



# VOLUNTEERING: A FAMILY AFFAIR?

## FULL REPORT

### PART 1

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Contents

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Acknowledgements.....	3
Research team.....	3
Foreword.....	4
Executive summary.....	5
Introduction .....	5
Defining and describing family volunteering .....	5
Why and how family volunteering comes about .....	6
Family and organisational context makes a difference to family volunteering .....	6
Family volunteering makes a difference to families and organisations.....	7
Conclusions and considerations.....	7
1. Introduction .....	10
1.1. Background.....	10
1.2. Research aims and objectives.....	12
1.3. Research approach.....	14
1.4. Reading this report.....	17
2. What? Defining and describing family volunteering.....	19
2.1. What volunteering looks like within families.....	19
2.2. Organisational approaches to family volunteering .....	26

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### Research team

This project has been led by NCVO, in partnership with the University of Birmingham and the University of Salford. The research team has included: [Véronique Jochum](#) (study lead, design and case studies), [Amy McGarvey](#) (case studies), [Oliver Chan](#) (mapping) and [Joanna Stuart](#) (literature review, case studies) from NCVO; [Daiga Kamerāde](#) (study design and Time Use Survey analysis) from the University of Salford; [Angela Ellis Paine](#) (lead author, study design and case studies) from the Third Sector Research Centre at the University of Birmingham.

## Foreword

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How people volunteer and choose to give their time is not a static thing. It changes over time and this change can be influenced by many different aspects of what is happening in people's lives and their relationships with those around them. For many, some of the most important relationships they have are with their family (in the broadest sense of the word), and we know that these relationships can play a significant role in shaping attitudes and behaviours. We also know that there are practical implications of being part of a family that influences how people spend their time and ultimately whether they volunteer or not. We have known this for some time, but we have never fully understood the role of family within volunteering.

The partnership that came together to work on this research wanted to learn more. Although we come from very different organisations, we share a common goal: to get more people volunteering and to make volunteering more inclusive so that people who are less likely to get involved can also experience the benefits of volunteering. Formal volunteering in a group or organisation currently doesn't work for everyone, and addressing this diversity challenge will require volunteer-involving organisations and funders to think differently about the type of volunteering they offer and how it's supported and managed. This may become even more pressing as we begin to understand the impact of covid-19 in worsening inequalities within our society. Volunteering is an important part of the solution, but it is also part of the problem if we aren't able to make volunteering and the benefits more accessible to all.

Covid-19 has been challenging for everyone, including for families who have had to deal with the stressful realities of lockdown and social distancing. However, as communities have come together in response to covid-19, there have been some indications of positive changes for volunteering and families. Opportunities could emerge from stronger family ties created by more time spent living and working together, flexible working could open up time for those who felt they were too busy and a digital offer may continue to be something that enables people to fit volunteering in around a busy family life. So, although this research was conducted before covid-19, the learning and practical considerations within it feel more relevant than ever as communities and individuals start to rebuild and renew the connections between them.

We have found real value in the collaborative approach to funding this research, and the process of working together has had a positive impact in itself: strengthening relationships between our partnership of volunteering-involving organisations, researchers and funders and identifying shared objectives that could support future work. Our range of perspectives have also helped to shape the practical guidance, so that it feels relevant to a broad spectrum of volunteer-involving organisations that share our passion for opening up volunteering to new groups of people. Insights from research projects like this can help to shape volunteering practice.

*Sport England, the Greater London Authority (Team London), Pears #iwill Fund and the Scouts are proud to support this research.*

## Executive summary

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### Introduction

Our research set out to explore the relationship between families and volunteering, from family and organisational perspectives. It aimed to address evidence gaps and to support volunteer-involving organisations to develop or enhance volunteering opportunities and experiences for families. We did this by reviewing existing evidence, mapping family volunteering opportunities, undertaking analysis of the Time Use Survey and carrying out organisational and family case studies. The report brings all this together under the following sections: What? (Defining and describing family volunteering); Why? (Why and how family volunteering comes about); How? (How family and organisational contexts shape family volunteering experiences); To what effect? (The outcomes of family volunteering for families and organisations); So what? (Conclusions and considerations). We hope that the findings will be used to help enhance the experience for all those involved.

### Defining and describing family volunteering

Family volunteering is diverse, and it is extensive. It looks and feels very different in different families and organisations. It includes, but is about far more than, parents and children volunteering together within the same organisation. We identified five types of family volunteering: do together, do alongside, do for, bring along and do separately.

Family volunteering can mean parents and children getting involved in volunteering; more often it means couples. It can also mean siblings, or grandparents and grandchildren. Families may engage in these types of volunteering at any one time or at different stages of their lives. For example, on moving to a new area, couples may volunteer together as a way to integrate themselves into the community; parents may volunteer for activities in which their young children are involved and then volunteer alongside each other as their children grow older, and they may all volunteer separately after their children leave home.

According to the Time Use Survey, in 2014/15 one-third of all formal volunteering households in the UK volunteered together as a family, most often as couples without (dependent) children, followed by one parent with at least one child. And we define family volunteering more broadly than is reflected within this Time Use data, which only covers our 'do together' and 'do alongside' categories, suggesting that family volunteering is likely to represent an even greater proportion of volunteering.

The ways in which organisations approach family volunteering also differ: we identified a spectrum of approaches from 'by design' through to 'going unnoticed'. For many organisations, family volunteering is something that has evolved, largely 'by default', over the organisation's history or as an 'extension' of the activities and services they deliver which themselves have been focused on families or children. Family volunteering was not a discrete thing, but integral to the organisation's engagement with volunteers per se, and often reflective of a general orientation towards families or communities. While some efforts may be made to promote and encourage family members to get involved, particularly in terms of parents being encouraged to help out with activities their children participate in, often family volunteering goes unacknowledged. Some organisations, however, had designed specific family volunteering schemes in

which families (particularly parents and children) were explicitly encouraged to volunteer together, often within discrete projects or activities. There were indications that these types of approaches are on the increase.

