likely to have a positive experience than others, including younger, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME), and disabled volunteers. This report – which builds on NCVO’s *Time Well Spent* research – looks at organisational approaches to diversity and inclusive volunteering.

Covid-19 has changed so much in our lives and society. Volunteering is no different. People on furlough leave who may have never volunteered before came forward to support their communities. Micro-volunteering opportunities – people giving small amounts of time rather than a regular commitment - became much more commonplace. Yet in parallel, self-isolation of vulnerable groups, services moving online overnight and changing economic circumstances have created new barriers to getting involved for some groups of people. It remains to be seen how these changes will impact on diversity in volunteering in the longer term.

Even before the pandemic, NCVO’s *Time Well Spent* research showed that diversity in volunteering was an issue. Those from lower socio-economic groups are less likely

to volunteer than those from higher socio-economic groups. People over 65 are also more likely to volunteer than younger age groups. Furthermore, younger, BAME and disabled volunteers report a less positive volunteering experience.

Put simply, volunteering is not inclusive of all people and communities both in terms of levels of participation and the volunteer’s experience of being involved.

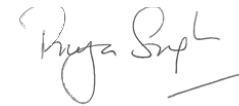
At NCVO we believe in the power of volunteering to change lives. Volunteering can improve mental health, social networks, employment readiness and life chances. And of course, there are also benefits for the people and communities supported by the 11 million+ people who volunteer regularly in the UK. There is huge value created when a service is provided by someone who has given up their time freely. Involving volunteers also puts communities at the heart of services, making services more responsive to need. This is why we are determined to drive change and support an expansion in the diversity of volunteers so that everyone can get involved and all communities can experience the benefits.

We know that if we want inclusive volunteering to happen, organisations need to approach diversity holistically and across everything they do. Many of the learnings identified in this research are applicable

more generally to creating more equitable, diverse and inclusive organisations in the voluntary sector and beyond. NCVO itself is on its own diversity journey looking to engage better with a wider range of people from all walks of life.

We also found in our research that volunteering can be overlooked when organisations examine their approaches to diversity and inclusion. In order to move past outdated concepts of ‘helper and helped,’ we must first identify the barriers embedded in our volunteering infrastructure.

Covid-19 has put volunteering centre stage in the eyes of decision makers and in the wider public conscience. As plans are developed for recovery and renewal of the country post-covid, it is critical that volunteers are recognised as an important part of our social infrastructure. But if we are to maximise their role in society, it is equally important that volunteering truly speaks to the breadth of people who are and would want to be involved. We hope this research will support policy makers, volunteering infrastructure, leaders of volunteer-involving organisations and volunteer managers to prioritise diversity in their plans for volunteering. We also hope it will support organisations take practical steps to create cultures that are inclusive of all who want to give their time.



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1. AT A GLANCE

This section provides an overview of each of the main sections of this report, including a summary of key findings.

Introduction

Section 2 provides background to the report. It outlines the key aims and approach to the research and includes a note on definitions.

- This report on volunteering and diversity is the third in a series of focused reports building on our *Time Well Spent* research, which looks at this topic from an organisational perspective.
- The report draws on further analysis of the *Time Well Spent* data, workshops carried out with organisations, phone interviews, follow up feedback and existing literature.
- The research was carried out predominantly before March 2020, with some follow up data collection taking place in the second half of the year in order to understand the potential impact of covid-19 and global anti-racism mobilisations on this topic.
- The research, which focuses on formal volunteering, aims to understand what diversity means to organisations, to explore their journey towards greater

diversity in practice, to reflect on and share any lessons learned, and to identify areas for subsequent research.

What does volunteer participation look like?

Section 3 explores the context of volunteering in relation to diversity and what we know about who participates, how volunteering is organised, satisfaction levels and motivations.

- A brief review of literature shows that organisational approaches to diversity are shifting. Research about diversity and volunteering has consistently found that organisations need to do more to address this issue. Research has also shown that issues around diversity and volunteering are linked to wider inequalities, power structures, service users and delivery, perceptions of volunteering, leadership and volunteer management frameworks.
- There continues to be disparities in *who* volunteers through groups, clubs and organisations. The most significant differences in who participates relate to socio-economic status and education levels.
- Participation by ethnicity shows a mixed picture whereas there is little variation in participation based on disability overall. Young people, Black,

Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) volunteers and disabled people are more likely to have a less positive experience of volunteering and BAME volunteers have lower levels of satisfaction as volunteers. Disabled volunteers are more likely to say volunteering had negatively impacted their health and wellbeing than non-disabled people.

- Research on volunteering, and on participation more broadly, consistently indicates that inequalities of resources and unequal power structures mean that some people are more likely to be excluded from certain activities.
- There are some notable differences by demographics in the types of activities undertaken and inequalities are evident, particularly in leadership or representative roles such as trustees.
- Among those who hadn't recently volunteered and who felt they could be encouraged to volunteer, being flexible with the time committed was the key factor cited by all groups, whether they had volunteered or not.

How diversity is viewed by organisations

Section 4 looks at organisational perceptions about diversity and volunteering and how this sits within their context and structure.

- Organisations view diversity in relation to their values (or culture), the actions and approach that their organisation takes in addressing diversity issues or in terms of what getting diversity right enables them to achieve as an organisation (outcomes).
- Talking about diversity is a 'starting point' – but there are differing levels of confidence when it comes to knowing *how* to talk about issues relating to diversity for organisations.
- Some organisations have dedicated 'EDI' teams or roles, but for many, diversity is one small part among many areas within their role or remit.
- Organisations have a variety of practical measures in place to address diversity within their organisation – but creating an inclusive culture is equally important.
- Since this year's anti-racism mobilisation, organisations are more likely to talk about the importance of embedding diversity within their organisation.

Organisational experiences with diversity and volunteering

Section 5 looks at how diversity has been prioritised in organisations and the actions organisations have taken towards inclusion and diversity within their organisations and volunteer opportunities.

- Most organisations feel that diversity is a ‘work in progress’ and see themselves as taking small steps on a long journey.
- Organisations tend to have two approaches to strategic volunteer recruitment: that volunteers should reflect their service users (for some this means lived experience) or volunteers should broadly reflect the community or locality they are based in. However, some organisations do not take a strategic approach to recruitment but rather rely on whoever ‘shows up’ and they often note that they are ‘open to everyone’.
- There is sometimes a clear gap between interest and action when it comes to addressing diversity issues, and organisations varied in how much they prioritised diversity. But there was a general sense that it is now higher on the agenda in the current context. While interest in diversity may have increased, organisations talked about having fewer resources to make significant changes as a result of covid-19.

What are the key issues and learnings?

Section 6 explores key issues and challenges – as well as learnings to take forward, organised thematically.

- Embedding inclusion and diversity in the organisation in multiple ways builds common understanding and shared values across the organisation. To address imbalances of power, diversity and inclusion need to be valued, prioritised or strategically embedded throughout the organisation. Being honest and authentic is a good first step. It is also important for organisations to engage volunteers in their diversity journey.
- If governing bodies and senior staff embrace diversity, it is more likely to be prioritised, resourced, and embedded in volunteering and across the organisation. It is important to take a ‘whole organisation’ approach to this, rather than a siloed approach.
- Low levels of staff capacity and shrinking financial resources can be a barrier for implementing diversity but creating an inclusive volunteer environment does not have to be costly.
- Developing flexible roles that fit around the diverse lives of volunteers, their needs and motivations can help to remove barriers to participation and make volunteering more accessible to a wider group of people. The ‘home-grown’ model of volunteering (which builds volunteer roles around the individual) may be more inclusive than the ‘modern’ volunteer model (which

recruits volunteers around pre-defined roles).

- Staff and volunteers who are resistant to change or who hold prejudiced attitudes create a closed culture that is not inclusive. Educating and training staff and volunteers on the value and importance of inclusion is vital, as is creating clear processes and expectations to challenge bias and discriminatory behaviour.
- Many organisations struggle to collect and analyse data about volunteers but those who do are in a better position to create a diverse volunteer base.
- Building trusted relationships in communities helps to create positive opinions and encourage volunteer engagement.

Concluding reflections and implications

Section 7 summarises some of our key learning from across the research and looks at what the findings might mean for practice and for decision makers.

- Discussions about volunteering and diversity are not new and this is a complex area with wide variation between organisational realities. We have seen that organisations are at different stages on their individual journeys towards inclusion and diversity.
- Most organisations do not view diversity through a singular lens and understand the importance of

intersectionality in relation to identity and volunteering.

- The events of 2020 have increased the appetite for embedding diversity within organisations and volunteering. The impact of covid-19 on volunteering is not fully known and it is likely that the pandemic has had both a positive and negative effect on volunteering.
- Vision and strategies are not enough. Culture matters just as much if not more than organisational processes. Building a culture of respect and celebration of difference are key elements of inclusive volunteering.
- While recognising that volunteers have differing needs and aspirations, the research suggests a number of key features that help to create more inclusive volunteering and have identified key questions for organisations to reflect on and consider:
 - Where in the journey toward inclusive volunteering is your organisation?
 - Are your organisational structures supporting diversity and inclusive volunteering?
 - Which volunteering framework makes sense for your organisation?
 - Does the volunteer management of your organisation support diversity?
 - Have you considered how you are perceived by those external to the organisation and how this impacts on your volunteering diversity?

2. INTRODUCTION

This section provides background to the report. It outlines the key aims and approach to the research and includes a note on definitions.

2.1. About this report

This research on volunteering and diversity (also covering inclusion and equality) is the third in a series of reports focused on key themes from *Time Well Spent*, based on a national survey of over 10,000 people across Britain on the volunteer experience. The first of these reports was released in June 2019 on employer-supported volunteering and the second in January 2020 on volunteering in the public sector. The aim of these thematic reports is to look at specific areas in more detail, building on the findings from *Time Well Spent* and drawing on both new and existing research.

We recognise that diversity is a subject that encompasses a broad range of areas and is a complex and sensitive issue. It includes multiple identities and intersectionality including age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and education (often used as proxies for social class). In the context of volunteering all these can be explored from a number of perspectives including that of current and lapsed volunteers, non-volunteers, and volunteer-involving organisations.

Given the breadth and complexity of the subject area, we will likely explore this topic in stages: this first stage looks at diversity and volunteering primarily from the organisational perspective and any future stages will likely take a more focused approach on the experience of volunteers. This report outlines the findings from the first stage of our research.

2.2. Scope, approach and limitations of this research

This report focuses on the organisational journey related to diversity and volunteering in a UK context. By this we mean the process and steps organisations take towards more inclusive volunteering while understanding that there is not necessarily one destination and recognising that there are likely to be many paths.

The focus in this report is on the specific volunteering context in relation to diversity and by design does not include wider but related issues (such as pay gaps, staff recruitment, etc). However many of the issues and actions are broader than our focus on volunteering and will have a wider impact on organisations in general. Many organisations, including NCVO, are currently reviewing their internal practices and prioritising equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) work.

Throughout the report we attempt to take an asset-based approach to the topic; to both celebrate examples of diversity and inclusive volunteering and to generate discussion and reflection about inclusion within volunteer-involving organisations. We know that organisations will be at different stages on their journey towards inclusive volunteering and there will not be a one size fits all answer to making volunteering truly open and inviting to all.

It is important to keep in mind when reading this report that much of the fieldwork and data gathered for the research took place before the key events of this year (pre-March 2020) and so reflects organisational and staff perspectives from that time; although we have included additional analysis and data from after this time where possible.

One of the limitations of this research is the small amount of data we have post covid-19 and after the global anti-racism movement took off. It was not possible within the time frame to add significant amounts of data to the research, but this would be an important area for further study.

This report is based on findings from the *Time Well Spent* research as well as qualitative data from fieldwork with over 50 volunteer-involving organisations. The organisations and staff who participated in

this research are not necessarily a representative sample of the voluntary sector in the UK. Some participants self-selected (see [section 2.4](#)), but researchers also carried out a number of interviews with experts and representatives of organisations who support minority communities such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) groups, disability support groups and organisations that support groups within the Black community.

While the data from *Time Well Spent* adds to the body of knowledge about who volunteers in terms of ethnicity, age, disability and socio-economic status, it is important to recognise that it has limited information on LGBTQI+ volunteers or volunteering within specific minority ethnic or religious groups.

Within the report we attempt to provide balanced analysis of the data. However, we acknowledge that different demographic groups have varying amounts of related data and that organisations we spoke to focus on some groups more than others. Some of this is context driven and based on current topics in the sector. For example, within the report there is slightly more discussion about ethnicity, which reflects the discussions we had with organisations and reminds us that context matters in our research.

We acknowledge that structural racism and discrimination exist within both the voluntary sector and volunteering, as it does in wider society. The [#CharitysoWhite](#) campaign has effectively highlighted this issue recently, as have others. Given that large parts of the voluntary sector were built on foundations of social justice and fairness, debates and actions in the sector about diversity and volunteering are particularly relevant. We hope that this research will contribute to the discussion and inspire further action within volunteer-involving organisations in the voluntary sector and in all other contexts.

2.3. Overall aims

The overall aim of this research is to look in greater depth at diversity and volunteering in order to inform practice on the ground as well as strategic decision-making and help organisations address this important issue.

This stage of the research aims to improve understanding of organisations' experiences of diversity and volunteering.

The specific research aims are to:

- understand what diversity means to volunteer-involving organisations
- explore their journey of addressing diversity issues in practice, from engaging and recruiting volunteers to managing and supporting them, right through to when they leave
- highlight lessons learned from organisations' experience that can be shared and applied more widely, including how choices are made within organisations; and what has worked well as well as the challenges and barriers to progress

- identify areas of focus for any subsequent stages of research.

2.4. Our methods

This research draws on numerous data sources, as summarised below. More detail can be found in the appendix ([section 8](#)).

Much of the research for this report took place before the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic as the report was originally due to be published in the spring of 2020. Due to these circumstances, the project was paused for several months. When it resumed, a small amount of data gathering took place in the summer and autumn of 2020, because the environment had changed so significantly, and we wanted to explore how events had impacted organisations' views and approach towards diversity and volunteering.

This has resulted in a report with two halves: a before and after. We have tried to make this as clear as possible in the report, but it is worth bearing in mind that much of the findings are based on data gathered before March 2020.

This research draws on the following key sources of data:

- **Scoping and reviewing existing evidence:** including collating relevant findings from *Time Well Spent* on the volunteer perspective, and other key research and evidence on diversity and volunteering. This was to understand how organisations are talking about diversity and inclusion in relation to volunteering (via organisational websites and social media) and to identify key networks and individuals to speak to for stakeholder interviews.

- **Engagement with organisations via workshops and digital forms:** this included three workshops (two in London, one in Bristol) and 69 digital forms (some of these were completed by those attending workshops) from organisations to better understand their perspectives and experiences of diversity. It is worth noting that participants from organisations ranged from CEOs to volunteer managers and included organisations of all sizes and types in both the voluntary and public sectors. In some cases, participants were able to speak on behalf of the organisation but in others, staff were solely expressing their individual point of view.

- **Phone interviews with key stakeholders:** networks, organisations and individuals were identified who have specialised knowledge and experience within the topic area of diversity. The aim of these interviews was to get a wider understanding of these issues from an overall perspective rather than from a specific organisation. A total of 12 interviews were conducted. The first round of interviews with seven participants were conducted in early 2020, before covid-19, and another round of interviews with five participants in the autumn of 2020 to understand how organisational approaches to diversity in volunteering may have changed in light of global events.

- **Follow-up questions via email:** in the context of these events, organisations that took part in workshops and first round of interviews were asked follow-up questions about any changes to organisational approaches since March as well as any further reflections about

diversity and volunteering. There was a total of 13 responses via email between July and October 2020.

- **Major events from this year** led us to collect evidence outside of the literature; we gathered data from news sources, podcasts, blogs and more recent discussions with organisations to inform the two spotlight sections which look at the impact of covid-19 and global anti-racism activism on volunteering.

The data from all sources were collated and analysed together to inform the findings of this report.

2.5. A note on definitions

The title of this report refers to diversity and volunteering, but we recognise this terminology is imperfect. In the context of this report, it is meant to encompass and reflect how organisations themselves think about and act on the topic and issues relating to diversity and volunteering. Part of this research includes looking at the terms used by organisations, which is discussed in [section 4.1](#).