## **Why and how family volunteering comes about**

We found that families can provide the motivations for, routes into and triggers for volunteering, and the resources that they draw upon to enable them to do so. Existing research shows us that marriage, divorce, strength of relationships, having children and caring for elderly/ailing relatives can all make a difference, in different ways, to volunteering: some make it more likely that families will volunteer, and others have the opposite effect. Our case studies highlighted how family can be a motivation for volunteering through: a desire to instil or express family values; parental desire to be effective role models for their children; wanting to spend meaningful time together (or indeed apart); wanting to give back to an organisation/community as a family. Families can also provide important routes into volunteering: the activities that children get involved in, for example, can be routes into volunteering for their parents and young people themselves, and volunteers often rope others in too! Volunteering also requires resources, and those resources can be found and shared on a family basis, particularly in terms of time and money, but also emotional support. They can also be a drain on those resources, creating barriers to involvement.

From the organisational perspective, family volunteering was seen by some as a way to meet mission or strategy and/or to strengthen and diversify engagement. These were the two main drivers identified by organisations for the establishment of specific family volunteering schemes. It was harder to identify drivers for the more extensive family volunteering by default, as by its very nature this was less strategically driven.

## **Family and organisational context makes a difference to family volunteering**

Family circumstances can make a considerable difference not just to the chances of volunteering, but also to how it is experienced. With ever-busy lives, fitting volunteering in can be difficult, particularly when it is given less priority than other roles and responsibilities. There were important gender dimensions to family volunteering, which were reflective of those within wider society, not least of which included women often shouldering the responsibility for making volunteering fit within the family schedule. Sharing resources, including physical and emotional support, amongst family members can be crucial in sustaining volunteering: it becomes a team effort.

What organisations do and how they do it can make a difference to the opportunities for, experiences of and outcomes from family volunteering. Creating a 'family-friendly' environment is significant. Key aspects seen to facilitate engagement included: actively encouraging families to get involved in a range of flexible opportunities; opportunities that suit the (changing) needs and interests of different family members (particularly of different ages); having the potential for stepping up and stepping back as circumstances change; supporting volunteers in a way which recognises and accommodates not just their own individual circumstances but also their family circumstances and how these may affect their

volunteering. Some organisations grapple with how to balance a desire to be inclusive, particularly of children and young people, with the need to ensure safeguarding measures are followed.

## **Family volunteering makes a difference to families and organisations**

Volunteering can make a considerable difference to those families that get involved. It can be an enjoyable way to spend (meaningful) time together. Perhaps more significantly, it can deepen the bonds between family members, providing a point of commonality and an expression of shared values and identity. It can also be a route to new opportunities and experiences. It can, however, also add to the stresses and strains of family life. When volunteering becomes too onerous – in time and/or energy – it can take its toll not just on those individuals directly involved, but also on the wider family; other roles and responsibilities can be neglected, opportunities missed and tensions heightened. For some, however, when the stresses were not too great, working through these issues as a family had in itself been developmental.

Whether by design or by default, family volunteering can also have a considerable impact on organisations: it can help them meet their mission and boost volunteer recruitment, retention and resource. It can also, however, create challenges for volunteer managers and get in the way of inclusivity.

## **Conclusions and considerations**

Family provides one of the contextual layers shaping an individual's volunteering. More than that, however, exploring family volunteering has highlighted how volunteering is not a purely individual activity – it can also be a collective one. In this case, the collective is the family. We found it to be extensive – even more so than we had imagined. Like other forms of collective engagement, however, we also found evidence to suggest that it is no longer possible to assume that family volunteering will continue to flourish by default. Changes in the ways that we live and in how organisations involve volunteers are both affecting the chances of family volunteering happening and the experience of it once it does. If it is to be sustained, it needs attention and nurturing. While an increasing number of organisations are looking to design specific family volunteering schemes, this remains a small part of what family volunteering is about.

We suggest a series of questions which organisations may want to consider on if they are looking to develop family volunteering.

- 1. How do families currently engage with your organisation?** Family volunteering is diverse, and it is extensive. It includes, but is about far more than, parents and children volunteering together within the same organisation. It can be about any number of family members volunteering and can involving volunteering alongside each other, for each other or together. It goes beyond what people typically think of as family volunteering. Much of this volunteering currently goes unacknowledged by organisations. We encourage all organisations to reflect upon how they

currently involve families as volunteers (and members, supporters and participants), how this has been facilitated to date and how it is changing.

2. **How do you want to involve families and what approach to family volunteering is right for you?** Organisations have got involved in family volunteering for different reasons and in different ways. The different approaches to family volunteering affect how that volunteering manifests, is experienced and contributes to organisational and family life. After considering how they have involved families to date, we encourage organisations to consider what more they would like to achieve through family volunteering and what different approaches offer in helping them to get there.
3. **Can you enhance the volunteering pathways for families within your organisation?** Traditional pathways, which had previously facilitated family volunteering largely by default within some organisations, have begun to break down. We encourage organisations to consider the pathways through participation for families within, and indeed beyond, their organisation and how these might be further supported. This may require a more systems-based approach to volunteer leadership that looks beyond individual roles, programmes, activities, teams and even organisations.
4. **Can you do more to help families balance volunteering with family life?** Families provide important reasons for, routes into and resources for volunteering. But family life is busy – increasingly so – and it can be difficult to fit volunteering in. Volunteering is often carried out alongside or as part of other roles and responsibilities. If organisations want to facilitate family volunteering, it is important that they recognise and support their volunteers with this. We encourage organisations to consider how they can be more flexible in their involvement of volunteers and how they can adapt, so that volunteering can be seen as part, or an extension, of a family's other roles and responsibilities rather than a source of conflict about a family's resources.
5. **How can you ensure that family volunteering is as inclusive as possible?** While family volunteering has the potential to create more inclusive volunteering practices and is particularly effective at engaging parents with young children who would otherwise be less likely to get involved, it also has the potential to become exclusionary. Organisations need to consider how they can develop their volunteering offer to make it more inclusive of families, and within that a more diverse range of families, while also guarding against the potential for family takeover.
6. **How does the balance you are striking between risk management and being inclusive affect the involvement of families in volunteering?** A tendency towards formalisation, professionalisation and centralisation can work against flexibility and inclusivity, and as such against family volunteering by default/extension. A growing amount of 'red tape' created barriers and was contributing to a suggested decline in multigenerational family volunteering in particular.



We encourage organisations to think more about how they can strike the right balance between risk and regulation.

- 7. How can you help to ensure that families, and your organisation, get the most out of volunteering?** Volunteering can make a considerable difference to those families that get involved. It can deepen the bonds between family members and provide an enjoyable way to spend time together, a point of commonality and an expression of shared values and identity. It can also be a route to new opportunities and experiences. It can, however, add to the stresses and strains of family life, particularly when it becomes too onerous. Organisations can also get a lot out of family volunteering, and the returns are likely to be even greater when families have a positive experience of volunteering. We encourage organisations to think more about how they can ensure that families get the most out of volunteering: not only will this improve the volunteering experience and outcomes for families, it will also improve the outcomes for organisations and their beneficiaries.

# 1. Introduction

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## Key findings

- Existing evidence suggests that family context might be an important influence on volunteering.
- Family life is changing, with unknown consequences for volunteering.
- While we know something about how family influences volunteering, we know relatively little about how families experience volunteering or how organisations engage them.
- This research study set out to explore the relationship between families and volunteering, from the family and organisational perspective.
- The research involved: reviewing existing evidence; mapping family volunteering opportunities; analysing the UK Time Use Survey; organisational and family case studies.
- This report brings together the findings from across these research elements.

## 1.1. Background

Volunteering is often viewed purely as an individual activity that is driven by a mix of altruistic and instrumental motivations, is influenced by demographics and leads to a range of personal benefits. When we research it, we often seem to freeze it in time and space, exploring individual instances of volunteering, in one place and at one moment in time. Over the last decade, however, research findings have emerged which have encouraged us to recognise the complex and wide-ranging social context in which volunteering is situated. The *Pathways through Participation* research,<sup>1</sup> for example, highlighted the range of factors that shape participation beyond the individual – including relationships and social networks, groups and organisations, local environment and wider societal and global influences. These interdependent contextual layers act together to shape the motivations for, routes into and experiences and outcomes of volunteering.

Evidence suggests that family context might be particularly significant. We know from existing literature, for example, that married people are more likely to volunteer than those who are single, especially if their spouse volunteers;<sup>2</sup> but newly married women (not men) are less likely to volunteer immediately after marriage,<sup>3</sup> and volunteering rates can drop off when parents have a baby<sup>4</sup> and increase when

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<sup>1</sup> Brodie, E., Hughes, T. Jochum, V., Miller, S., Ockenden, N. and Warburton, D. (2011) *Pathways Through Participation: What creates and sustains active citizenship?* London: NCVO/ IVR/Involve.

[www.involve.org.uk/resources/publications/project-reports/pathways-through-participation](http://www.involve.org.uk/resources/publications/project-reports/pathways-through-participation) (accessed September 2020)

<sup>2</sup> Nesbit, R. (2012) 'The influence of major life cycle events on volunteering', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 6, pp. 1153–1174.

<sup>3</sup> Einolf, C. J. and Philbrick, D. (2014) 'Generous or greedy marriage? A longitudinal study of volunteering and charitable giving', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 76, no. 3, pp. 573–586.

<sup>4</sup> Nesbit, R. (2012) 'The influence of major life cycle events on volunteering', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 6, pp. 1153–1174.

children reach school age.<sup>5</sup> For women, in particular, volunteering rates can drop when they become carers for elderly or sick relatives<sup>6</sup> and when someone is widowed.<sup>7</sup> We know that if parents volunteer, their children are more likely to do so,<sup>8</sup> partly through the parents acting as influential and enduring role models<sup>9</sup> and through socialisation processes by which pro-social behaviour becomes the norm,<sup>10</sup> although this can be disrupted by marital distress and family transition.<sup>11</sup> Children's activities can also provide a route into volunteering for parents and vice versa.<sup>12</sup> In short, existing evidence suggests that family matters when it comes to volunteering.

We also know, however, that families are changing. Evidence shows that family structures have become more diverse: fewer people are married; more couples cohabit outside of marriage, including those with children; there are more single-parent households (almost entirely mothers); there are more LGBTI couples, including those with children.<sup>13</sup> Some of these structures have come hand in hand with changing attitudes and legislation. The division of roles and responsibilities within families has also changed. Changing attitudes to women working, combined with economic needs, have come with the rise of two-income households, for example. According to one recent report, 60% of households had two working parents, with more women in full and part-time work than in the past.<sup>14</sup> Despite more women entering the workforce, however, the same research suggests that women are still doing the majority of domestic tasks, including childcare and chores, on their own. Evidence suggests that men are doing more childcare in general than in the past but are disproportionately undertaking interaction tasks, while women do more practical work alone and are more likely to reduce their leisure time or workload as a result.<sup>15</sup> Women have

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<sup>5</sup> Einolf, C. J. (2018) 'Parents' charitable giving and volunteering: Are they influenced by their children's ages and life transitions? Evidence from a longitudinal study in the United States', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 2, pp. 395–416.

<sup>6</sup> Taniguchi, H. (2006) 'Men's and women's volunteering: Gender differences in the effects of employment and family characteristics', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 83–101.

<sup>7</sup> Ravanera, Z. R., Beaujot, R. and Fernando, R. (2002) 'The family and political dimension of social cohesion: Analysing the link using the 2000 National Survey on Volunteering, Giving and Participating', *PSC Discussion Paper Series*, vol. 16, no. 7, article 1.

<sup>8</sup> Grimm, J. R., Dietz, N., Spring, K., Arey, K. and Foster-Bey, J. (2005) *Building Active Citizens: The Role of social institutions in teen volunteering*, Washington, DC: Corporation for National and Community Service.

<sup>9</sup> Bekkers, R. (2007) 'Intergenerational transmission of volunteering', *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 99–114.

<sup>10</sup> Taylor-Collins, E., Harrison, T., Thoma, S.J. and Moller, F. (2019) 'A habit of social action: Understanding the factors associated with adolescents who have made a habit of helping others', *Voluntas*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 98–114.