Throughout the report, we use the term **volunteering** to refer to **formal volunteering**, which is the focus of this report. There is, of course, a great deal of volunteering that happens informally, through mutual aid and via neighbours, but the remit of *Time Well Spent* research focuses on formal ways of giving time and helping others through groups, clubs or organisations. In addition, the following terms related to volunteering are used:

- **Regular or frequent volunteers:** people who have given unpaid help at least once a month.

- **Recent volunteers:** those who have given unpaid help in the last 12 months.
- **Lived experience:** the experience(s) of volunteers on whom a social issue, or combination of issues, has had a direct impact’.

We use the term **organisation** to refer mainly to volunteer-involving organisations, as the focus of this report is on organisations and other bodies that involve volunteers. On the whole these organisations are from the voluntary sector or the public sector.

We define **diversity** to be the visible and invisible differences between people and groups of people, and within groups. It also takes into account, valuing and respecting those differences. For more information on this term, please see the [Equally Ours glossary](#).

We use the term **inclusion** specifically to refer to the practices and processes undertaken by organisations and volunteer programmes to welcome and include all sections of society.

We use the term **equity** to refer to a concept of fairness or parity, for example equality of outcome or supporting volunteers based on their individual needs. This contrasts with **equality**, which we use to mean treating people the same, for example treating all volunteers the same and this does not necessarily take into account individual needs.

In this report, we use the above terms as appropriate, based on their definitions, but we also use **diversity** as a shorthand term

to include equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) work generally and in the widest sense, specifically to refer to the range of identities and communities that organisations are engaging with or hope to engage with.

We also recognise the need to discuss these issues through the lens of **intersectionality**, as people have multiple identities and do not view themselves as belonging solely to solely one identity. Analysis of data, however, often lends itself to the examination of single layers, but we have taken an intersectional approach where possible.

Many have criticised the use of terms like ‘Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME)’ and ‘diversity’ as no longer fit for purpose. The term **BAME** in particular is problematic for several reasons: it creates a false dichotomy between white and non-white people and insinuates ‘white’ as normative. It also groups a wide array of ethnic minority groups together who are very different. The term refers to communities whose ethnic or national origins are not wholly white British. Where feasible in this report, we disaggregate the term although in some cases we do not have enough data to report on individual ethnic groups.

The global **anti-racist** movement that was triggered by the death of George Floyd in police custody in the USA has invigorated the Black Lives Matter movement in the UK and has inspired many organisations to publicly stand against racism. We refer to this movement in this report as **anti-racism** for brevity.

In this report **disability** is defined as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. It covers physical disability, some medical conditions and mental illness. When referring to people with disabilities, we acknowledge that there is tremendous variation between types of disabilities and differences in the needs and barriers of volunteers with disabilities.

The approach in this report is to accept the **social model of disability** which locates the disability within the physical barriers and negative attitudes in society rather than a person’s impairment and was developed by disabled people in contrast to the medical model of disability.

Social class is also an important dimension when it comes to diversity. It is notoriously difficult to define. In *Time Well Spent* we have used socio-economic status (using a classification based on the occupation of the chief income earner of the household)¹ and level of education attainment as indicators of social class, but we recognise that this has many limitations.

We use the term **mainstream organisations** in the report to refer to organisations that are larger than average, better resourced and broader in scope (often national or international) than the majority of voluntary sector groups and who tend to have paid employees and a paid volunteer coordinator or manager. We acknowledge that these terms are far from perfect and we will strive to find and use alternatives as our work in this area evolves. The use of language, particularly in relation to diversity, is contested and ever-

changing. This is partly because communities and people are not static and this mobility often leads to changes in terminology, use and understanding of language to reflect current societal values.

¹ See appendix of Time Well Spent full report <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/policy>

[and_research/volunteering/Volunteer-experience_Full-Report.pdf](#)

3. WHAT DOES VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION LOOK LIKE?

This section explores the context of volunteering in relation to diversity and what we know about who participates, how volunteering is organised, satisfaction levels and motivations for volunteering.

Much of the data in this section comes from the *Time Well Spent* research and the NCVO UK Civil Society Almanac. It has been complemented by findings from a brief literature review.

3.1. Context

There has possibly never been more interest in this topic or more support for inclusive volunteering than there is at this moment in time.

2020 has been an extraordinary year in many ways, with the covid-19 pandemic and global anti-racism efforts. Both, in very different ways, have impacted on volunteering and we should acknowledge that as a result, some organisations have changed over the course of the year, but some of the impact from these events may not be known for some time.

The pandemic has likely shifted volunteering in ways that are yet to be understood. The economic toll alone will be devastating to many organisations financially, with some undoubtedly left with fewer staff and resources, or facing closure.

Some volunteers will have had to step back from their roles. Some will have volunteered online for the first time. Others will have stepped forward to help their local community because they suddenly had time on their hands, and there was an unprecedented need around them.

The death of George Floyd in May 2020 in America sparked a global anti-racism movement and gave momentum to local Black Lives Matter protests and campaigns like [#CharitySoWhite](#) in the UK. Support for racial equality has become a greater priority for many organisations in the voluntary sector and beyond this year.

Diversity looks different in formal and informal volunteering settings.

The findings from this report will be most relevant to formal volunteering and within organisations in the UK with paid staff who manage volunteers. There is a mixed body of evidence relating to who volunteers and how people's involvement might differ in formal and informal volunteering settings. There is also a growing interest in placed-

based mutual aid efforts, which has certainly increased during covid-19.

Mutual aid groups are informal, hyper-local efforts to help others and the model is rooted in communities that have fought injustice and inequality. While this report maintains its focus on formal volunteering, it is worth considering mutual aid efforts related to covid-19 and how they might affect formal volunteering (see [spotlight on volunteer participation during the covid-19 pandemic](#)).

Volunteering is steeped in a history based on notions of power that are currently being challenged.

Volunteering has been framed by some within a dominant western construct that is exclusionary and based on a service delivery model which can hinder diversity² and entrench outdated concepts of 'helper and helped' and 'powerful and powerless'.

Different approaches to volunteering may be more or less conducive to diversity.

In the book *Volunteering and Society in the 21st Century* (2010)³, there are several chapters related to making volunteering inclusive. These identify a range of barriers to volunteering faced by minority groups, including direct discrimination and prejudice. This book highlights why diversity is important for organisations (equity,

effectiveness, representation and inclusion) and outlines the two main frameworks for volunteer management: modern and home-grown. The modern framework is typical of larger organisations, with paid staff and more hierarchical structures which have set volunteer roles. The home-grown framework is described as smaller, more egalitarian, where the roles are more likely to be matched to the volunteer.

Power, privilege and prejudice must be addressed for inclusion to thrive.

The anti-racism movement has highlighted issues within the voluntary sector that relate to volunteering as well as wider issues. The [Home Truths report](#) reminds us that these issues are about power and privilege. It notes the need for 'top levels of charities to make space for marginalised people and those with lived experience.' It also underlines the need to move away from past approaches in creating an inclusive environment for people, including volunteers.

This is echoed in Helen Timbrell's⁴ research which shows how volunteers are often unclear as to what their organisations are doing in relation to diversity. Her report also highlights that white volunteers are often ignorant about the barriers faced by ethnic minorities and black people.

² Lukka, P. and Ellis Paine, A. (2001) 'An Exclusive Construct? Exploring different cultural concepts of volunteering' *Voluntary Action* 3(3).

³ Rochester, C., Paine, A.E. and Howlett, S. (2010) *Volunteering and Society in the 21st Century*, Palgrave Macmillan.

⁴ Timbrell, H. (2020) *What the bloody hell are you doing here? A comparative study of the experiences of*

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and White volunteers in four organisations.

'Without meaningful change, the sector as it stands cannot be fit for purpose.'

Organisational approaches to diversity are changing.

Looking back over the last twenty years, it was common for organisations to focus diversity efforts on policies and strategies to promote diversity, rather than a focus on creating an inclusive environment for volunteers.

The Equality Act of 2010 also helped to push organisations forward on their journey towards diversity. Although this legislation does not directly apply to volunteering, it has been a factor in shifting the context.

There have also been discussions about the business case for diversity linked to discourses around social corporate responsibility and a societal shift for mainstream organisations to acknowledge the importance of diversity and inclusion in their work and as part of their values.

Many organisations have been discussing how to make sure that volunteering is open to all, with varying degrees of success, but often these internal discussions are not communicated to wider stakeholders or the public.

Research findings about volunteering and diversity have been consistent over time.

There has been a plethora of small-scale research projects and reports related to specific groups volunteering. The Institute

for Volunteering Research has produced several research reports over the last two decades related to the topic, including an exploration of the link between volunteering and social exclusion and the 'changing and non-changing faces of volunteering' as well as numerous related practical guides such as how to monitor volunteer demographics.

The findings from this literature are somewhat consistent with more recent literature on inclusive volunteering. This leads us to ask if organisations are uninformed about what works, unable to implement best practice or uninterested in change.

Volunteer Centres have a track record of recruiting and supporting under-represented people to volunteer.

Research⁵ related to volunteering infrastructure has shown that Volunteer Centres are often in a position to support and recruit people who are under-represented as volunteers, who are new to volunteering or who are from disadvantaged or vulnerable groups. It has not been uncommon for Volunteer Centres to run supported volunteering schemes and to recruit people who may not have the resources (such as access to the internet or technology) to volunteer. Additionally, the same research found that Volunteer Centres registered twice the number of black people in proportion to its population and young people were more likely to use their services.

LGBT volunteering and infrastructure engagement in Greater London, The Consortium of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Voluntary and Community Organisations.

People want to volunteer in ways that resonate with what matters to them and this might mean getting involved in groups that reflect their identity.

We know from NCVO UK Civil Society Almanac data that the voluntary sector is hugely diverse and that most organisations are very small and completely volunteer run and led. We also know that some of those organisations serve very specific communities and sub-sectors, eg the Sikh community, people with visual impairments, Bangladeshi young people in Tower Hamlets, older Afro-Caribbean people with Dementia; while others are broader, eg National Trust and Citizens Advice.

There is evidence⁶ showing that some volunteers tend to volunteer within settings where there is a shared identity; for example, LGBTQI+ organisations having a high proportion of LGBTQI+ volunteers, people with mental ill health volunteering with mental health charities or mosques with community centres having a high proportion of Muslim volunteers.

Organisations that serve minority communities tend to attract volunteers from those groups in larger numbers. Organisations that serve mainly minority interests (such as the ones described above) also tend to be smaller organisations outside of the mainstream voluntary sector.

⁷ McCabe, A., Wilson, M. and Ellis Paine, A. (2020) *Rapid Research COVID 19 Stepping up and helping out: grassroots volunteering in response to COVID-19*, Briefing 6, Local Trust.

Social capital and volunteer characteristics can have an impact on volunteering.

There is some evidence in the social capital literature that groups which have shared characteristics allow for more in-group bonding (and potentially exclude others). More diverse groups are potentially more challenging and less comfortable, but may be better for social cohesion and social mobility.

Those with fewer resources are less likely to be get involved, meaning that volunteering can reinforce wider inequalities.

The Pathways through participation research showed that participation requires resources (practical resources such as time, money and health; learnt resources like skills, knowledge, and experience; and felt resources such as confidence and sense of efficacy) in addition to opportunity, and so people with fewer resources may be at a disadvantage for volunteering. The research also showed know that in order to continue volunteering, people need a good quality experience, but resources remain key.

More recent research⁷ has shown that volunteering can reinforce inequalities by creating unequal relationships between people who are helping and those who are helped, and it may be that mutual aid and less formal participation and support between neighbours may lessen this effect. This would be an interesting area for further research but is beyond the scope of this report.

⁵ Paine, A.E. and Donahue, K. (2008) *London Volunteering Health Check: All fit for 2012?* Institute for Volunteering Research, London.

⁶ Donahue, K. (2007) *Opportunities for All:*

The involvement of volunteers with lived experience is growing.

There has been a trend, particularly related to the health sector, towards engaging volunteers with lived experience (eg women who have struggled with post-natal depression) as well as engaging service users as volunteers. Many organisations have acknowledged the benefits of this approach, including creating services that are better at meeting the needs of the community.

A lack of diversity in leadership can impact on the diversity of an organisations volunteer base.

For example, if we look at mainstream organisations, particularly larger national charities, they are often led by white, non-disabled people from higher socio-economic groups. More broadly, a [recent review](#) found that people from BAME backgrounds accounted for 16% of CEOs in the sector, 10% of senior leaders and 15% of trustees. Women are also under-represented in charity leadership.

There are gaps in research, particularly related to LGBTQI+ and disabled volunteers.

Volunteering research within the LGBTQI+ community is limited but there has been, for example, research commissioned by infrastructure organisation the [Consortium for Stronger LGBT+ Communities](#) (serving over 400 LGBT+ groups in the UK) focused on LGBT volunteering in London. There are also several related toolkits (for example *vol'n'queer*; a toolkit to help organisations recruit LGBT volunteers⁸ and Stonewall's

Citizenship 21 guide to active citizenship for LGBT people⁹).

The *London LGBT community and voluntary sector almanac*¹⁰ from 2012 includes research about LGBTQI+ volunteers. This research concludes that some of the unique characteristics of LGBTQI+ volunteers include the need to create positive identity-affirming spaces and networks as a motivation.

The numbers of LGBTQI+ volunteers in mainstream organisations is not well known as these volunteers are sometimes less visible and many organisations do not monitor the sexual orientation of their volunteers.

There is also both a lack of disaggregated data and research related to the needs and barriers of volunteers with physical or mental impairments.

3.2. Who participates and who doesn't?

There continues to be inequalities in *who* volunteers through groups, clubs and organisations.

Research over recent decades has consistently demonstrated that as well as continued participation levels, those who are participating also remains largely unchanged with some groups less likely to participate than others. *Time Well Spent* data has largely confirmed findings from previous research in this area.

This was confirmed in our own *Time Well Spent* research, which showed that recent volunteers are more likely to be older, from higher socio-economic groups, female and educated and that those who have never volunteered are more likely to be younger, from lower socio-economic groups, male, unemployed or not working, living in an urban area and educated to a lower level.

Despite these findings, almost three-quarters of volunteers (73%) agreed that 'there was a wide range of backgrounds among those who volunteered' with them.

Figure 1: Volunteering by characteristics

Recent volunteers (last 12 months) are more likely to be:

- 65+ years old
- from higher socio-economic groups (ABC1)
- educated to a higher level
- female
- retired or working part time (< 8 hours)
- living in town and fringe, or rural area

Those who have never volunteered are more likely to be:

- 25-54 years old
- from lower socio-economic groups (C2DE)
- educated to a lower level
- male
- unemployed or not working
- living in urban area

(Source: *Time Well Spent*, 2019)

⁸ Macguire, A.M. (2009) *vol-n-queer toolkit*, Yorkshire MESMAC.

⁹ Egan, B. and Lee, S. (2002) *Get Involved: A guide to active citizenship for LGBT people*, Stonewall.

¹⁰ Centred (2012) *The London LGBT Voluntary and Community Sector Almanac, Second Edition* (centred.org.uk)

people from lower socio-economic groups and found that they are less likely to volunteer and yet potentially have the most to gain in terms of the benefits of volunteering. Related to this has been research on volunteering as a gateway to employment and in increasing skills and confidence of young people. The more recent #Iwill campaign was launched in 2013 to link young people to social action and organisations.

The most significant differences between volunteers and non-volunteers relate to socio-economic status and education levels.

The *Time Well Spent* research found that the most notable difference between those who volunteer and those who do not relates to socio-economic status. People from higher socio-economic groups were more likely than those from lower grades to be recent volunteers (44% vs 30%) and frequent volunteers (30% vs 19%). Those from lower socio-economic groups were most likely to say they had never volunteered (40% vs 25%).

Additionally, those with higher educational qualifications were more likely to have volunteered recently than those with lower educational qualifications. For example, 48% of those educated to degree level or above had volunteered recently, compared with 20% of those with no qualifications.

The ‘civic core’¹¹ that comprises the most engaged is made up of people who are more likely to be from managerial and professional occupations and who have higher educational qualifications.