<sup>11</sup> Ottoni-Wilhelm, M. and Bandy, R. (2013) 'Stage-specific family structure models: Implicit parameter restrictions and Bayesian model comparison with an application to prosocial behavior', *Review of Economics of the Household*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 313–340.

<sup>12</sup> Einolf, C. J. (2018) 'Parents' charitable giving and volunteering: Are they influenced by their children's ages and life transitions? Evidence from a longitudinal study in the United States', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 2, pp. 395–416.

<sup>13</sup> OECD (2011) *Doing Better for Families*. [www.oecd.org/els/family/47701118.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/els/family/47701118.pdf) (accessed September 2020); ONS

(2019) *Families and Households in the UK: 2019*.

[www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2019](http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2019) (accessed September 2020); Saner, E. (2019) 'The family in 2050: artificial wombs, robot carers and the rise of single fathers by choice', *The Guardian* [www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/dec/31/family-2050-artificial-wombs-robot-carers-single-fathers](http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/dec/31/family-2050-artificial-wombs-robot-carers-single-fathers) (accessed September 2020)

<sup>14</sup> UCL (2019) 'Less than 7% of couples share housework equally'. [www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2019/jul/less-7-couples-share-housework-equally](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2019/jul/less-7-couples-share-housework-equally) (accessed September 2020)

<sup>15</sup> Wajcman, J. (2014) *Pressed for Time: The acceleration of life in digital capitalism*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

also been found to disproportionately carry the 'mental load': the responsibility for organising, planning and managing the household.<sup>16</sup>

These changes have knock-on effects for wider family life, including the ability of families to spend time together. One study highlighted that many people are likely to be working hours outside of the traditional working week (flexible evenings and weekends), which can impact on the time that family members will be able to spend time together.<sup>17</sup> Another study highlights that other factors in addition to work, including technology, housework and homework, are impacting on family time together: the study estimated that families spend on average less than seven hours of time together each week.<sup>18</sup> Half wanted to spend more time together, and nearly all recognised that time together was crucial. Families are often combining activities, such as domestic chores or childcare, with leisure.<sup>19</sup>

All these developments raise considerable questions for volunteering, including how they will affect the likelihood of families engaging in volunteering, the volunteering experience and its outcomes. To date, however, evidence is limited on exactly how they are shaping volunteering from an individual or family perspective, and an organisational one.

When it comes to how volunteer-involving organisations are engaging with families as volunteers (and beyond), we know relatively little. Family volunteering schemes and opportunities which specifically target families have been operating in the US and Canada for a while but, to date at least, appear to have been less common in the UK. In a short survey on family volunteering conducted by NCVO in 2015, the majority of organisations that responded did not offer family-focused volunteering opportunities, but there was interest in developing these kinds of opportunities in the future. We suspect, however, that many have been involving multiple members of the same families as volunteers for years. The implications of family volunteering for volunteer recruitment, retention and support are as yet unclear. Furthermore, it seems that volunteer-involving organisations are thinking about family volunteering opportunities primarily as those in which family members participate together. There is, however, scope to look at this area more widely, including opportunities for siblings, grandparents and grandchildren, and couples to volunteer together, as well as considering how organisations might take into account family dynamics more generally when developing and supporting volunteering activities.

## 1.2. Research aims and objectives

Recognising the potential significance of the (changing) family context for volunteering, and the existing gaps in evidence, raises new questions about the relationship between families and volunteering. There is more to be understood from the family perspective – how and why families

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<sup>16</sup> Emma (2017) 'The gender wars of household chores: a feminist comic', *The Guardian*,

[www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/26/gender-wars-household-chores-comic](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/26/gender-wars-household-chores-comic) (accessed September 2020)

<sup>17</sup> Wajcman, J. (2014) *Pressed for Time: The acceleration of life in digital capitalism*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>18</sup> Woolfson, R. (2017) *The Bassets Vitamins Purple Paper*.

[www.bassettsvitamins.co.uk/~media/Bassettsvitamins/en/Pdf/BassettsVitamins%20PurplePaper%20Website.pdf](http://www.bassettsvitamins.co.uk/~media/Bassettsvitamins/en/Pdf/BassettsVitamins%20PurplePaper%20Website.pdf) (accessed September 2020)

<sup>19</sup> Wajcman, J. (2014) *Pressed for Time: The acceleration of life in digital capitalism*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

engage with volunteering individually and collectively, how they think that changes in family circumstances are shaping their experiences and what effect volunteering has on the family. There is also more to be understood from an organisational perspective – why and how organisations engage with families as volunteers, whether this is through formal schemes or more generally through their everyday volunteering activities, what enables and constrains family engagement in volunteering and what difference it makes to those organisations.

We aimed to address these evidence gaps by exploring how organisations engage with families as volunteers and how families engage with volunteering. We did this through undertaking research to address three key questions.

- How and to what extent do families engage in volunteering?
- How do families understand and experience volunteering?
- How do organisations and community groups engage family members as volunteers?

Within this report, we have reframed these questions as follows.

- What? (Defining and describing family volunteering)
- Why? (Why and how family volunteering comes about)
- How? (How family and organisational contexts shape family volunteering experiences)
- To what effect? (The outcomes of family volunteering for families and organisations)
- So what? (Conclusions and considerations)

We hope that the findings will support volunteer-involving organisations to:

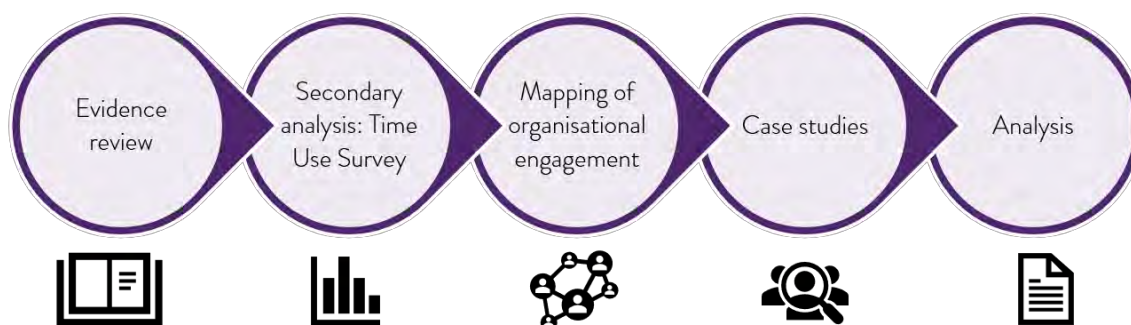
- develop or enhance volunteering opportunities for family members (individually or collectively)
- successfully manage such opportunities and enhance the experiences of all those involved
- help organisations, through newly created practical resources, to think through and consider family dynamics when developing and supporting volunteering activities.