‘Charities are inflexible and inaccessible for diverse volunteers - many people can’t afford to do unpaid work which means that volunteers tend to be better-off financially (ie middle-class).’ (Expert interview)

Full time workers are less likely to have volunteered recently than those working part time, retired people and students.

People who are unemployed or not working (eg no need to work or are unable to work) were most likely to say they had never volunteered (both 42%) and showed the lowest recent participation rates overall (both 28%) and for frequent volunteering (both 18%). People working full time were less likely to have volunteered in the last year (35%) than those working part time for 8–29 hours a week (41%) or fewer than eight hours a week (53%). They were also less likely to volunteer than retired people (44%) or full-time students (42%).

Those working part time (fewer than eight hours a week) and retired people were most likely to report consistent involvement over their lifetime (34% and 28%). Retired people were the most likely to say they had always been heavily involved or more heavily than lightly involved (23%).

Women are more engaged than men, but this is likely related to their working patterns.

When we look at just full-time workers, part-time workers and the unemployed, we see no differences in the propensity of men and women to volunteer. A greater proportion of women than men work part time and part-time workers were more likely to volunteer. This may explain the slightly higher instance of volunteering among women.

Men were more likely to say they have never volunteered than women (34% vs 29%) and men who have volunteered at some point were more likely than women to say they have been hardly involved throughout their life (23% vs 19%).

Participation by ethnicity shows a mixed picture of volunteering.

Time Well Spent data found that ethnicity has little bearing on overall propensity to volunteer. Rates of volunteering were similar for people who were white and people from BAME backgrounds with 38% and 36% having respectively volunteered at least once in the last 12 months; this was similar across individual ethnic groups as well as overall.

It also found that people from BAME backgrounds may be less likely to volunteer frequently, however low base sizes among BAME respondents, especially among those who are older, means the data was not conclusive. People’s participation over the course of their life was similar between

those from BAME backgrounds and white ethnic groups.

The ABC of BAME¹² research found that as an aggregate, black and minority ethnic people volunteer less frequently compared to white British counterparts, and lower income BAME groups are even less likely to volunteer. This research shows that participation by form and type of organisation may vary across ethnic groups and there are differences when this is broken down by specific groups and gender.

The research indicates that there is an under-representation of British asians in volunteering and particularly of women in this category. It shows that the under-representation of asian people in volunteering drives the lower likelihood of volunteering at the aggregate BAME level.

According to *Time Well Spent* data, BAME volunteers were more likely to volunteer for religious causes than white volunteers (19% and 10% respectively) and to cite their religious belief as a factor in their decision to volunteer.

Most religions encourage their followers to be of service to others in some form. For example, the Sikh community has the concept of Seva as central to the religion. Some of this faith-based service may take the form of less formal types of helping while some faith-based organisations have extensive volunteering programmes, community centres and networks.

¹¹ Mohan, J. and Bulloch, S. L. (2012) ‘The idea of a “civic core”: What are the overlaps between charitable giving, volunteering, and civic participation in England and Wales?’ Third Sector

Research Centre Working Paper 73. <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/tsrc/working-papers/working-paper-73.pdf>

¹² Hylton, K., Lawton, R., Watt, W., Wright, H. and Williams, K. (2019) *The ABC of BAME New, mixed method research into Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic*

groups and their motivations and barriers to volunteering. Project Report. Jump Projects.

Chart 1: Volunteer status by characteristics

	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	BAME (all)	White	All ethnicities
	(213)	(73)	(126)	(52)	(464)	(9,606)	(10,103)
Recent (volunteered in last 12 months)	33	32	39	43	36	38	38
Recent and frequent (volunteered in last 12 months, at least once a month)	15	21	23	21	19	26	26
Never volunteered	35	37	34	23	34	31	31

(Source: Time Well Spent, 2019)

Black and minority ethnic communities in the UK have long histories of activism, peer support and self-help. The black and minority ethnic voluntary and community sector was built on the foundations of activist networks going as far back as the 1950s and 60s and stemmed from the need for infrastructure to support communities that had been neglected by mainstream institutions, as illustrated by the [Communities Inc's project](#) on the story of Black Community Activism in the East Midlands over the last 60 years.

There is little variation based on disability overall, though some by age.

People who reported that their day-to-day activities were limited in some way because of a disability were no more or less likely to

be recent volunteers (39%) than people who reported that their activities were not limited in any way (38%). Disabled respondents were slightly more likely to be frequent volunteers (27% vs 25%).

However, these figures mask significant variation by age. Young disabled people (those aged 18–24 and 25–34) were more likely to have volunteered recently and frequently than non-disabled people of the same age, and older disabled people (55+) were less likely to have volunteered recently than non-disabled people of the same age. This could be reflective of the types of disability experienced by each age group or the different impact disability has on people as they get older.

Some have questioned the accessibility of volunteering and it is possible that covid-19 has, in some ways, made volunteering more accessible for disabled people due to an increase in remote volunteering and online volunteering. This would be an important area for further research.

‘Diversity is important to our organisation, but we do not attract a wide range of participants. Our activities are open to all, but the majority of our activities are attended by a small range of society. Our aim is that our events are inclusive to all as we want all sectors of society to connect with their environment.’ (Senior Programmes Manager: Volunteering, environmental charity)

Participation levels overall and by demographics have remained relatively unchanged over recent years.

According to the [2019/20 Community Life Survey](#), levels of volunteer participation have remained relatively steady between 2013/14 and 2019/20. Community Life Survey also shows that participation by key characteristics (eg age, ethnicity and gender) have also remained largely unchanged over the same period. This shows that despite efforts from organisations to increase the diversity of their volunteer base, there are persistent differences in who volunteers in the sector.

3.3. In what setting are people more likely to volunteer?

Diversity varies by type of participation and wider context.

The mixed picture in relation to ethnicity highlights a wider reality - that participation varies greatly. *Time Well Spent* highlighted some common features in how people volunteer, but also showed that the reality is often far more complex – volunteers combine different types of activity, cause, organisation, frequency and intensity of involvement, which reflects their own lifestyle and life stage, values and interests.

People’s lives and priorities change and, consequently, the ways they get involved may change too. This can also be influenced by the wider context – for example, the covid-19 pandemic has impacted on who volunteered and what activities they got involved in (see [spotlight on volunteer participation during the covid-19 pandemic](#)). So, while there are clear overall patterns of participation, this variability should not be ignored.

There are some notable differences by type of activities undertaken.

Volunteers were involved in a range of activities, most commonly relating to organising events (39%), administration (28%), raising money and taking part in sponsored events (27%) and getting others involved (27%). People mainly volunteered locally, in their own neighbourhoods (81%).

Those over 65 were most likely (than other age groups) to be helping with secretarial or administration (35%), leading an organisation or being a trustee or member of a committee (27%) and handling money

(19%). This is likely to be explained primarily by the higher proportion of older volunteers who volunteer frequently and are from a higher social grade.

One of the more common activities among the youngest age group (18–24) was befriending and mentoring, which around one in five (23%) of this age group were involved in; this ranked lower among other age groups.

Volunteering is more likely to involve a mix of online and offline activities (57%) than one or the other. Very few people volunteer exclusively online (6%). Disabled people were more likely to volunteer exclusively online (10%) than non-disabled people (4%), and this was even higher among those whose day-to-day activities were limited a lot because of a health problem or disability (16%). Disabled volunteers were also more likely to be often or very often online, indicating that online volunteering may be providing a means for disabled people to get involved or may indicate higher levels of exclusion for volunteers with disabilities.

Those aged over 55 were least likely to volunteer exclusively online, with 3% of this age group volunteering in this way, but otherwise there were few differences across age groups.

Older age groups were more likely to volunteer in their own neighbourhoods (88% of those aged 55+) than those aged under 55, the biggest contrast being with 25–34 year-olds (69%). Volunteers aged 25–34, on the other hand, were the most likely to give time outside their

neighbourhood (36%) or outside the UK (6%).

Areas or causes varied by age and gender but less so across other demographic groups.

Men and women broadly supported similar causes. However, some notable differences included women being more likely than men to volunteer in children’s education or schools (16% vs 10%) and youth or children’s activities outside of school (16% vs 12%). Men were more likely to be involved in sports or exercise (20% vs 11%), which was the most common cause among male volunteers. They were also more likely to be involved in politics (13% vs 6%).

There are fewer differences in the areas or causes that people volunteer for by other demographic groups, including social grade, level of educational qualifications and ethnicity.

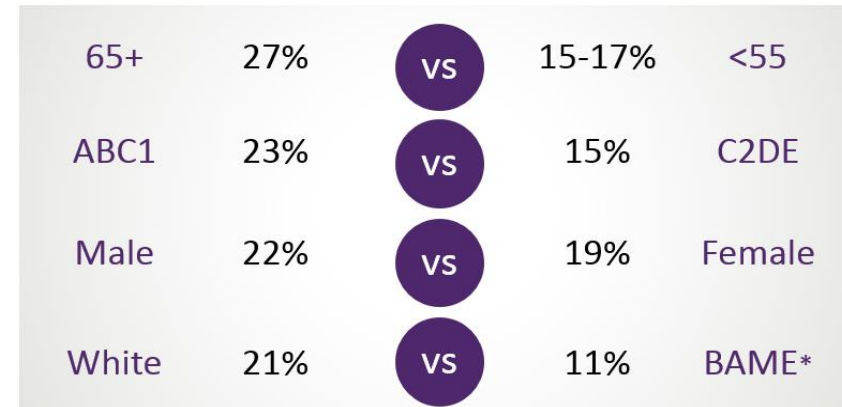
Inequalities are evident particularly in leadership or representative roles.

Time Well Spent highlighted that among those from lower socio-economic groups, as well as being more likely to have never volunteered, are less likely to undertake activities that involve organising and leading (for example being a trustee or member of a committee) if they do volunteer.

Women are less likely than men to be involved in representative roles, such as representing the organisation at meetings or events.

Figure 2: Proportion of recent volunteers who lead an organisation, are trustees or members of a committee, by characteristics

20% of recent volunteers lead an organisation, are trustees or members of a committee



*Caution should be taken due to low base sizes (Source: *Time Well Spent*, 2019)

The organisation, *Getting on Board* has been working to develop practical approaches which can improve the diversity of charity boards. In their 2017 research, they reported that 90% of charities recruited most of their trustees through word-of-mouth and existing networks, leading directly to chronic diversity problems at board level with men outnumbering women by two-thirds; the average age of trustees 55-64; and people of colour representing just 9% of trustees¹³.

‘It is of course common sense that if you recruit by "asking around" from a trustee base

which is whiter, older and more male than wider society, those that are recruited are most likely to be from similar groups.’ (CEO, trustee body)

Some activities and settings are likely to be more inclusive than others.

There are different levels of formality within volunteering settings, ranging from large organisations with paid staff and more formal policies and procedures, to more informal grassroots community groups. Formal volunteering processes, such as having an interview before starting to

¹³Charity Commission (2017), *Taken on Trust: awareness and effectiveness of charity trustees in England and Wales*

volunteer or role-specific training, are more common in certain settings and activities, eg where there are safeguarding risks.

We know that larger mainstream organisations are more likely to have volunteering infrastructure in place. This could be a volunteer manager and other paid staff who recruit and support volunteers. However, for many, the journey into and through volunteering is characterised by informal processes or ad-hoc organising.

There has been some debate in recent years between the home-grown model of volunteering (which builds volunteer roles around the individual), and the modern volunteer model (which recruits volunteers around pre-defined roles) (see [section 3.1](#)). Informal feedback from organisations indicates that the home-grown model may be more inclusive, however the modern model is potentially easier to manage.

3.4. How satisfied are volunteers and why?

Some groups are more likely to be more satisfied than others.

Overall satisfaction with volunteering is very high: 96% of recent volunteers say they are very or fairly satisfied. Almost seven in ten (69%) have already or would recommend their volunteering.

Older volunteers aged 55 and over are more likely to report being satisfied than younger volunteers. This gap was most visible for those who were very satisfied: 62% of volunteers aged 55 and over, 43% of those aged 18—34 and 46% of those aged 35—44.

While generally, higher satisfaction levels mean that volunteers are more likely to recommend volunteering to others, this is not the case for older volunteers. Those aged 45—54 (27%) and 55 and over (27%) were more likely to say they had not and were not likely to recommend their volunteering in the future than those aged 18—34 (19%).

Young people, BAME volunteers and disabled people are having less positive experiences of volunteering.

Time Well Spent highlighted that while volunteering is generally a positive experience, some volunteers have a less positive experience. This includes younger, disabled or BAME volunteers for a range of reasons. Our research into diversity and volunteering found that factors such as a lack of flexibility and attitudes of other volunteers may be contributing to this (see more on this in [section 6](#)).

Overall, satisfaction among BAME volunteers was lower than among white volunteers (91% vs 96%).

This difference was seen over a range of factors. BAME volunteers were:

- less likely to agree that getting involved was easy and straightforward (83% vs 91%)
- more likely to agree the organisation they mainly volunteered for could be ‘much better organised’ (49% vs 34%)
- much more likely to agree that the organisation was too structured (36% vs 12%), there was too much bureaucracy (34% vs 24%) and too much concern about risk (34% vs 15%).

This group were also less likely to agree that they received enough recognition (73% vs

84%) and were less likely to feel they ‘belong’ in their main organisation (77% vs 85%). BAME volunteers were also more likely to report negative experiences, including feeling unappreciated and excluded.

BAME volunteers were more likely to report tensions and conflict within the organisation (37% vs 28%) and less likely to feel they volunteered within a culture of respect (81% vs 88%). Given all this, it is perhaps not surprising that those from BAME backgrounds were less likely than white volunteers to say they planned to continue volunteering in future (73% vs 81%).

Because the profile of BAME volunteers is younger, and younger volunteers tend to be less satisfied with certain aspects of their experience of volunteering, we should interpret these findings with caution.

Key aspects of the volunteer experience strongly associated with being satisfied include having a culture of respect and trust, feeling well supported, being recognised, and feeling that they belong to the organisation. On the other hand, volunteers were much less likely to be satisfied where they felt things could be much better organised or the organisation wasn’t going anywhere.

Almost three in ten (28%) volunteers reported tensions and conflicts within their organisation. There were some demographic variations, including: men were more likely to report tensions and conflict than women (32% vs 25%), and disabled volunteers were more likely to report tensions and conflict than non-disabled volunteers (32% vs 26%).

Disabled volunteers were more likely to say volunteering had negatively impacted their health and wellbeing than non-disabled volunteers (16% vs 9%).

A lack of flexible opportunities (17%) and a lack of opportunities that matched skills, interests or experience (17%) were cited as barriers for potential volunteers.

Among those who hadn’t volunteered in the past and who felt they could be encouraged to volunteer, being flexible with the time committed was the key factor cited by all groups, whether they had volunteered or not (50%). Flexibility of the role (40%) and being asked directly to get involved in volunteering (28%) were also important factors. Being asked directly to volunteer was more likely to encourage women than men (52% vs 48%); similar differences were seen for being flexible about the way they volunteered (43% vs 36%).

Disabled respondents were more likely to be encouraged by transport being provided than non-disabled respondents (20% vs 12%). This was the same for those who were unemployed or not working (25% and 21 vs 10% of those in full-time work).

Spotlight: Volunteer participation during the covid-19 pandemic

Emerging evidence suggests that formal volunteering has decreased during the pandemic, while informal volunteering has increased

According to the [Community Life covid-19 Re-contact Survey](#), in England during March to July 2020, 27% formally volunteered at least once during that period, and 57% informally volunteered at least once. During 2019-2020, the [Community Life Survey](#) reported that 37% formally and 53% informally volunteered at least once during the year. This suggests that while the proportion of those formally volunteering seems to have decreased during covid-19, informal volunteering seems to have increased during the pandemic.

The impact of covid-19 on volunteer participation and organisations has been varied

While some organisations were able to move their volunteering online or remotely, others were forced to stop involving volunteers completely. Yet, at the same time people across the country signed up to a range of local and national initiatives to help out, including people who had not volunteered before. In addition to the hundreds of mutual aid groups that emerged as soon as the first lockdown was announced, over 750,000 people came forward to take part in the [NHS Volunteer Responder scheme](#) within days of its launch.