A [practical framework to help organisations reflect on how they currently involve families in volunteering and how they could develop this in the future](#) has been produced alongside this report.

## 1.3. Research approach

This research has involved five stages, which are summarised in figure 1 and expanded upon below.

**Figure 1: Research approach**



### Evidence review

Our search for existing literature on family and volunteering found 232 relevant documents that spanned a number of fields and disciplines. We reviewed these articles to help guide our research, in particular by highlighting key themes and gaps in current understanding on families and volunteering. While we identified quite strong evidence on how family status affects volunteering, we found very little on how organisations engage with families as volunteers. The findings of the review are available in a [full report](#) and [blog](#), as well as being interwoven within this report.

### Secondary analysis of the Time Use Survey

We undertook quantitative analysis of the data from the UK Time Use Survey (UKTUS) 2014/2015 (the most recent version).<sup>20</sup> This is a nationally representative large-scale household survey, in which people aged eight and over, from 4,216 households in the UK, complete diaries about how they spend their time. Our analysis focused on: understanding how common family volunteering is amongst households in the UK; whether different members of the same family engage in volunteering activities together or separately; who volunteers as a family; the relationship between family composition and volunteering rates. A [blog](#) and [detailed report](#) of the findings have been published.

### Mapping of organisational engagement with family volunteering

We mapped existing family volunteering opportunities using internet searches (Google, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) to understand the types of activities available, how they are communicated and the types and fields of organisations offering them. This included reviewing the websites of 106 organisations and 67 expressions of interest forms from organisations, which were submitted to NCVO in response to a blog about the research. We held follow-up conversations with a small number of

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<sup>20</sup> Gershuny, J. and Sullivan, O. (2017). 'United Kingdom Time Use Survey, 2014–2015'. In *UK Data Service.SN:8128*: Oxford: Centre for Time Use Research, University of Oxford.

organisations that had contacted the research team with particularly interesting examples of family volunteering schemes. These are presented in yellow boxes within this report.

### Organisational case studies

We undertook five organisational case studies. The organisations were selected from the mapping stage of the study to reflect different approaches to family volunteering, as well as a mix of other features such as: whether the engagement was within a specific scheme or part of general volunteering within the organisation; whether it was formal or informal; frequency of volunteering; activity subsector; focus; family type; scale of family volunteering; type of organisation. A brief summary of each of our case study organisations is provided in table 1.

Data collection for the organisational case studies included:

- interviews with staff/leaders at different levels
- focus groups and/or interviews with volunteers – both those who volunteered with family members and those who did not
- family case studies (see below)
- a review of organisational documents and administrative data
- observations of volunteering activities, where possible.

The methods we used were flexible, allowing us to adapt to organisational and family circumstances: the inclusion of young children in interviews, for example, required a different approach to those which only involved adults.

#### Table 1: Case study organisations

<p><b>Kids Run Free</b> is a medium-sized, UK-wide charity set up in 2010. It aims to get children healthier, happier and more confident through running. The organisation runs two programmes, Marathon Kids and Park Kids. Our research focused on the Park Kids programme, which involves children of all ages in regular running events. Volunteers play a central role in setting up and running the community-based events, with limited operational support from a centralised staff team. Volunteers are also involved ‘behind the scenes’ in fundraising and communication activities. Park Kids involves over 120 volunteers across 25 events, many of whom are parents of the children who attend the events. Efforts are currently being made to expand Park Kids into new areas, focusing on engaging young people from deprived communities where activity levels are lowest.</p>
<p><b>The Whitworth</b>, part of The University of Manchester, was founded in 1889. It is one of the main art galleries in the city. Recent years have seen major redevelopments and refocusing. The current director is a proponent of the ‘useful museum’ concept based on the idea that museums and art galleries have a civic purpose; this focus has led to engagement and participation becoming key priorities, with volunteering seen as a key mechanism for achieving this. While volunteers have long been involved in the organisation, until recently the approach was fairly informal. The wider changes to</p>

the organisation have led to an expansion of volunteering and a formalisation of approach. A new initiative has been established with the specific aim of attracting families to volunteer within the gallery.

**Little Village** is a medium-sized, London-based charity formed in 2016 to help local families to support one another during times of need through the collection and redistribution of clothes, toys and kit for families with young children. The charity has sites in three London boroughs and supports families across London. Our research focused on Wandsworth. Volunteers are central to the organisation, which has a small staff base – there are 155 volunteers to three paid staff in the Wandsworth branch. Nearly all the volunteers (95%) are mothers, including some who have been beneficiaries. Parents with young children, including those on maternity leave, typically attend daytime sessions; those who are working are more likely to go to evening sessions.

**St John Ambulance** is a major, national organisation providing first aid and pre-hospital care. There are approximately 15,000 adult volunteers plus a youth corps of approximately 11,000, many of whom currently volunteer or will do so in the future. There are approximately 850 paid staff. Volunteers are involved at all levels of the organisational structure and can be split into two groups: those who get involved with specific activities and stay for a few years before moving on; those who become highly committed, regular volunteers who take on different roles, with involvement often spanning whole families, across generations. One person estimated that half of the volunteers are connected to others within the organisation through family.

**St Mary's** is a lively church (a medium-sized, local charity), located in the market town of Wendover in the Chilterns. Alongside all the things you would expect of a church, it runs a gift and ethical-goods shop in the town centre and has a series of associated groups and activities which have grown out of its work over the years, including a youth centre and dementia-care group. All these activities rely on volunteers, with a wide range of volunteer roles. Volunteer involvement is organic, with little in the way of formal volunteer management. Recruiting new volunteers is becoming a bit of a challenge. Family volunteering tends to mean couples, with relatively few young people involved, although some whole families are particularly active.