‘Much of our volunteering activity was suspended in the early days of covid-19 because so many roles are face to face. Gradually over the last seven months we have been able to diversity our activities to ones that can be safely carried out from a volunteer’s home or ones that do not involve face to face meetings.’ **(Volunteer Co-ordinator, housing organisation)**

Covid-19 restrictions have disproportionately impacted older volunteers

According to the [Community Life Survey](#), 31% of those who formally volunteer regularly (ie at least once a month) were aged 65—74 and 25% were aged over 75. If the latest UK population estimates are applied, there are just over 2 million volunteers aged 65—74 and around 1.4 million volunteers aged over 75. However, with lockdown restrictions and social distancing measures, many have been encouraged to stay at home, particularly those aged over 70, and not been able to volunteer.

Online volunteering has had mixed results on improving the diversity of volunteers

Covid-19 has accelerated existing volunteering trends related to the development of both online volunteering and micro-volunteering with people doing small, time-limited tasks that can easily fit around existing commitments, such as work or family life. The use of digital technologies has enabled some groups who were previously excluded from volunteering to get involved more flexibly and in a way that suited them. Prior to the pandemic, [Time Well Spent](#) had shown that disabled volunteers were more likely to volunteer online than non-disabled volunteers. So, it is possible that covid-19 may have further increased the range of online volunteering opportunities available to disabled people and had a positive impact on disabled volunteer participation levels, but further research is needed to explore this more.

‘Online digital platforms and telephone buddying schemes have allowed people with disabilities unable to leave their homes or those who were shielding more of an opportunity to get involved although there were a limited amount of these roles available. There has been more “thinking outside the box” for example “micro volunteering” dividing up volunteering roles which has the potential to open up more opportunities for a wider cohort of people.’ **(Volunteering Lead, county council)**

However, we recognise that online volunteering can exclude people and reinforce inequalities. Many do not own digital devices or have access to the internet or the skills or confidence to engage online. We know, for example, that digital exclusion is more likely to affect older people or those on low income. Online volunteering can also be an issue for other groups who don't feel safe or are unable to volunteer from home. For instance, some of the LGBTQI+ organisations we spoke to reported that some volunteers (particularly those who are not 'out of the closet' at home) feel that by not being in the building, they have lost the 'safe space' to volunteer.

Keeping volunteers engaged remotely is a challenge

For many volunteers, the social aspect of volunteering is a big driver and maintaining this aspect of volunteering alive has been difficult in the context of the pandemic. While the use of digital tools such as Zoom calls and Facebook groups have helped to maintain links with volunteers and to support them, many volunteers have missed face to face interactions.

A lot of volunteers have said that they think there should be alternatives in place during the covid-19 pandemic, but they do want to go back to volunteering [and] meeting people at groups when it is safe to do so. In future I can see a role for both remote and face to face volunteering as they both have a lot of value for individuals we support and volunteers, potentially increasing diversity and making volunteering more flexible **(Volunteering and Co-production Co-ordinator, social service organisation)**

Volunteering remains a moving picture

Covid-19 may have led to an increase in the total number of volunteers and brought a new cohort of people to volunteering (including people on furlough), but according to [Local Trust](#) research it remains to be seen whether these new volunteers will continue being involved after the pandemic. The rise of flexible volunteer options that are easy to engage with may help sustain their involvement. However, priorities of volunteers may shift, particularly in view of the difficult economic times ahead. In the future, more people may not be able to afford to volunteer or may need to prioritise getting paid work and this is likely to have a negative impact on the diversity of volunteering.

4. HOW DIVERSITY IS VIEWED BY ORGANISATIONS

This section looks at organisational understandings and perceptions of diversity and volunteering and how this sits within their context and structure.

Most of the findings for this section come from workshop data collected January to March 2020.

4.1. How diversity is talked about and what it means to organisations

Organisations use a variety of different terms to talk about this topic, with diversity and inclusion most commonly used.

Qualitative data gathered in this research from staff and leaders of organisations tells us about what diversity, particularly in relation to volunteering, means to them. Workshop participants described numerous terms that they use, including diversity, inclusion, equality, belonging, respect, equity, liberation, inclusivity, EDI (equity, diversity and inclusion), openness, differentiation, community engagement, hard to reach groups, people seldom heard, disadvantaged and overcoming barriers.

Diversity and inclusion are the most commonly used terms, but in many organisations multiple terms are used.

Some organisations distinguish terms more clearly than others – and use them in different ways.

There is wide variation between organisations' use and understanding of terms in relation to diversity. Sometimes this varies within organisations and between people as well. For example, different teams and staff members may have different levels of understanding of diversity. If an organisation is not clear about its use of these terms or what diversity means to them, there will likely be misunderstandings and misconceptions internally.

Organisations who have a diversity or inclusion strategy have likely had internal discussions, analysis of data and planning sessions that have mapped out issues such as who they are referring to when talking about diversity and what the term means for volunteering.

Some respondents felt that their volunteer programme or opportunities were 'open to everyone' and were not clear about what diversity might look like within their volunteering base or had not been able to explore this further.

We take a very broad and inclusive view of diversity including people on low incomes, people living in rural areas who can become isolated, etc. and we

try to make volunteering possible for all these groups. We understand that carers are not homogenous; their experiences and demographic vary. Therefore, in all that we do we try to be as diverse as possible in our approach so that we can support and be there for all carers.

(Senior Membership & Volunteering Officer, carers charity)

One of the key distinctions some organisations made was between diversity and inclusion (inclusion being used in a wider sense of creating a welcoming and open environment for everyone who volunteers). Two separate respondents spoke about the importance of inclusion, which they said results in diversity.

Diversity for us means difference. We want our units and members to recognise and embrace the common differences that exist among people, such as their age, ethnicity, sexuality, gender or religion. As an organisation, we recognise the important difference between diversity and

inclusion, and place a big emphasis on inclusion. When we talk about inclusion, we're talking about all members feeling an equal sense of belonging and receiving tailored support to reach their maximum potential. **(Inclusion Project Manager, youth organisation)**

For some organisations, diversity meant that volunteers are a reflection of who the service users or stakeholders of the organisation are.

Diversity to our volunteering service means having a volunteering population that reflects our patient population. This entails having a responsive and flexible service that empowers volunteers from a wide variety of backgrounds and abilities to volunteer. **(Volunteering Services Manager, NHS foundation trust)**

Talking about diversity is a ‘starting point’ – but there are differing levels of confidence when it comes to knowing *how* to talk about issues relating to diversity.

Most of the organisations and staff we spoke to felt that it was important to their organisation to talk about diversity. However, there was variation in the confidence levels of staff as to how to support these discussions internally and with volunteers.

Some organisations at very early stages of addressing diversity issues lack confidence around terminology and have fears about ‘getting it wrong’ stemming from concerns about causing offence. Using the ‘right’ language came up repeatedly as a barrier to progress and some volunteer managers clearly feel they need more support, knowledge and training around this issue.

Organisations view diversity in relation to their values, actions and outcomes.

When participants talked about what diversity (and related terms) meant to their organisation, three main perspectives stood out.

Some viewed diversity in terms of their **organisational values** – and how these values are reflected in the organisation’s. For example, recognising, accepting and embracing people’s differences (across a range of different factors) and being welcoming, inclusive and friendly as an organisation. This also includes organisations that see EDI as part of their wider commitment to social justice and equality.

Diversity is one of five key values which were chosen by staff, volunteers and members in 2018

and is something that we as an organisation are consistently working towards. We look to represent the local community with diversity and equality amongst age, ethnicity, gender and ward. We are an all-inclusive organisation and we like to encourage our visually impaired members to also volunteer. **(Volunteer co-ordinator, health organisation)**

Others focused on the **actions and approach** that their organisation undertook in addressing issues in this area, for example through gathering monitoring data, delivering specific programmes or initiatives, having a team leading on this area, or having a diversity strategy.

We have an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion team, the naming of which gives an insight into our stance. Our approach is human rights focused, for example citing the social model of disability. We have an Equality Strategy, and network groups for staff and volunteers who identify as BAME, disabled, LGB, or Trans and non-binary. **(Volunteer co-ordinator, advice charity)**

Others looked at it in terms of outcomes or what ‘getting it right’ enabled them to achieve as an organisation – for example, providing services in an accessible manner

and being more relevant to the wider community, or meeting statutory duties.

We are a stronger, bolder and more confident organisation when we embrace diversity. Having people with a diverse range of experiences and views will mean that we are able to deliver on content that is meaningful to a diverse range of people and creates a more welcoming environment to a wider range of people. **(Learning co-ordinator, museum)**

Organisations recognise that diversity includes a wide range of factors.

When reflecting on what diversity (and related terms) means, most organisations acknowledged that it covers many different aspects such as age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability and religion, but also more widely diversity of thought and background, experience, and education. However, to some organisations, diversity has a narrower focus. For some, it is used as a shorthand term for ethnic minorities, while others see it as encompassing only age and gender or creating accessible spaces for disabled people. While diversity is not a synonym for ethnic minority groups, the current anti-racism movement may be unwittingly reinforcing this idea.

Diversity is all about having a varied mix of people from different backgrounds who can all contribute their skills, cultural awareness, knowledge and experiences. It brings a variety of

perspectives and allows us to deliver better results. **(People and Project Manager, employment and skills organisation)**

4.2. How diversity ‘fits’ within the organisation

Some organisations have dedicated ‘EDI’ teams or roles, but for many participants, diversity is one of many areas within their role or remit.

Larger and more well-resourced organisations tend to have a dedicated role or team working on diversity for the whole organisation and these staff tend to work across all teams and with volunteers. Where dedicated roles were in place, some had been recruited recently (within the last year or so), possibly reflecting a growing interest in this area.

Some organisations put diversity roles within HR teams, and these would support both staff and volunteers.

But for many respondents, diversity and inclusion is one of many areas within a role or remit that is often considered already overloaded and unrealistic. Typically, volunteer managers lack capacity, many are part time, and their role includes all aspects of volunteer recruitment and management. Some volunteer management staff are supported by wider organisational structures, but others feel more that it ‘sits with them’ and is largely driven (or not driven) by individual priorities and capacity.

Organisations have a variety of practical measures in place focusing on diversity – but culture matters just as much as policies and data.

All colleagues and volunteers can bring their whole selves to work; intersectionality, diversity and difference is celebrated, and everyone is treated with dignity and respect. (Head of Volunteering, disability charity)

Many organisations talked about having diversity and equality policies and processes in place and offering related training. But there was also a recognition for the need to have an organisational culture that actively supports diversity and inclusion across the organisation. Examples from respondents included having shared organisational values that promote diversity and inclusion, internal networks for different groups within the organisation and platforms for people to share personal experiences.

Within some organisations, diversity was part of the wider organisational strategy – this tended to be in organisations where the work on diversity was driven by the organisation rather than individuals.

Since the recent anti-racism movements, organisations were more likely to talk about the importance of embedding diversity within their organisation.

Some respondents were keen to look at organisational or volunteering culture and how that relates to institutional and systemic racism. This has been driven at least in part, by the global anti-racism movement. These respondents showed a desire to look at their origins, dismantle power structures and redistribute power to service users.

Many organisations talked of wanting to have a ‘whole-organisation’ approach to diversity in volunteering (see [our diagram on embedding diversity](#)), and the challenges around fully embedding this. Organisations spoke frequently about wanting to change organisational culture to promote diversity and inclusion.

While there is a drive to embed diversity in some organisations (and the wider sector), competing priorities in light of covid-19 have meant that some respondents do not have the resources needed to fully embed inclusion in the ways that they feel would be most effective (eg not able to commission specialists or consultants) and instead must rely on internal networks or HR staff. This challenge was mentioned in some interviews that took place during the pandemic.

Embedding diversity and inclusion within organisations can also be challenging in organisations with leaders who have been at the helm for many years. Organisations noted that these leaders are sometimes too embedded in the ‘old culture’ to want to make any lasting change.

Spotlight: The impact of global anti-racism movements and volunteering in the UK

Since the death of George Floyd in police custody in America in May 2020, activists have sparked a global anti-racism movement that has inspired many in the UK voluntary sector to do more to combat structural racism within their organisations. The impact of this movement was noted by organisations we interviewed in the second half of the year. Some organisations felt that the issues in relation to volunteering and diversity might have a greater chance of being addressed in the current climate. Wider society was seen as being more willing to look at structural racism and to create more inclusive environments, including for volunteering. Some organisations felt ready to look inward and to evaluate their practices and how they may be contributing to or supporting structural racism and inequality.

Respondents reported that, while some organisations were engaging in these changes in a tokenistic way, others were taking serious actions to make change happen, so that their volunteers would be more reflective of their service users or community. These organisations were often working to dismantle existing power structures and dynamics within their organisation that contributed to structural inequalities and reinforced 'otherness' and disempowerment. They were also seeking to address unjust power imbalances that were rooted in colonialism and paternalism and lead to oppression and discrimination. For organisations already fully engaged and working to tackle racism, such as UK Black Pride, the impact of the anti-racism movement was perhaps less of a turning point but more an inspiration to do even more or to focus on intersectionality and engaging service users with the least power (such as trans people of colour).

Protests by Black Lives Matter campaigners and the wider global anti-racism movement were seen as bigger drivers for diversity and inclusion than covid-19. However, covid-19 and the lockdowns had allowed some organisations to have more time to reflect on these issues and their organisational culture around volunteering.

'Black Lives Matter was a big driver in thinking about our diversity approach (as we imagine most organisations are doing right now also). Our CEO put out a passionate letter to staff in response to the Black Lives Matter protests in London, and this was sent to volunteers as well... As a result of the [anti-racism] movement, we have started doing things to celebrate Black History Month, and volunteers have been engaged with this also.' **(Volunteers Services Manager, environmental organisation)**

'I think that Black Lives Matter has caused the sector to reflect on diversity differently, however, much of the work feels performative and fails to address the inherent power dynamics that exist within the third sector, but that being said it is leading some to be more critical in their thinking around diversity which can only be a good thing.' **(Expert interview)**

Case example:

SPEAR (a London-based charity assisting people experiencing homelessness) has actively embraced the Black Lives Matter movement. The organisation has established a diversity committee which includes black and minority ethnic members of staff and has set up a committee for gender and age diversification. Staff developed a Yammer feed during Black History Month which supports and encourages conversations around diversity. These initiatives are staff-based, not volunteer based. After attending the NCVO diversity workshop, the organisation was inspired to continue building on the 'face' of SPEAR by including more diverse and minority photos on its website, all its social media platforms and in leaflets and pamphlets. After lockdown ends, the organisation hopes to give talks with diverse community groups within its operating area to actively encourage volunteering from different demographics.

5. ORGANISATIONAL EXPERIENCES WITH DIVERSITY AND VOLUNTEERING

This section looks at how diversity has been prioritised in organisations and the actions organisations have taken towards diversity and inclusion within their organisations and volunteer opportunities.

The findings in this section are informed by data from workshops, interviews and emails.

5.1. Where organisations are in their journey

The organisations we spoke to seemed to be working within one of two (or both) volunteer frameworks in relation to diversity and inclusion:

1. **Volunteers should reflect the organisation's service users** – this might include organisations that serve a community of interest, for example people who are deaf or hard of hearing, or service users from lower socio-economic groups or who are battling a specific disease. This framework would also value volunteers with lived experience related to the organisations' mission.
2. **Volunteers should reflect the locality where the organisation is based** – this framework would be based around reflecting the local, regional or national population and

would require an organisation to understand the demographics of the community where it is based.

Organisations told us that addressing diversity issues within volunteering is a 'work in progress'.

Most organisations reported that they were doing 'something' in relation to diversity and inclusion. Examples of activities which organisations have been undertaking include:

- developing strategies, processes and policies
- carrying out research or internal audits
- gathering information or data about volunteers
- reaching out to specific target groups in the community
- creating networks or having ambassadors
- creating training materials
- making sure communications and images reflect diversity and are inclusive
- creating a welcoming and inclusive culture for volunteers or the wider organisation.

We created Equal Opportunities forms for our families, young

people and volunteers. In these forms, we gather information about ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, religion, etc. By collecting this information, we generate data that informs our ability to be an inclusive organisation that targets people who need our services and attract a diverse network of volunteers. (Programme manager, befriending service)

Where diversity is addressed at a senior level it is more likely to be embedded and prioritised.

Participants cited various factors related to how diversity was prioritised within organisations. Some of the drivers cited included structural changes to their organisation, which in some cases could result in greater focus (eg new dedicated roles) or less focus (eg other priorities becoming more important) and key individuals advocating for it within their organisation.

Among those respondents in organisations where diversity was a higher priority, it was typically being addressed at a strategic level with a recognition that it is an area that requires resources, time and capacity as well as buy-in from wider and more senior levels of the organisation.

Respondents who had typically got further along their journey towards diversity and inclusion tended to be in organisations with more resources and capacity, such as a dedicated staff or team.

Organisations commonly want to address 'imbalances' in their volunteer profile.

There are huge differences between organisations related to who volunteers with them. There are also many organisations who do not fully understand the demographics of their volunteer base.

Organisations talked about wanting to address imbalances. For example if their current volunteers were predominantly older, white, and middle class, they might be looking to expand their base with younger volunteers from a range of ethnic and socio-economic groups. This is often very context specific: for example if an organisation had mainly male volunteers, they might look to include more women, and this could vary by role as well.

We want to be representative of the borough that we operate in as well as the service users we support. (Workshop participant, London)

There is a recognition that the issues associated with diversity and volunteering are varied and complex.

There was a recognition by respondents that there are many ways of interpreting

and approaching diversity and volunteering. It is a complex topic, not only in terms of language, but also the different aspects that are focused on such as age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc. There was also an acknowledgement of the importance of intersectionality when looking at identity.

Many respondents felt that they were making progress in some areas but not in others. Some of their activities on inclusive volunteering had been paused due to covid-19. In general, most respondents felt they were on a journey towards inclusion and greater diversity, although they recognised there was more to be done. However, some respondents acknowledged that very little has been done within their organisations or that they were in the early stages of making changes and still have a very long way to go.

We know we need to do a lot more. At a local level, volunteers tend to recruit from whomever they can who meet the criteria. There are not universal pro-active measures in place. However, we are starting a pilot project to address this. (COO, social service organisation)

Case example: RNIB

As a charity for those who are blind or partially sighted, the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) are committed to ensuring that its volunteering programme is as inclusive

as possible. They have started making steps towards this, but also recognise there is still a long way to go to create a fully inclusive volunteer experience.

When a staff member or volunteer applies to RNIB, there are several avenues in place to ensure that the role is inclusive:

1. They carry out a **risk assessment** of all roles before they start recruitment. This helps them identify and address any potential issues with our roles
2. When interviewing, all candidates are **asked openly and sensitively if they have any additional requirements**
3. If a new volunteer or staff member has disclosed an accessibility issue during the interview, they conduct an **individual risk assessment** with them during their induction. This will help them understand if there are any changes they need to make to the role, or if the volunteer requires any additional support
4. If a volunteer or staff member has an issue in their role at any point, they can use the **Workplace Adjustment policy** and they will assign them a case worker to help identify and address any issues (eg refer to a specialist for equipment)
5. Their **IT Helpdesk (supported by an Accessibility Assurance Panel)** helps to address any technology accessibility issues. For instance, this may highlight if one of our web pages is not accessible to blind or partially sighted people.

These avenues not only help our volunteer programme to be inclusive, but also ensures that their volunteer managers feel confident in offering support to all of their volunteers.

In 2020, they also hired a diversity and inclusion manager who has established a number of staff and volunteer networks for those with certain characteristics (eg a women's network, an LGBTQ+ network etc). These networks provide a safe space for staff and volunteers, and also provide another avenue to feedback any inclusivity issues.

Covid-19 has brought about some challenges in making their volunteering inclusive. They (like many in the sector) have seen a reduction in our volunteer base, particularly those with additional needs. This has meant that they haven't yet been able to fully see the advantages of creating a more inclusive volunteer programme.

5.2. Diversity as a priority and how this changed in 2020

Organisations varied in how much they prioritised diversity– but there was a general sense that it is now higher on the agenda.

Participants were asked (pre-covid-19) to reflect on how much their organisation currently prioritised diversity – on a scale of 1-10 where 1 was very low priority and 10 very high. Their responses varied widely from one organisation to the other; but from 67 responses the average (mean)

score was 8. Wider discussions at the workshops reflected this also.

The overall sense from respondents was that organisations are thinking about diversity more and trying to be more active in this area (even if they may not have done much to date). Events in 2020 may have increased the pace of change but there are likely additional factors such as public pressure, funding requirements and demands from service users.

There are inconsistencies within organisations with diversity meaning different things and being more or less challenging in different parts of an organisation. For example, an organisation's charity shops might have very different approaches and sub-cultures to those of the head office.

Organisations also noted differences in the level of priority given to the diversity of staff and the diversity of volunteers (with greater priority given to staff). This can sometimes reflect whether volunteering is considered a priority for the organisation or not.

Interest in diversity may have increased, but organisations feel they have fewer resources to make any significant changes.

Some organisations noted that diversity in volunteering had not been seen as a priority before covid-19, but this changed when the pandemic started to impact on volunteer numbers. This was the case, for example, for organisations with a high proportion of older volunteers who had to shield and were no longer able to volunteer. So, for some organisations focusing more on diversity and reaching out to people who had never volunteered before was a way to increase their volunteer base. However, for those organisations that had not prioritised diversity before covid-19, the pandemic

crisis may have pushed this even lower down their list of priorities because of additional competing demands (eg day-to-day operations, finances etc).

Many of our respondents felt that there was now a greater acknowledgement that systemic racism exists and that, consequently inclusion had become more of a priority and organisations were under increasing pressure to respond to this. Some considered that covid-19 and the lockdowns had given organisations the space to pause and reflect on their working culture (particularly around remote working) and to talk about inclusive working practices. This context has given organisations the opportunity to look at their staff and volunteer compositions and consider whether they are reflective of their service users.

However, organisations recognised that they have also been dealing with a very challenging funding environment this year. With reduced resources, some respondents highlighted that it was harder for some organisations to make diversity and inclusion a financial priority.

There is sometimes a gap between intention and action.

Diversity had become more of a priority for some respondents as a result of global anti-racism movements. But covid-19 has created an environment of competing priorities, leading some organisations to slow down their efforts towards greater diversity and inclusion, while others have stepped up their work in this area and been more active.

While many respondents felt that there was willingness and enthusiasm within their organisations to do more, this did not always translate into action or progress. This was particularly the case when talking

to respondents after March 2020, who were keen to make changes but talked about numerous financial or practical barriers that prevented this from happening (see section 6). For others, it was a matter of confidence or lack of knowledge about how to make progress. Organisations acknowledged the need to undertake actions that were meaningful and the importance of 'doing it properly' and making sure that efforts are not tokenistic or a 'tick box' exercise.

5.3. Future aims and aspirations

Research workshops asked participants what inclusive volunteering would ideally look like in their organisation. Additionally, those who responded via written feedback reflected on their ambitions and future plans.

These aims and aspirations broadly fit into three distinct categories: reflecting communities or service users, volunteers' feelings in and towards the organisation, and organisational processes and culture.

A key aspiration among organisations was for volunteers to better reflect the wider community, especially service users.

Many organisations felt there was a mismatch between the demographics of their volunteers and the demographics of the community within which the organisation was based or of wider society. This concern was especially prevalent for participants in organisations based in London. Many participants spoke about their volunteers being majority white, middle-class, older women, although this depended to some degree on the type of organisation and the role.

Organisations also highlighted the differences between volunteers and service users and their desire to bridge this gap, including through encouraging more service users to become volunteers. It was felt to be especially important to minimise power imbalances and for both volunteers and service users to receive support from peers.

Organisations want to see not only a diverse range of people volunteering, but a genuine inclusive culture where volunteers (and potential volunteers) feel welcomed and as though they belong.

Respondents described their 'ideal scenario' in terms of how volunteers would feel in or towards their organisation. Words used to describe this included: engaged, that they belong, included, welcomed, comfortable and that the organisation is relevant to them. This was particularly important during covid-19, where many organisations worried about keeping remote volunteers engaged.

Overall, respondents recognised the need to offer a high-quality experience to all volunteers, which we know from *Time Well Spent* is key in both attracting potential new volunteers and retaining current ones.

Organisations discussed what would help enable increased diversity and inclusion in their organisations.

The main themes discussed with respondents were:

- Creating a positive culture related to diversity that was embedded in the organisation – and commonly understood by all.
- Developing processes and roles which recognise and address barriers – eg having a wide range of flexible roles, less onerous recruitment processes, training – and resources to support volunteers.

- Engagement with local communities through partnership working.

We want diversity to be celebrated rather than a problem to be overcome. (Workshop participant, Bristol)

Some organisations talked about having tangible actions planned ahead.

When reflecting on future plans to address diversity issues, some organisations talked about their general ambitions and vision (as outlined above) and others reported specific actions they had planned ahead that would support them in making progress.

Examples included:

- making sure that diversity and inclusion was specifically written into the current strategy
- organisational change such as new leadership or appointing specific teams or individuals to lead on activities
- capturing data on demographics, monitoring and analysis; specific projects or programmes related to diversity.

Our staff and volunteer teams are great at welcoming and supporting new members, through peer-learning, training and an open-door policy. This 'team-generated-warmth' is spread across everything we do. We have sound policies in place to provide accessibility, support

with mental health and reasonable adjustments for all staff and volunteers. All volunteer roles are designed to be mutually beneficial for the organisation and the volunteer. **(Volunteer Manager, cultural organisation)**

6. WHAT ARE THE KEY ISSUES AND LEARNINGS?

This section explores the key issues and challenges relating to diversity and volunteering experienced by organisations – as well as learnings to take forward for staff and organisational leaders.

The findings from this section come mainly from workshop data and to a lesser extent data from interviews and digital forms.

6.1. Setting the context

As we have seen in the previous section, organisations are at different stages of their journeys related to diversity. Most felt there was still more to be done and some have only just begun. In this section, we explore the lessons learned about diversity and volunteering, starting with internal issues and ending with external ones. Many of these areas are, of course, linked but we have separated them out for ease of analysis.

These are explored in turn, as below:

- [Organisational culture \(6.2\)](#)
- [Leadership \(6.3\)](#)
- [Capacity and resources \(6.4\)](#)
- [Volunteer management \(6.5\)](#)
- [Attitudes of staff and volunteers \(6.6\)](#)
- [Data \(6.7\)](#)

- [External perceptions and communications \(6.8\)](#)
- [Community engagement \(6.9\)](#)

For each of these areas, we look at the issues and challenges as well as lessons learned from organisations, based on what participants told us about what has worked well and what more could to be done.

Diversity in volunteering cannot be fully achieved without taking a holistic approach as an organisation, which is why some of the sections below focus more on actions within the organisation as a whole while others explicitly focus on volunteering.

6.2. Organisational culture

What are the key challenges?

One of the most overarching barriers to greater diversity in volunteering identified by organisations across the research relates to organisational culture and values, and how these shape practices and behaviours within organisations. This was, for example, mentioned in the context of anti-racism and in light of campaigning by #CharitySoWhite which highlighted a range of issues within the voluntary sector (eg paternalism, colonialism). One interviewee noted the importance of not reinforcing these ideas:

Volunteering for some charities can feel like reinforcing colonial behaviours and attitudes: eg being complicit with white saviourism, reinforcing the global north's position and undermining the global south, all the ills of voluntourism (eg white middle class people going to poorer countries and building wells or schools instead of allowing people in those countries to do this). **(Expert interview)**

Diversity is not always valued, prioritised or strategically embedded throughout organisations.

Many organisations we spoke to were looking at their internal culture and how to address imbalances of power between stakeholders by doing less 'to' and more 'with' service users, such as through involving volunteers with lived experience (sometimes known as experts by experience). There were some common features in organisations with these imbalances of power, many of which are at the start of their diversity journey. These common traits included:

- a general lack of prioritisation of diversity and inclusion often accompanied by numerous reasons or excuses about why this had not been the case

- actions undertaken on a more individual basis (by those who were passionate about it), rather than being organisationally driven or embedded within the organisation, including having little volunteer input – which resulted in inconsistencies within the organisation
- actions taken that tended to not be strategically driven but more ad hoc and did not progress very far
- a lack of confidence in how to talk about diversity and inclusion or a fear of offending and of doing it 'wrong'.

One respondent commented that some organisations saw diversity as an 'add-on' or 'nice to have', which meant that it couldn't be embedded. Other respondents reflected that it was more difficult to shift culture in larger organisations or those which have been in existence for a long time.

As a large, established organisation, any change is difficult to embed and relies on cultural shifts and change management processes. (Inclusion Project Manager, youth organisation)

It was also noted that decision-making sometimes takes place in exclusive spaces. This makes change harder to happen and negatively impacts diversity:

Volunteering to be on a board can be difficult as some decisions are made outside of meetings; dinners, coffee catch ups, gallery openings or other white and exclusionary spaces that BAME board members either aren't invited to or don't want to be at. Board decision-making power should remain within board processes. **(Expert interview)**

What are the learnings to take forward?

Organisations felt that they had or could make more progress in addressing organisational culture challenges in the following ways:

- **Being honest and authentic:** organisations felt that a positive 'first step' for many organisations in changing organisational and volunteer culture was to be honest about where they are at, coupled with a genuine willingness to change.
- **Creating a direction and embedding it:** organisations considered it was important to make diversity a priority at a strategic level (see also [section on leadership](#)) and to develop clear objectives in this area, supported by formal processes such as training and inductions for all (to address inconsistencies). Organisations also felt that inclusion needed to be embedded as part of the volunteering culture, whether it be through its values, having

internal networks for specific groups, or getting involved in cultural celebrations.

We need to embed equity into organisations culture. This is why having people in positions of power for a long time can be unhelpful – they are too embedded in old culture to want real change and can be defensive when trying to approach EDI in an equitable way. **(Founder, BAME organisation)**

Embedding inclusion in the organisation and volunteering in multiple ways builds common understanding and shared values across the organisation.

- **Valuing the small steps:** while spearheading activities at an organisational level was perceived as necessary, it was also highlighted that progress could be made at both a micro and macro level. Organisations recognised that it was often not a quick process to embed these sorts of changes and that small steps could sometimes make a big difference. It is also important to have concrete and achievable smaller targets. One organisation, for example, talked about adding preferred pronouns to emails and having rainbow lanyards, and while these are small actions, they help to make progress towards being a more inclusive organisation.
- **Engaging volunteers on the journey:** organisations suggested that an important way of embedding inclusion and diversity, and making it authentic, was to include and engage volunteers

themselves on the journey. This could be done in various ways whether through getting specific feedback (eg via focus groups, panels or exit interviews), including volunteers in training and strategic meetings, or having platforms for honest conversations and the sharing of meaningful experiences (eg case studies, photos or real-life stories). Organisations also felt it was important that volunteers understand the impact they potentially have on each other, service users and the organisation as a whole.

- **Evaluate cultural practice:** organisations noted the importance of internal reviews about how volunteers are celebrated and how volunteering is valued throughout the organisation. Alongside this should be an analysis of the benefits volunteers receive from volunteering in addition to what they contribute. Volunteer managers should be encouraged and supported to evaluate the volunteer sub-culture within the organisation, which may have both positive and negative aspects.

Case example: The National Trust

The National Trust have taken steps to create a more inclusive culture for all, including volunteers. They have actively recruited more diverse volunteer managers through their Volunteer Management Traineeship Project and have recently revised a [statement on their commitment to diversity and inclusion](#), which specifically mentions volunteers:

We are focused on creating a welcoming, friendly and open environment where

people can bring their whole selves to work or volunteer and feel a sense of belonging, knowing they are in a safe and supportive environment, which respects and values their visible and invisible differences.

The National Trust have taken other steps to support diversity, including their support for LGBTQI+ staff and volunteers, as demonstrated in their visibility at Gay Pride celebrations around the country.

- **Address structural and systemic discrimination:** organisations felt it was ultimately beneficial to take an honest look internally and work to tackle and redress any issues that are structural or systemic within their own organisations. This included understanding the ways that organisations might be reproducing colonial or oppressive structures (such as having a 'saviour' approach to service users rather than a peer-to-peer approach) and working to shift the balance of power and take a more equity centred approach. This links to external issues related to branding and images used as well as internal attitudes of governing bodies and volunteer managers, and power dynamics between paid staff and volunteers.

6.3. Leadership

What are the key challenges?