In the main text of this report, we avoid referring to individual organisations to protect their anonymity, but organisations are named in the boxed examples. The green boxes throughout the report highlight stories from our organisational case studies.

### Family case studies

We undertook 12 case studies with families from within the case study organisations. We sought, as far as possible, to maximise diversity of families in terms of: patterns of volunteering; family structure; ethnicity; age. For example, our case studies included: two siblings volunteering together without their parents; a single parent with three children, plus two grandparents; families with young children and families with



grown up children; blended families. Although most of our family case studies were from white, middle-class backgrounds, we did include families from minority ethnic backgrounds and from lower socio-economic groups. The limited demographic diversity of our family case studies does create a limitation to the study. Family case studies typically involved a joint interview with as many of the family members as possible, during which an interactive exercise was carried out to map out family members, their roles and responsibilities, and volunteering activities. In most cases, the joint interview was followed by a series of one-to-one interviews with individual family members. We have given all families pseudonyms to protect their identities in this report. The purple boxes throughout the report highlight stories from our family case studies.

### Analysis

For the case studies, we conducted both within-case (description of the case and themes within the case) and cross-case (identifying key overarching themes, points of similarity and disconnect) analysis. An analysis framework was used to support this. Short case study descriptions were written up for each organisational case study.

Emerging findings, from all stages of the research, were shared at a workshop with volunteer-involving organisations to check for resonance and validity and to think through implications. The discussion within the workshop helped to shape the final stage of analysis and the development of our set of considerations for practitioners.

## 1.4. Reading this report

The report brings together the main findings from the different stages of the research and is divided into six key sections: Introduction; What? (Defining and describing family volunteering); Why? (Why and how family volunteering comes about); How? (How family and organisational contexts shape family volunteering experiences); To what effect? (The outcomes of family volunteering for families and organisations); So what? (Conclusions and considerations).

### A note on definitions

The Office for National Statistics defines a family as: ‘a married, civil partnered or cohabiting couple with or without children, or a lone parent, with at least one child, who live in the same address. Children may be dependent or non-dependent.’<sup>21</sup> We have taken a slightly broader definition, including members of extended families who may not live at the same address. Families, then, can include single-parent families, gay and lesbian families, blended and non-custodial families (including step-parents and stepchildren) and families without children.

We know that not everyone will call their involvement ‘volunteering’. We have tried to capture the range of activities that people undertake when giving unpaid help. This includes informal volunteering (carried out on an individual basis), as well as formal volunteering (through a group, club or organisation), although

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<sup>21</sup> ONS (2019) *Families and Households in the UK: 2019*.

[www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2019](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2019) (accessed September 2020)

## Volunteering: A family affair?

our focus is predominantly on the latter not least because we reached volunteers through organisations, groups and clubs. While we asked them about volunteering elsewhere, our findings are inevitably skewed to more formal forms of volunteering.

As for 'family volunteering', while it is commonly understood to refer to family members volunteering together in the same organisation, often within a specific initiative, in this report we take a broader view to include the range of ways in which families get involved in and shape volunteering. We detail our understanding of 'family volunteering' in section 2.

## 2. What? Defining and describing family volunteering

### Keys findings

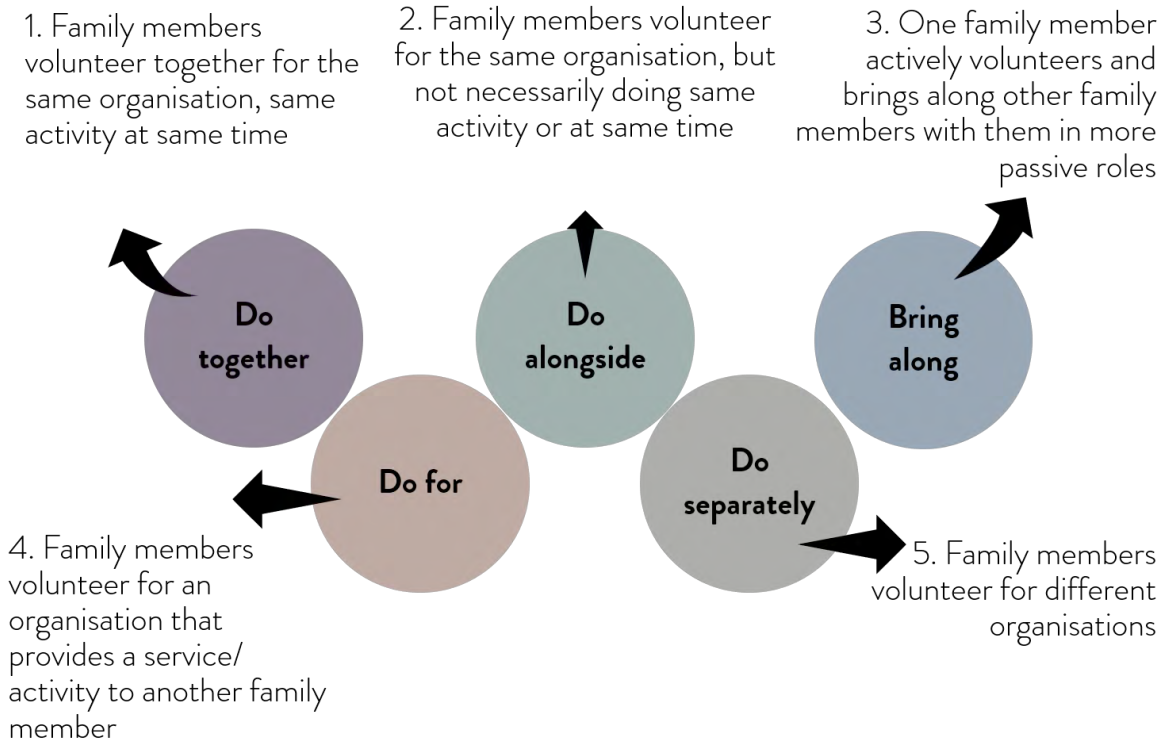
- Family volunteering is diverse and extensive.
- We identified five ways in which families engage in volunteering: do together, do alongside, do for, bring along and do separately.
- Family volunteering can mean parents and children getting involved; more often it means couples.
- Families may engage in these types of volunteering at any one time, or at different stages of their lives.
- The ways in which organisations approach family volunteering also differ.
- We identified a spectrum of approaches ranging from specifically designed family volunteering schemes to the involvement of families in volunteering going unnoticed.
- For many organisations, family volunteering is something which has evolved over time, largely by default, as an organic part of the organisation's wider volunteer involvement.
- Although relatively rare, specifically designed family volunteering schemes appear to be on the rise.