Organisations commonly thought that a key aspect which determined whether diversity was valued and flourishing within

volunteering was how it was perceived by the leaders within the organisation, if there was diverse representation at that level and if action was being taken at a strategic level to make the organisation more diverse and to prioritise inclusion. This applied to staff at senior levels as well as the governing body, who were perceived as being critically important from a strategic and governance point of view.

[Our challenge is] persuading some trustees and executive staff that trustee recruitment is worth the investment. (CEO, governance charity)

Without doubt organisational leaders are under immense pressure, especially in the current climate, and there will always be challenges related to competing priorities and resources. However, where there is a lack of interest, buy-in, representation or action regarding diversity at senior leadership levels, it was seen as being very difficult for it to be practically embedded within volunteering or throughout the organisation.

If governing bodies and senior staff embrace diversity, it is more likely to be prioritised, resourced, and embedded.

Where senior level buy-in was in place, organisations were much more likely to be successful in creating inclusion and increasing diversity within volunteering.

There is a need to be diverse at all levels of organisations: you can't just have diverse volunteers if trustee boards, management and

staff are not diverse. (Director, BAME organisation)

Organisations also noted that some decision-makers (such as CEOs or board members) may not realise that diversity is an issue (or should be a priority) in their organisation if they do not have any lived experience of oppression or have never felt discriminated against. Participants cited examples of leaders whom they knew this was an issue for.

In addition to the need for buy-in from senior staff members, organisations see diversity among leaders themselves as a way to reflect its priorities and values. When it came to diversity among the governing body, a particular barrier that was cited was recruitment methods. These roles are not always advertised openly but instead are often recruited through personal networks or word of mouth, which increases the likelihood of attracting the same type of people and leads to boards that lack diversity.

Organisations highlighted a current trend towards the recruitment of younger trustees, as there was acknowledgement that many governing bodies are often composed of older people.

What are the learnings to take forward?

Organisations felt that they had or could make more progress in addressing these challenges in the following ways:

- **Committing to a 'whole organisation' approach to diversity:** rather than taking a 'siloed' approach, organisations felt it was important to take a holistic

approach to embedding inclusion within organisations, and making sure that volunteering is included within wider organisational efforts towards diversity.

- **Developing a strategic direction and dedicated roles:** where organisations had achieved progress in increasing diversity, there was a tendency to have in place a strategy underpinning activity in this area. Having a more strategic approach was felt to help address issues specific to the organisation, with resource targeted in these areas. This created an organisation-wide approach and meant it was less individually driven, with senior leadership supporting changes from the top but with actions and responsibilities dispersed across the organisation.

Some felt that organisations also benefited from staff expertise (preferably at a senior level) dedicated to driving diversity and inclusion within the organisation. This was seen to avoid activities being done in isolation and to create a 'golden thread' that ran through the organisation as a whole, linking activities together, including volunteering – so that it was part of, rather than excluded from, wider organisational plans in this area.

- **Highlighting the benefits to the organisation:** for those organisations who considered that a lack of buy-in at a senior level was an issue, some believed more could be done to create an appetite for it by clearly articulating the benefits of increasing diversity in the organisation, backed up by evidence where relevant. Organisations also felt that it was important to specify how actions could be taken forward, which

were not necessarily costly or significant, but could still be effective.

- **Diversity training and increasing awareness for leadership:** some organisations felt that more could be done to create greater awareness and knowledge around diversity among senior staff and governing bodies specifically. While this was not common in practice, some organisations talked about including diversity within the scope of board training (making sure that not just legal responsibilities were covered but also their duties in this area).

Other examples suggested an away day for senior level staff and trustees with independent EDI consultants to address these issues with experts (budget permitting) or people with lived experience. As well as formal methods, other suggestions included informal methods such as through learning groups, to support raising awareness and knowledge of these issues.

- **Increased support from national networks:** organisations suggested that there was a role for national networks and infrastructure bodies such as ACEVO and NCVO to play in helping to challenge the voluntary sector, particularly senior leaders, to question as a critical friend and to support as needed, such as through training or networking events.
- **More diverse recruitment for governing bodies:** when it came specifically to addressing the issue of the lack of diversity among boards, respondents felt that it was important to use appropriate recruitment methods and an inclusive process to build governing bodies that reflect either the community served or

the local area. This included recruiting people with different backgrounds and skills. Some suggested that longer term planning in recruitment could support this, for example re-advertising if not getting suitable applicants.

6.4. Capacity and resources

What are the key challenges?

An overall barrier that cut across all areas (and many believed it to be the cause of some of these issues) was a lack of capacity and resources. This has been exacerbated during the covid-19 pandemic, where resources have been even further stretched. Organisations spoke about diversity not being a priority (this may relate either to volunteering or more widely) and not being able to invest the time and resource required to make changes, which meant that progress could not happen. There were also practical barriers created, such as not being able to pay expenses.

Low levels of staff capacity and shrinking financial resources can be a barrier for implementing diversity but creating an inclusive volunteer environment does not have to be costly.

Some organisations felt that the lack of staff and resources was particularly acute within volunteer programmes and opportunities that are sometimes seen as an add-on and often not given the support needed within organisational structures. Where there is a paid volunteer management role, it is often only part-time. In other cases, the

responsibility for volunteer management is distributed across multiple roles and teams. In both instances, this can mean that diversity happens in a more ad hoc manner.

[Our challenge is] staff capacity to make it a priority, to forge links with community groups, to embed it slowly and sustainably. There's been one-off projects that have gone well, but then not been repeated. (Volunteer Officer, faith-based organisation)

What are the learnings to take forward?

Organisations felt that they had or could make more progress in addressing these challenges in the following ways:

- **Leadership as gatekeepers of capacity and resources:** as previously stated, buy-in at senior levels was viewed as particularly important. This was not only so that changes could cascade from the top, but also so that a more strategic approach was taken, and resources could be targeted as needed.

While leaders are constantly weighing up priorities, they must also understand and convey the benefits of diversity to the organisation, the value of investing in diversity and the link with the values of their organisation. Having a dedicated lead staff person to coordinate diversity efforts was seen as one way to support these discussions and activities.

- **There are cost effective actions:** some organisations thought that lack of resources was sometimes used as an 'excuse' for inaction, but in reality, there are small changes that can be made without incurring large costs. Some examples of this type of action include small gestures of solidarity with marginalised groups, such as celebrating cultural events that might otherwise be ignored (eg LGBTQI+ pride, Eid, Diwali), including diverse images of volunteers on websites and use of inclusive language. Identifying barriers and some of these solutions could help organisations make progress, even if not having the financial resource to invest.
- **Partnership and creative collaboration:** organisations considered it would be helpful to collaborate with external partners and experts as a way to mitigate against the lack of resources. These could include corporate organisations, public bodies, or other voluntary sector organisations and would involve bringing in additional skills, expertise and capacity to support activities. Some also spoke about peer learning – one organisation, for example, was working with other charities in their London borough to share experiences and learnings; another had partnered with an organisation to address a particular aspect of diversity.
- **Seeking out funding opportunities for inclusion:** organisations spoke about getting funding for projects related to inclusion and diversity, whether through grants or crowdfunding opportunities. This might be to fund particular aspects of their volunteering programme, such as IT solutions to make volunteering more accessible, or could include funding for a dedicated volunteer recruitment and support role.
- **Increased training and support resources for volunteer managers:** organisations noted that an especially important resource related to diversity should include training and supporting volunteer managers with the necessary tools and resources to build their confidence and knowledge in this area. This is also an area where additional resources and training could be supported by funders and other support bodies.

6.5. Volunteer management

What are the key challenges?

Organisations highlighted that some internal processes and procedures were currently making it more challenging to be inclusive. Some of the most common barriers in this area included:

- the volunteer recruitment process can be intimidating or daunting – this might relate to application forms (that can be difficult to understand and complete) or training requirements
- that training can be an onerous or extensive process that requires a time commitment that is inflexible and lengthy.

Making volunteering more accessible involves removing the physical, cultural, and informational barriers for potential volunteers.

- The lack of accessibility of physical spaces (such as the buildings where volunteering takes place) and of

information can create barriers for people with disabilities, those for whom English is not their first language or those with low levels of literacy.

- Whether organisations reimburse volunteers for out-of-pocket expenses related to their role or how they reimburse them can exclude people. In addition to the obvious out of pocket expenses such as transport, there are hidden costs of volunteering including childcare or other care costs. Additionally, some organisations have a culture or norm where volunteers are not expected to claim expenses even if there is a policy in place, which creates a cultural barrier.

We are a massive organisation that can be slow to change. We have a lot of bureaucracy which can make it difficult to be responsive. We have more admin and red tape for volunteers to go through which works against under-represented groups. **(Volunteering Services Manager, NHS Trust)**

Developing flexible roles that adjust around the diverse lives of volunteers makes volunteering more accessible to a wider group of people.

One of the key barriers to progress cited by organisations related to volunteer roles – many felt that their current volunteer roles had requirements that excluded certain groups of people. These requirements varied and included the level of commitment required, the nature of the role (eg physical labour), the need for types of experience or skills, the time of day or

week in which the activities took place or the location.

Having pre-set roles makes it more challenging to accommodate all volunteers, especially where volunteers might have additional support needs.

In some instances, staff can create further barriers by having unrealistic expectations of volunteers. Participants saw this as being a greater problem in organisations that approach volunteering from the perspective of the ‘modern’ model (with pre-set volunteer roles).

Volunteering asks are often very narrow and inflexible and don’t fit around the lives of those working long hours, multiple jobs, with caring responsibilities, etc. **(Consultant)**

What are the learnings to take forward?

Organisations felt that they had or could make more progress in addressing these challenges in the following ways:

- **Reviewing volunteer recruitment and support processes:** organisations felt it was important to review their own processes to see how inclusive (or not) they were and try to understand what, if any, barriers might be in place for volunteers – from recruitment to physical spaces or cultural barriers. Once reviewed, an action plan should be put in place to address these barriers. Some organisations did more formal audits or equality action plans, while others took more informal approaches. One

example of a small action taken by an organisation was that they had used wording provided by Stonewall (an LGBTQI+ organisation) to improve the way questions were worded in an application form. Another organisation had carried out their own research into the barriers faced by potential volunteers, which helped them to involve more people.

In addition, it is worth considering how covid-19 may have a lasting impact on the diversity of volunteer roles and processes with the development of remote, online and micro volunteering being accelerated as a result of the lockdown restrictions (see [spotlight on volunteer participation during the covid-19 pandemic](#)).

- **Simplifying volunteer recruitment and training processes:** in addition to flexibility around roles, participants felt that organisations needed to be both more varied and more flexible in how they undertook their recruitment processes and training. This could mean using different methods other than application forms (eg Zoom or coffee mornings), and not always having the same requirements for every role. This could be tailored to appeal to specific groups, for example online application forms or online videos might be more appealing for younger volunteers. Organisations also felt that making sure processes were inclusive should involve volunteers’ input – for example asking what works for them or offering support to complete forms where needed.

Developing a variety of volunteer roles and tailored recruitment messages: organisations suggested that in order to attract a wide range of volunteers, there

needed to be different types of volunteer roles on offer. This included suggestions for roles to be carried out or organised in different ways such as remotely, more project-based activities or ad hoc roles. Participants felt that organisations needed to be imaginative and creative in their approach in making roles more attractive to a wide variety of people. As well as having diverse roles on offer, it was equally important to market those roles effectively, tailoring messages to different groups, making sure benefits (eg gaining skills, making a difference or meeting people) are made clear and appealing to target groups of potential volunteers.

More volunteering roles to offer has meant more volunteers from different backgrounds. Being flexible about roles and also having short term opportunities has worked well. **(Volunteer Services Manager, housing association)**

- **Deciding which volunteer management approach will be in place:** participants thought organisations should consider whether volunteer roles had any elements of flexibility and how much capacity there was to recruit and support volunteers. Informal feedback is that the home-grown model of volunteering is more inclusive (as it builds the role around the individual), however the modern model may be easier (as it often slots individuals into pre-defined volunteer roles).

- **Developing volunteer roles that fit around the volunteer:** building on the previous point, participants felt that organisations should be flexible in accommodating the needs of volunteers and their motivations. Why people engage is often quite personal and is linked to individual circumstances, values and priorities.
- As part of this, organisations would need to engage with volunteers to understand what their needs are and what is important to them and to also support volunteer managers and others who might be responsible on a day-to-day basis to make adjustments. It was noted that often these adaptations could be made easily. Volunteer recruitment can be more inclusive if recruitment is linked to the motivations of the target group of potential volunteers.

The global pandemic has provided ample opportunities for organisations to rethink their volunteer roles and often this has meant more remote and micro volunteering. While this might work for some volunteers, not everyone will have equal access to digital technology or data which these types of volunteering often rely on (see [spotlight on volunteer participation during the covid-19 pandemic](#)).

Some organisations were looking at ways they could do this. An example was an organisation who had rolled out a new process where a volunteer would be assigned a case worker to support them to make any necessary adjustments.

We have previously been too prescriptive about what we ask of volunteers and how we

shape opportunities, we are changing and increasing the flexibility of opportunities for volunteers to join us from all backgrounds with an "apply and we'll find something meaningful for you" approach. (Volunteer and Apprentice Manager, county council)

It is important to remember that volunteers may have more pressing issues to deal with (especially during covid-19) such as housing, employment or illness. Finding flexible and creative ways to support these volunteers to allow them to continue being involved and keeping the momentum is key.

- **Develop more inclusive role descriptions:** in addition to more flexible roles, organisations felt it was also important to review how roles are described and make sure that the role descriptions are inclusive. Some organisations had taken active steps to review communication materials, including volunteer roles to look at the impact of the language being used and to make it as inclusive as possible.
- **Clarity and expectation management in relation to roles:** throughout the discussions about volunteer roles, organisations highlighted the need for clarity and managing expectations of volunteers. This was felt to be important in making sure that volunteers had a good quality experience from the outset and were not disappointed. It is also important to have honest conversations about what the organisation is able to commit to so as not to put them in a

position where they were not supported properly. For example, where volunteers might have additional needs, it is essential to be clear about what the organisation could and could not do to support volunteers.

By being clear and managing expectations, volunteer managers felt that it allowed for volunteers themselves to be able to evaluate whether a role was suitable for them. Some suggested ways this could be done, such as with taster days, or opportunities to shadow where volunteers could fully understand what the role was like and if it was 'for them'.

- **A good quality experience is key to retaining volunteers:** as well as getting volunteers in the door, making sure that roles work for volunteers is something that requires continuous effort. Organisations suggested that it was important for organisations to 'check in' with volunteers, whether more informally or formally (eg via a trial period to see how it's working) and to engage via regular communications to 'keep volunteers warm', even if (and especially if) working remotely with the organisation. This can be done in many ways, for example through buddying new volunteers with existing volunteers. Some also suggested that it is important to build in progression for volunteer roles.

6.6. Attitudes of volunteers and staff

What are the key challenges?

Resistance to change among those already in the organisation – including current volunteers and staff – is a major barrier.

Regarding volunteers, some participants recognised that their organisations attracted a certain demographic. Others acknowledged that entrenched and long-standing groups of volunteers could be less welcoming to newcomers, especially those who did not share the group identity. Where this was cited, there were examples of volunteers bring cliquy or excluding new volunteers. In one organisation, this had resulted in a volunteer being very close to leaving the organisation. This links to recent research and data (see [context section](#)) highlighting discrimination within organisations. In some organisations, long-standing, entrenched or very independent groups of volunteers can create their own volunteer culture, and this can be inclusive and welcoming or closed and exclusive.

In the context of covid-19, some organisations have seen some of their older volunteers step back due to the need to shield at home, while new younger volunteers have started. It is too soon to tell how these might impact on attitudes.

Staff and volunteers who are resistant to change can create a closed culture that is not inclusive.

Participants thought that staff resistance to having a more diverse volunteer base related, in some cases, to a general negative attitude towards change and not

recognising the need for diversity. In other cases, it also related to not appreciating the value of volunteers more generally. Others perceived that staff resistance was linked to potentially feeling threatened by volunteers, especially those who offered specific skills and this relates to perceptions of volunteers replacing paid workers.

The biggest factor I face in talking about diversity on blogs and in trainings is the pushback from so many charities and non-profits that say ‘We don't need to be putting so much emphasis on diversity. We don't do anything that prevents anyone from volunteering here. If we're not diverse, it's because “those” people don't want to volunteer here. (Expert interview)

Finally, in a number of cases organisations felt that a barrier in relation to staff was that their focus was on service delivery and that volunteers were recruited to support this. They felt that volunteers were there to ‘make their life easier’ and in many cases, these volunteers were longstanding volunteers who were perceived as being ‘very reliable’ and as such the staff were resistant to make any changes to a situation that they felt was working well. In this scenario diversity and inclusion were not seen as a goal, as the focus was on how volunteers could support service delivery.

What are the learnings to take forward?

Organisations felt that they had or could make more progress in addressing these challenges in the following ways:

- Increasing education and training for staff and volunteers on inclusion:** some organisations had already put in place active steps so that those within the organisation, whether volunteers or staff, can learn about inclusion – whether about the need for and value of it, or specific aspects such as addressing unconscious bias. This was primarily through training – this was not always successful in changing perspectives but was felt to be a necessary step in addressing some of the resistance present in organisations and should be rolled out to everyone. Others suggested alternative approaches to building inclusion among existing staff and volunteers, for example by focusing on values such as social justice which many organisations are built on.
- Creating clear organisational processes and expectations to challenge discriminatory behaviours:** Organisations felt that there should be mechanisms in place as well as processes (both formal and informal) to have courageous conversations and ‘call people out’ for inappropriate behaviours, and to make sure that expectations were clearly communicated about what was acceptable (or not) in the organisation. For this approach to work, it was considered important for these messages and mechanisms to be

reinforced from the highest levels of the organisation.

- Creating an inclusive volunteering culture:** organisations felt that to change attitudes and behaviours among staff and volunteers, it is necessary to ensure that the organisation widely relays positive messages related to diversity and volunteering and makes this an organisational ‘norm’ while making it clear that there is no place for those who do not share these values. Part of the work of building an inclusive volunteering culture includes using various communication platforms to raise awareness and to build support, such as through an intranet or events. As always, these messages are more effective if they are genuinely endorsed from senior levels within the organisation.
- Maintaining a welcoming environment for volunteers:** Participants highlighted that organisations need to create spaces where all volunteers feel they belong, are welcomed and that they ‘fit’. They talked about what happens once you have recruited a more diverse pool of volunteers and reflected on the need to provide evidence of whether volunteers feel included and engaged in the organisation or not. They felt that it is important for volunteer managers to make sure that volunteers are supported from within the organisation and to proactively ensure that volunteers feel they are part of the organisation and safe, particularly if they are in the minority within the organisation.

6.7. Volunteer data

What are the key challenges?

Some organisations, especially those at the beginning of their diversity journey, may not understand where they are at, as they lack accurate data on who volunteers within their organisation. Participants felt this was a barrier to knowing where to put resources and, without a baseline, they were not able to fully understand what sort of progress had been made.

Data and insight in itself is hard to come by, which then makes it harder to identify the right actions that will be most impactful. We also have a historical profile of volunteers that is typically not very diverse (for a few key reasons) and this also slows down our rate of change for us. (Senior Volunteering Journey Manager, children’s organisation)

Organisations struggle to collect data about volunteers but those who do are in a better position to create a diverse volunteer base.

Organisations reported numerous challenges in capturing data about volunteers. For example, not all volunteers are willing to provide information and it is often not compulsory. Additionally, some volunteers do not have access to the internet or lack the technical skills to use online tools, which makes it more

challenging to capture and analyse monitoring data.

GDPR requirements are also seen as a barrier for organisations, however this is easily overcome by clarifying the purpose of the data or by collecting information anonymously. Where information had been captured, some organisations cited further challenges, including not having an adequate system in place to record the data or not having the skills needed to analyse or communicate about the data (for example, explaining to volunteers why they need the information and how it will be used).

As we do not include demographic questions in our volunteer form, we do not have accurate figures to show how diverse our volunteers are. **(Senior Membership & Volunteering Officer, social services organisation)**

Some organisations gather data in a very focused way rather than taking an intersectional view.

For example, some may target young people or people with a disability rather than taking a holistic approach. One organisation noted it is important to recruit people with lived experience to volunteer on programmes where that group is served (eg refugees volunteering with refugee support organisations), but thinks that intersectionality is sometimes forgotten in this scenario (ie the refugees could also be of differing religions, ethnicities or sexual orientation).

What are the learnings to take forward?

Organisations felt that they had or could make more progress in addressing these challenges in the following ways:

- **Reviewing data needs:** as a first step, organisations felt that it was important to be intentional about what information they need, how they plan to use it and why. Organisations might have different reasons for collecting information (eg to benchmark against similar organisations) however it is important to be clear about the purpose for collecting data and to understand that diversity is more than just capturing one or two demographics such as age and ethnicity.
- **Developing a system to collect and analyse volunteer data:** for organisations to be able to use their data effectively organisations felt it was necessary to have a reliable and secure system for collecting and analysing the data. As the data collection requires volunteer engagement, a key part of this stage was communicating to volunteers the value of this information. While it may be challenging to overcome 'survey fatigue', organisations could explain to volunteers the benefits and/or need for the data (eg to better reflect the community served or as a funding requirement) so as to get better results.
- **Creating a snapshot of volunteers to see how this compares to service users or the community:** organisations felt it was important to use volunteer data effectively – to create a clear picture of who volunteers within the organisation and to be able to compare this with the

community served or the local, regional or national population. It was also considered important to think about intersectionality when analysing data.

If organisations are not willing or able to use the data, they should not collect it and all organisations should have a data protection policy in place. It is also possible to survey volunteers within organisations anonymously and to draw conclusions based on a representative sample of volunteers. The results of any research should be shared with volunteers.

6.8. External perceptions

What are the key challenges?

A key issue identified by organisations in relation to diversity and volunteering is associated with external perceptions of the organisation. There are numerous aspects to this issue:

- **Public opinion about the organisation is not always positive or accurate:** one organisation noted that their name implied it was religious while another was concerned their organisation was perceived as being 'stuffy'. This view was more prominent in responses received later in 2020, potentially as a result of campaigns that have drawn attention to paternalism and institutional racism in the voluntary sector.
- **Volunteers are not all motivated by the same causes:** organisations are not appealing to everybody and some organisations felt their cause was 'harder

to sell' (eg a refugee charity who felt their cause was polarising) or resonated less among certain groups. One organisation noted that support for causes can vary greatly, for example support for animal charities is not popular within every culture.

- **There may be misconceptions about the nature or requirements of the volunteer roles:** some organisations felt that there were prevailing and possibly misguided assumptions being made by potential volunteers about roles. One example given was that hospital volunteer roles are patient-facing and that an arts background is required for volunteering at an arts-based organisation.
- **Organisational branding and marketing may leave some volunteers feeling excluded:** the external communications, branding and images from organisations do not always reflect the diversity of society or communities served and potential volunteers do not always 'see themselves' or feel that they belong in organisations where their identity is not visible.

What are the learnings to take forward?

Organisations believed that they had or could make more progress in addressing these challenges in the following ways:

- **If volunteers see themselves in organisational imagery they are likely to feel more welcome:** organisations noted that this requires looking at how people are represented in current communications and using imagery that reflects the people that the organisation

is hoping to attract so that potential volunteers 'see themselves' there. Organisations also noted the importance of using images authentically and avoiding tokenism – many felt it was important that volunteers could identify with images and through sharing of experiences via case studies or real life stories as well as the need for inclusive language in communications.

A small change that we have been embedding is using images that our students can see themselves in and identify with when advertising volunteering roles to them. (Volunteer Coordinator, student union)

- **Organisations should pro-actively challenge misconceptions about what they stand for and their volunteer roles:** organisations suggested that this needed to be an 'active' process – eg going out to volunteer fairs and public events to talk about the organisation and make sure potential volunteers get a realistic understanding of what the organisation is about (and not about). This also included more proactive community engagement (see [section 6.9](#)). Similarly, with the roles offered, organisations felt that actively promoting different roles, especially those people do not expect, could help to address preconceptions of what volunteering at the organisation involves.
- **Targeted volunteer recruitment messages are effective:** organisations felt that a 'blanket' approach was less effective than thinking about different target groups and tailoring volunteer recruitment messages and

communications accordingly, highlighting benefits that might appeal to each group and that are based on their motivations for getting involved. For example, young people are likely to be more interested in gaining new skills.

Case example: Carers UK

Carers UK are the UK's only national membership charity for carers, they describe themselves as both a supportive community and a movement for change. Their senior membership and volunteering officer describes below some of the actions they have taken to be more inclusive.

We include photos of volunteers from different backgrounds in our role profiles and volunteer webpages so that prospective volunteers can 'see themselves' within our volunteering programme. We also included volunteers from many backgrounds in our volunteer induction and promotion video.

We try to partner with organisations that can help us connect with groups we might not otherwise reach. For example, when we had a year-long partnership with BAPS Temple in 2018, volunteers from the Hindu faith raised thousands of pounds for Carers UK through their annual sponsored walk. During the pandemic, our twice weekly online meetups have featured two sessions for BAME carers which included talks from Dhek Bhal and Birmingham Black Carers Support Group.

When hosting events, we select carers from different backgrounds to share their stories, ensuring that the event is inclusive, and when inviting volunteers to

join a discussion panel at an event, we always consider the diversity of participants.

We have developed a project plan for building links with faith groups across the UK and asked our volunteers what connections they have, with the aim of working with them further to increase the diversity of our membership.

We have a diverse staff team and volunteering programme, with people from many different ethnicities, religions, ages and sexualities.

We recognise and showcase annual celebrations such as LGBT History month, Black History Month, Diwali and Eid on our Volunteer Facebook Group.

To reach young volunteers, we've advertised flexible, one-off volunteering opportunities on websites such as Team London and we have hosted volunteer stands at university fairs.

6.9. Community engagement

What are the key challenges?

Organisations noted a challenge related to engaging with local communities and targeting specific groups for volunteer recruitment. Specific outreach was seen as an important way to access a more diverse demographic and to break down barriers and change perceptions of their organisation (as outlined in [section 6.8](#)).

'They don't want to volunteer' isn't a valid excuse. Organisations shouldn't be taking this at face value. They need to find the reason that they don't want to volunteer and fix it. (Expert interview)

Organisations were at different stages in terms of their knowledge and skills in relation to community engagement. This ranged from those who felt that they lacked awareness or knowledge of the types of organisations present in their community, to those who had developed specific relationships with target groups, eg a local school or faith group. Some organisations were also targeting individuals directly rather than through community groups.

Building trusted relationships in communities helps to create positive opinions and encourage volunteer engagement.

It was common for organisations to feel that it was not just a case of 'knocking on doors' but building long-term relationships. This was seen as an activity that involves tremendous effort without always being successful. Within some organisations, this had resulted in staff 'giving up'. There was a recognition of the need to develop trust and goodwill, but organisations noted that there was not always the resource or capacity to invest in relationship building.

Covid-19 has limited organisations' ability to engage face-to-face and this may have longer term impacts. During lockdown, engagement has shifted to remote and online platforms and this may have both positive and negative impacts on perceptions of volunteer recruitment (see

spotlight on volunteer participation during the covid-19 pandemic).

What are the learnings to take forward?

Organisations felt that they had or could make more progress in addressing these challenges in the following ways:

- **Being visible and communicating messages pro-actively:** organisations considered it was important to not just put adverts out generally but to actively engage with communities they want to involve in volunteering and showing how roles might appeal to those groups. It was also important to strategically communicate about the values of the organisation, the benefits of its volunteer roles and how volunteering could make a difference and be impactful. Labelling some groups as ‘hard to reach’ was not perceived a valid reason for lack of engagement, and it was highlighted that organisations needed to reach out and work collaboratively to engage volunteers and service users and reflect the communities they serve and want to involve.
- **Focusing on understanding community needs:** one of the first steps that was considered important to make progress in this area was to build an understanding of the communities that organisations want to engage with. One organisation talked about ‘building bridges’ – as well as communicating about the organisation, taking steps to listen to the needs of target groups, so as to be able to recruit volunteers in a way that matches with their motivations and needs. One organisation suggested that

a community development team could be responsible for outreach and engagement, but this type of capacity may not be possible for every organisation.

- **Identifying and developing relationships with key people:** there was a recognition that finding key people or local leaders to work with is an important step in the journey towards inclusion. There is also a need to build long term relationships and trust in order to maintain networks and make this a sustainable approach.
- **Taking the time that is needed – this is a long-term approach:** organisations acknowledged that developing sustainable and trusting relationships with local communities takes time and sometimes involves setbacks before progress. Being aware of this and continuing to make efforts and steps forward was felt to be important.

Case example: Voice 4 Change England

Voice4Change England is a national advocate for the Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community sector. They have shared their tips for engaging volunteers, which is an area they have been providing support around.

Go to places with diverse people: including areas with high BAME populations or engaging with students for example.

Create structured training programmes: and ensure they get a minimum level of engagement.

Make volunteering exciting: give people a range of tasks and activities. Give them

plenty of experience in internal and external meetings, tell them how their work helps the cause, explain important policies to them.

Encourage and acknowledge the experience volunteers can offer: for example, young people may be very good with digital skills. Nourish those skills and learn from them.

Be welcoming and address racism in the sector: make sure volunteers feel comfortable in the space. This also means looking at your own culture and possible structural issues (eg racism) and solving these issues before welcoming volunteers. BAME volunteers won’t want to volunteer at an organisation that makes them feel like an outsider.

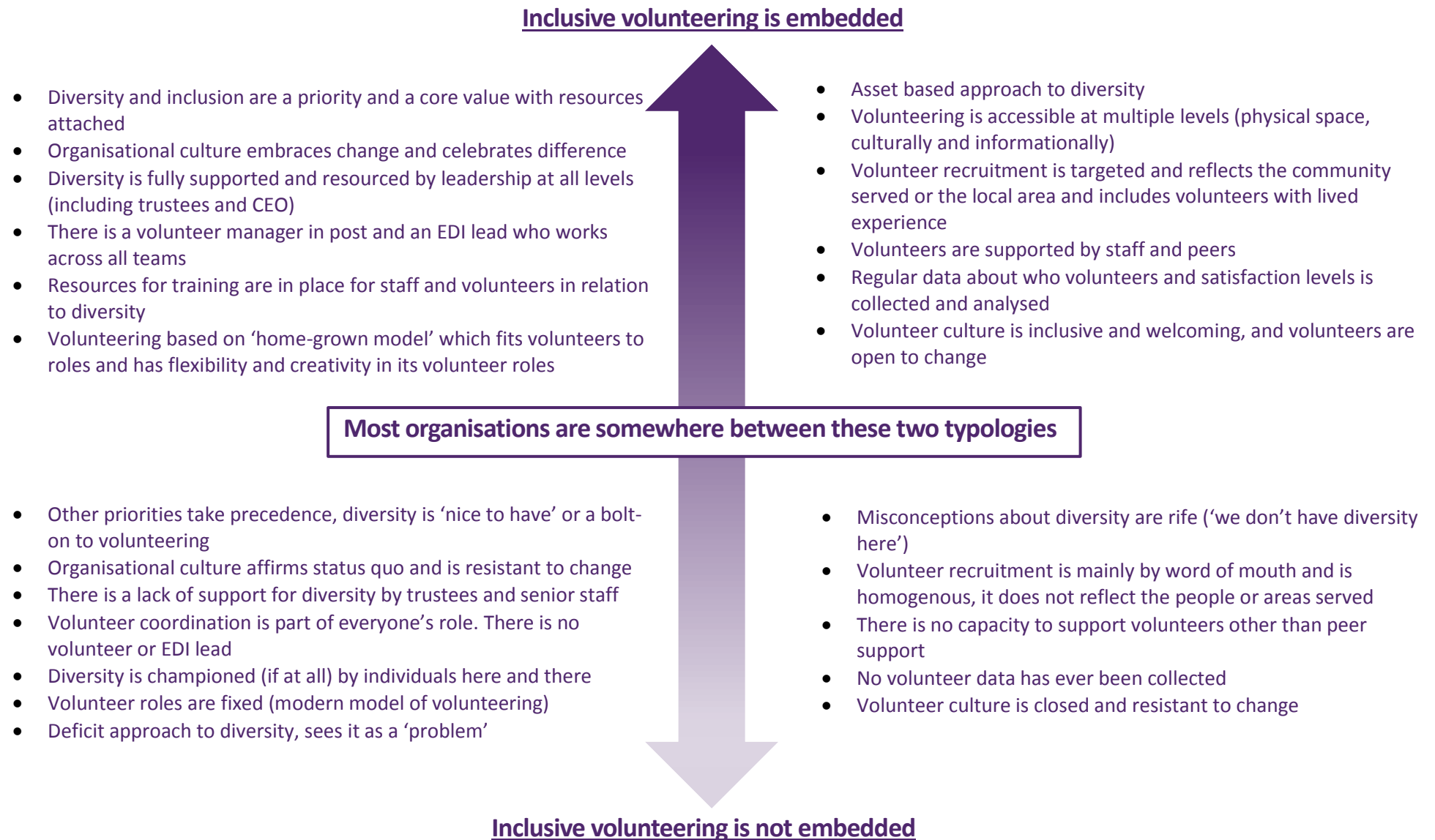
- Patterns of volunteering and the volunteer experience of people with different types of disabilities
- Volunteering, accessibility and the social model of disability
- Faith as a motivator for volunteering
- Volunteer Centres’ role in recruiting volunteers from diverse communities
- Volunteering as an intervention to improve social mobility
- Diversity in relation to formal and informal volunteering
- The image, perception and stereotypes of volunteering as a barrier to diversity
- Place-based approaches to volunteering
- Research on volunteering among particular intersections of identity such as BAME people with disabilities
- Power dynamics between volunteers and between paid staff and volunteers

6.10. Further research needed

There are clearly some gaps in knowledge that have been highlighted within this research. Below we have identified key areas where further data, information or research would help understanding of volunteering and diversity. This information may also inform any further stages of our work on this topic, which will focus on the volunteer experience of diversity.