Like all volunteering, family volunteering is diverse. Here we outline our findings on the ways that families got involved in volunteering and how we have grouped these together to come up with categories of involvement. Our categories go beyond what others have traditionally defined as family volunteering. We then look at the ways in which organisations engage with families as volunteers and suggest that there is a spectrum of approaches – from family volunteering by design through to family volunteering going unnoticed.

### 2.1. What volunteering looks like within families

We identified five ways in which families engage in volunteering, as summarised in figure 2 and detailed below. While these take us beyond traditional definitions, we suggest that all of these are part of family volunteering: they all reflect how families engage in volunteering and all are important to consider. These are not mutually exclusive: many of our families were engaged in a number of these types. Indeed, we found that some families do them all. More likely, however, is that they move between types over their life course, depending on personal, family and organisational circumstances, opportunities and constraints.

**Figure 2: Types of family volunteering**



**Figure 3: Examples of types of family volunteering**



### **1. Do together: two or more family members volunteering together for the same organisation, doing the same activity at the same time and place**

Our first category – ‘do together’ – is perhaps what people typically think of as family volunteering. It is when two or more members of the same family volunteer together for the same organisation, doing the same activity at the same time. It can be any combination of family members volunteering together: couples, parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, siblings, aunts and nieces, etc. Indeed, while we often think of family volunteering as being parents and children volunteering together, our analysis of the Time Use Survey data suggests that it is more often couples volunteering together.

Sometimes family volunteering together can be through specific initiatives set up to engage whole families as volunteers: our mapping work suggested that opportunities for families to volunteer together are most likely to be offered within organisations in the fields of heritage and culture (for example, museums and art galleries) and the environment (for example, conservation). More often, however, it is likely to be part of the general volunteering going on within the organisation, whether or not this is explicitly recognised. See section 2.2 for more on these different organisational approaches.

#### **Volunteering together: the Johnston family**

Rosie, Sam (aged seven) and Ellie (aged five) Johnston volunteer together at the Whitworth. Rosie used to come to the gallery for the free Baby Art sessions when Sam was only a few months old. They both really enjoyed the sessions, more so than other baby activities in town. The gallery then closed for a major refurbishment and they came back once Ellie was born. The circumstances were very different, as Ellie was ill and spent months in hospital. They came to the gallery in between hospital visits, as it was nearby. A couple of years later, Rosie saw on the gallery’s Facebook page that it was looking for family volunteers and she was really interested in taking this opportunity up. She felt that it was a way of ‘giving back’ to the gallery as it had ‘been a wonderful resource for her and the children’. Rosie initially only volunteered with Sam during the summer holidays and at half-term, but Ellie ‘was desperate to do it too’, so now they volunteer together. Sam and Ellie help set things up at the beginning of the activity, show the children taking part what to do and help to clear up. Rosie wasn’t sure whether having both children volunteer together would work, but they support each other and are comfortable in the gallery setting. It’s very much about play and fun, but Rosie feels that it’s also a way for her children to understand what helping others means.

### **2. Do alongside: different members of the same family volunteering for the same organisation, but doing different activities, often at different times**

As well as families volunteering together, we also found that family members volunteer alongside each other – multiple members of the same family volunteering for the same organisation, but doing different roles and activities, potentially at different times. While our mapping work only revealed a few instances of

opportunities for families to volunteer alongside each other being actively promoted, our case studies suggested that it is happening far more extensively than this would suggest.

Some families we spoke to talked about the value of being involved in the same organisation but doing different roles and activities, which reflects their different interests, skills and experiences, and enables them to have a common connection but not step on each other's toes: 'it worked better that way'. As we would expect from existing evidence of volunteering, there was often a gender dimension to the roles being undertaken;<sup>22</sup> there was also an age dimension. We discuss in section 4.2 how having a variety of flexible roles and activities available for family members of different ages and genders enables families to volunteer alongside each other.

### Family members volunteering alongside each other: Jane and Peter

Jane and Peter are both in their 70s and retired. They have been married for 50 years, they have two grown-up children – both in the 40s and no longer living locally – and four grandchildren. They have lived in their current community for over 40 years and have been involved in the local church all that time. They are also involved in lots of other groups and organisations within the local community: 'We've been participants in as many things as we can in the village because we find that that is part of being in a village that you need to be in with things to know what's going on and to do that.' When their children were younger, Jane and Peter encouraged them to be actively involved in things and often volunteered to support activities for them – Peter, for example, volunteered in the Scouts, and Jane in the Guides. Both their children volunteer, their daughter more so than their son. Although Jane and Peter are involved in many of the same groups and organisations, they took the active decision to volunteer not together but alongside: 'we did agree between us that we wouldn't be on any committees where both of us were on it because any conflictions of ideas or that we might disagree on something. So, either [Peter] would be on something or I would be on something but not together.' In the past, while Peter was on the school's PTA, for example, Jane volunteered in the classroom, helping with sewing and reading. In the church, while Peter is on the church council, Jane is heavily involved in various administrative activities, including spending one day a week sorting all the arrangements for weddings in the church. Fitting in such extensive commitments can be a bit of a juggle, with Jane leading on careful diary planning to ensure all their commitments can be met.

### Family volunteering together and alongside: some insightful data

The UK Time Use Survey captures family members within the same household volunteering together or alongside each other, at the same time. It does not, therefore, neatly fit in to any one of our categories, but it provides valuable insights into the scale of family volunteering that are not available from any other data source.

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<sup>22</sup> See for example Low, N. *et al* (2007) *Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving*. London: Cabinet Office.