- The impact of covid-19 on volunteering patterns
- Patterns of volunteering and the volunteer experience of ethnic minority groups (disaggregated)
- Patterns of volunteering and the volunteer experience of LGBTQI+ communities

Diagram: Embedding diversity



7. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This section summarises key learning from across the research and looks at what the findings might mean for practice and for decision makers.

These concluding reflections are designed to capture some of our key thoughts that have stood out across the research. We have focused on diversity and volunteering in this report, but we know that some of the issues we have highlighted are also present in other organisational contexts and that many organisations are currently developing their work around EDI more generally rather than looking at it solely in the context of volunteering.

Discussions about volunteering and diversity are not new and this is a complex area with wide variation between organisational realities. We have seen that organisations are at different stages on their individual journeys towards inclusion and diversity. Many organisations shared good practice examples and stories of their work on this journey and told us they still have a long way to go. Moreover, the events of this year have had a considerable impact on organisations and volunteering, some of which we may not fully understand for some time to come.

7.1. Key findings

This section looks at the key findings that have come out of the research for organisations to consider. We have grouped them thematically with some relating more to principles or values and others being more action-oriented.

Organisations view diversity in a number of different ways.

Organisations view diversity in relation to **values, actions and outcomes**. There are mixed levels of confidence related to how organisations can talk about diversity, especially in relation to volunteers. Viewing volunteer management through a service delivery model may reproduce inequalities in society and be biased towards white, middle-class, older volunteers.

Organisational culture matters just as much if not more than organisational processes and diversity strategies. If an organisation's culture is not welcoming, engaging a diverse pool of volunteers will be much more challenging.

Most organisations understand that diversity cannot be viewed through a singular lens and understand the **importance of intersectionality** in relation to identity and volunteering.

If volunteering is central to an organisation's values and culture then its approach to volunteering will prioritise the

needs of volunteers alongside the needs of the organisation, leading to a more inclusive volunteering environment.

Organisations are at different stages of their diversity journey.

Organisations have been talking about the need for diversity and how to make volunteering more inclusive for a long time – but the data shows that **there has been little significant change over time**. Multiple data and research sources show that who volunteers has remained fairly consistent and a lack of diversity continues to be an issue for many organisations.

There is variation in terms of where organisations are at on this journey towards diversity, and many organisations that we spoke to have at least begun and recognise that **there is still so much more to do**. There is also variation in terms of how diversity is prioritised by organisations.

The events of 2020 have increased the appetite for embedding diversity within organisations and volunteering.

Organisations told us that diversity is now a higher priority, but challenges still exist related to resources and capacity and these have been exacerbated due to covid-19. However, there is serious momentum for change at present and organisations may want to capitalise on this.

Embedding diversity within volunteering may mean different things for organisations and could include for example, addressing bias or prejudice among current volunteers

(in the current climate of support for anti-racism movements) or creating new or more flexible volunteer roles (given the current trend in favour of remote working). Rigid volunteer roles make it harder for people to be and stay involved and is likely to decrease diversity. How organisations might build on these trends will be interesting to watch in coming months.

The impact of covid-19 on volunteering is not fully known.

It is likely that the pandemic has had both a positive and negative effect on volunteering. Covid-19 has had a sudden impact on who volunteers, how and what kind of volunteering is taking place. The pandemic may have brought more people into volunteering, but it has likely driven others away. The crisis has inspired many people to volunteer but lockdown has meant that many older volunteers or those more likely to get the virus are shielding and are potentially more isolated.

However, there is more remote and digital forms of volunteering taking place, which is engaging volunteers differently, including new volunteers. The result may be a total re-think about volunteer roles in the future including the development of more flexible roles, which can only be a win for diversity. But it is impossible to know if volunteering will return to how it once was when the pandemic is over or whether covid-19 will have changed it forever.

How we talk about volunteering may need a re-think in order to be more inclusive.

This research has reminded us that how we define volunteering and talk about it matters – whether that be as activism, service to others or as a leisure pursuit – along with the level of formality associated with it. There are differences between groups in terms of how they describe their unpaid help and in who uses the term volunteering. These differing understandings of what volunteering means will ultimately include or exclude the people involved and have implications for organisations.

It's about power and privilege.

Organisations who participated in our research spoke about the importance of being brave even if creating diversity within volunteering is challenging and there is backlash from some volunteers and potentially wider afield. We may be seeing **a shift from the 'business case' for diversity into a moral case for diversity.**

In order to promote inclusive volunteering and greater diversity, organisations may need to face uncomfortable realities internally in relation to attitudes and behaviours, shared values and beliefs. This work is not easy. Shifting culture and entrenched prejudice takes time and should be intentional. It may involve uncovering power dynamics and privilege that are not easily visible to all and may meet with resistance by some.

The structures of some charities can sometimes recreate power dynamics rooted in colonialism and paternalism between staff, volunteers and service users that can lead to discrimination and oppression. This can reinforce 'otherness' and disempowerment and is one reason for

organisations to have a volunteer base that reflects its service users.

This research has highlighted an image and perception problem faced by some organisations related to volunteering. The outdated model of volunteering as 'doing to' is exclusionary and if we want volunteering to be more diverse, different models and perceptions of volunteering are needed.

The importance of building a culture of respect and celebration of difference.

We know from the *Time Well Spent* data that volunteer satisfaction is created in organisations when there is a culture of respect and trust combined with well-supported volunteers who are recognised for their contribution. Organisational culture can be both a barrier for diversity and a driver for change. Developing an **asset-based approach to diversity** may help to make volunteering more inclusive.

Being inclusive means changing practices to be more proactive in reaching out to those who have been left out, making it easier to volunteer, creating a more welcoming volunteer culture at all levels and increasing accessibility in a variety of ways.

Leadership matters but so do volunteer attitudes.

Volunteer environments should be safe, welcoming and brave spaces. For this to happen, volunteer managers and leaders need to have zero tolerance for racism, prejudice and discrimination within their volunteer programmes and among their volunteers, as well as a willingness and ability to have courageous conversations.

Where diversity is addressed at senior levels of an organisation, it is more likely to

be embedded and prioritised. Our research also highlights that inequalities exist not only within volunteer pools, but also within governing bodies and senior management. Until there is diversity within these groups, it is unlikely that diversity will change within volunteering.

Vision and strategies are not enough.

Many organisations have statements and plans in place for diversity but lack real action that will create inclusion. This research has highlighted some of the most effective actions that organisations have taken to make volunteering more inclusive.

Lack of skills, data or knowledge about how to foster diversity and be more inclusive is no longer an acceptable justification for inaction.

When an organisation says they are 'welcome and open to everyone' but takes no positive action to create a diverse volunteering space, they are not being inclusive or open to all volunteers. Pro-active and targeted engagement, recruitment and support for volunteers enables diversity. Expecting a diverse pool of volunteers to happen without active effort is unrealistic.

Many organisations still do not have an accurate picture of who volunteers with them or why. Surprisingly few organisations survey their volunteers regularly and analyse this against their service users or community. If more organisations had better information about volunteers, it would also contribute to a clearer national picture about volunteering.

Recruitment is not the whole story.

Volunteer recruitment is only one aspect of diversity. Once a more diverse group of volunteers has started volunteering, it is

important to provide appropriate support in order to create a good quality experience which impacts positively on retention. Also important is maintaining a welcoming environment and a positive volunteer culture where minority groups and disadvantaged people feel they belong.

Inequalities of resources and power means that some people are more likely to be excluded from certain activities.

Research on volunteering, and on participation more broadly has consistently highlighted this. We also know from the data that BAME, young people and people with disabilities are more likely to have less positive experiences of volunteering and this may be linked to the barriers described in this research, particularly with regards to volunteer culture and attitudes and the flexibility of roles.

Diversity varies by type of participation and wider context.

The mixed picture in relation to ethnicity highlights that participation varies greatly. *Time Well Spent* shows that there are common features in how people volunteer but the reality is more complex – volunteers combine different types of activity, cause, organisation, frequency and intensity of involvement, which reflects their own lifestyle and life stage, values and interests.

People's lives and priorities change and, consequently, the ways they get involved may also change. This can also be influenced by the wider context – changes to participation during the covid-19 pandemic is a good example of the importance of context. Consequently, when we look at who is participating and not, while there are clear patterns, the range of

factors that lead to this variability should not be ignored.

7.2. Key implications for practice

In the remainder of this section, we explore what organisations might consider when it comes to practice. It is aimed at people who work with volunteers on the ground as well as those who operate at a more strategic level.

In our main *Time Well Spent* report, we suggested a number of key features that make a quality experience for volunteers. It was also suggested that unequal access to volunteering is entrenching disadvantage and harming social mobility. This report also suggests that some organisations have a long way to go in creating inclusive volunteering environments.

Through our research, we have identified a number of key questions for organisations to reflect on and discuss in relation to their volunteer management and volunteers themselves.

Where in the journey towards inclusive volunteering is your organisation?

It is important to identify where you are now and where you would like to be. Make sure that your organisation builds a culture of respect and trust, supports volunteers and recognises their value and achievements. There are a number of elements within every organisation that contribute to creating a welcoming environment for volunteers. These are described in turn.

Are your organisational structures supporting diversity and inclusive volunteering?

- Have you created an organisational or **volunteering culture** that values diversity and inclusion and is embedded at all levels?
- Do you have **leaders (staff and board)** who support diversity efforts, prioritise action and value volunteering?
- Do **resources and capacity** match agreed actions and priorities related to diversity and inclusive volunteering?

Which volunteering framework makes sense for your organisation?

It is important to decide who you want to engage with and what framework makes sense for your volunteers. You might want your volunteer base to better reflect service users, members or the community you are based in for example. Once decided, you will need the data to understand the demographics of your target group for comparison.

Does the way volunteering is organised support diversity?

- Are there **processes** in place that are easy to engage with and that welcome all volunteers, create an inclusive environment and support volunteers to continue?
- Have you **targeted recruitment efforts** at under-represented groups? Have you sought the help of your local volunteer centre to do this?
- Do you encourage volunteers to be themselves and bring their **lived experience** to their role? Do you understand what matters to them and what their needs are?

- Have you created **flexible volunteer roles** that can adapt to individual needs? Do you offer both online and offline volunteering opportunities that are accessible and well-supported?
- Do you **collect and analyse data** and information about who volunteers in your organisation? Do you understand your current and potential volunteers and why volunteers leave?
- Have you **identified any barriers** that may exist for potential and current volunteers and made progress to remove them?

Data might include looking at things like ethnicity, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or socio-economic status but it is also important to look at the intersectionality of identity and the needs of volunteers as well.

Have you considered how you are perceived by those external to the organisation and how this impacts on your volunteering diversity?

- Have you thought about how your **communications** (including images) reflect and welcome a diversity of volunteers? Do you talk about volunteering and volunteers in a way that people can understand and engage with?
- Are you **engaging with communities** or service users pro-actively so that you understand the needs of under-represented groups and local communities?

This is of course not a static or one-off exercise but rather an ongoing and long-term process for organisations to manage, requiring ongoing commitment. There is

scope for organisations to be forward-looking and to recognise the need to build an inclusive organisation where volunteers from all walks of life feel they belong and are welcomed. There has never been a better time to make volunteering more inclusive.

8. APPENDIX – MORE ON OUR RESEARCH APPROACH

This appendix provides further details of the survey methodology and other details about the approach to this research.

As outlined in section two, this research draws on a number of different sources. More detail can be found below:

1. Main research findings of *Time Well Spent* - a national survey of 10,103 people on the volunteer experience.

This survey was completed by adults aged 18+ in Great Britain through YouGov's panel, via an online self-completion questionnaire between 4 and 15 May 2018. The total sample achieved was 10,103 respondents. The data was weighted to reflect the national population by key demographics: age, gender, education level and social grade. The survey focuses on formal volunteering (ie volunteering through groups, clubs and organisations). More technical details can be found in [Section 10 of the main *Time Well Spent* report](#).

2. Primary research carried out specifically for this report: qualitative research was carried out specifically with volunteer involving organisations as the first stage of this follow-up report on diversity and volunteering.

The fieldwork was carried out between December 2019 and October 2020 and had several stages:

- **Digital forms:** we used a digital feedback form to gain preliminary insight into how organisations approached diversity in volunteering. This form was open to all and promoted on the NCVO website and via twitter. We also used the digital forms as a recruitment tool for the workshops and further research. The digital form was open for responses between December 2019 and April 2020 and had 69 responses in total.
- **Workshops:** we ran three workshops in February-March 2020 (two in London with 41 participants in total and one in Bristol with 52 participants) lasting two hours, which combined open-ended discussion and interactive exercises for participants to share experiences and generate ideas. The purpose of these workshops was to explore how organisations approached diversity in greater detail, as well as to understand barriers, enablers and key learnings of their diversity journeys. We tried to ensure a mix of size and type of organisation at each workshop, as well as organisational approach to diversity and participant demographics. During the workshops, we also presented some of the key findings from *Time Well Spent*, to get participants' responses. We used a discussion guide, based on research

objectives to support and structure the workshop.

- **Phone interviews with key stakeholders:** to understand more about diversity and volunteering in the sector, we identified key people and organisations with an expertise in diversity to participate in interviews. These participants were either Equality, Diversity and Inclusion specialists, belonged to organisations with good practice and understanding of diversity, or served a specific community (eg LGBTQI+, disabled or BAME communities). We conducted a total of 12 telephone and online interviews (lasting 30-45 minutes) over two rounds: the first in February with seven participants and the second in October with five participants. The second round of interviews was primarily made up of participants from LGBTQI+ organisations to address the gaps we had in the first round. We also conducted this second round of interviews in order to get an understanding of diversity in the sector during covid-19.
- **Follow-up emails:** we asked respondents who previously took part in the workshops or expert interviews three follow up questions via email to get a better sense of the impact of covid-19 and anti-racism movements in 2020 and incorporated the feedback into the report. The questions were:

1. Since March 2020, in what ways, if any, has your organisation's approach to diversity and volunteering changed? Please include any specific examples where possible.
2. What were the key internal or external drivers that led to those changes?
3. Please share any key reflections or lessons learned related to your organisation's approach to diversity and volunteering this year.

Based on the information received during fieldwork, we identified several brief **case examples** of good practice from respondents.

3. A range of research and literature related to volunteering and diversity was reviewed for this report.

A summary of the literature review can be found in section two. A full list of the research and literature referenced in this report can be found below.

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