Our analysis of the 2014/2015 Time Use Survey found that on an average day, **3% of the households in the UK volunteered together** or alongside each other as a family in the same group or organisation at the same time. This is equivalent to approximately 810,000 households. With 9% of households containing at least one member who formally volunteered on an average day, it represents one-third of all formal volunteering. In other words, **one-third of all the households that volunteered, did so together as a family.**

These family households spent on average 27 minutes per person per day volunteering together – one hour per household per day. This is a considerable amount of time, but is less than the average of 47 minutes for volunteers in households where people volunteer alone.

**Most commonly, this was couples volunteering together.** Couples of all ages volunteered together, but 7 out of 10 volunteering couples were aged 60 or over. The second most common category was an adult volunteering with at least one child younger than 16, followed by two adults volunteering with at least one child.

### **3. Bring along: one family member actively volunteering and bringing other family members with them in more passive roles**

Rather than all volunteering together, some family volunteering involves one, or more, family members actively volunteering while bringing others with them – they are present together, but not everyone is actively involved in volunteering. Often this is parents bringing along young children. We found examples of babies being strapped to parents' chests while out on a march, prams being parked up in the back of a room during meetings and children playing while their parents got on with the task in hand. It also works the other way round: children bringing a parent/responsible adult with them for safeguarding or transport reasons.

For some, bringing family members along with them is what makes it possible for them to volunteer. A single mother of young children, for example, may not have childcare so could not take part in volunteering if she did not bring her child with her. For some, it is a more active choice: bringing children along, for example, can be part of a desire to instil values and build norms of behaviour. We heard that for some, being 'brought along' as a child had developed into a lifelong engagement with an organisation. We also heard suggestions that it was getting harder to bring children along due to growing safeguarding commitments. We explore these issues further in subsequent sections.

#### **Volunteers bringing family members along: Samira and her children**

Samira is a single mother in her 30s with two young children (aged one and three years old). She initially came to Little Village as a beneficiary of its services, receiving support at a difficult time in her life. After receiving this support, she felt strongly about giving back to the organisation that had helped her, and she has been getting involved as a volunteer up to twice a week. One of her sons is at nursery, but she is able to bring her one-year-old to the family-friendly sessions held at Little Village, where she can either have her son looked after in the crèche or have him near her as she volunteers in a

designated area. Other volunteers have got to know her and her son, so they also look out for him. As she doesn't have a support network of wider friends and family, she would not be able to participate in this volunteering without being able to bring her son along, and a key benefit for her is to be around others, which helps her mental health. She has recommended volunteering at Little Village to someone else she knows, who has since attended with their child.

#### **4. Do for: one (or more) family members volunteering for a group or organisation that provides a service or activity to another family member**

##### **Parents volunteering for their children's activities: the Dickens family**

The Dickens family – dad (Matt), stepmum (Sara) and Matt's two children (aged ten and seven) – consider themselves to be an 'active' family with 'frenetic' calendars. Sara now works full time and Matt is a freelancer at home, which gives him more flexibility with home life. The children are involved in many after-school and extracurricular activities – drama, rugby, Beavers, Cubs and running – and both Matt and Sara volunteer in various capacities to support these activities, sometimes together and sometimes individually. Sara is also the leader of a Rainbows group, which her stepdaughter once attended. Most of their volunteering can be considered 'do for' and is closely connected to their children's activities and interests, although they both actively volunteer in other areas too. Much of this involvement has been unplanned for Sara – helping to fill a role when there was no one else to do it, or helping out on the day has turned into a more regular commitment. Matt is very supportive of Sara's volunteering, both emotionally and practically, and he 'mucks in' and helps her in the various roles she has taken on. He also gets involved more directly in other community events and activities, often related to the children and his interest in music. Both Matt and Sara are keen for the children to be busy and for them to see first-hand the value of being active and taking action: 'I really want them to see them get up and go and that's a really good way to be and live.' Getting involved and helping out with their children's activities and clubs is seen as part of what they do as a family and an important element of their children's upbringing.

We came across many examples of one (or more) family member volunteering for a group or organisation that provided a service or activity for another family member; often this was parents volunteering to support activities their children were involved in, such as coaching a sports teams or helping out at Brownie packs, youth clubs or schools. There were also instances of volunteering at a care home where elderly parents were residents; it could also include, for example, chairing a local dementia support group that a partner attends, or volunteering at a hospice where a cousin, grandparent, aunt or other resident is cared for.



Our mapping suggests that this kind of family volunteering is quite prominent in sport and recreation (especially in local sports clubs), education (schools) and campaigns (education, climate change or bereavement justice).

### **5. Do separately: multiple members of the same family volunteering for separate groups and organisations**

This category recognises that family is an important context for volunteering and that multiple family members might volunteer for different organisations. They volunteer but not together or alongside each other. Sometimes the decisions to volunteer in separate organisations are made collectively, based on an assessment of the family and community needs, resources and interests. For example, we found families with young children where one parent volunteered to support the school that their children attend, while the other parent volunteered to support a sporting activity.

A perceived need to support the different organisations that families engaged in led to volunteering being shared out across the family, with family members volunteering separately in the different groups and organisations. Such decisions were actively negotiated in some families. Sometimes, however, volunteering separately was a purely individual decision that reflected the different interests and skills of family members.

#### **Volunteering separately: the Lowe family**

Roger and Sandra are a married couple, with two sons (in their early 20s). One of their sons still lives at home; the other spends a lot of time abroad. Both work from home, Roger as a self-employed management consultant and Sandra as a foreign language teacher. They met overseas – Sandra was working and Roger volunteering. They describe themselves as a ‘small’ and ‘tight-knit’ family with lots of shared interests, including a love of music and the outdoors. While they have lots of common interests and are all actively involved in the community in a variety of ways, they currently tend to volunteer separately: ‘We don’t do many things together.’ Roger is heavily involved in the local youth centre, while Sandra is a central figure within a local refugee resettlement initiative. Most things, however, can be traced back to a connection with the church. Sandra describes Roger as a real volunteer type, having volunteered throughout his life, and herself less so, although alongside her work with refugees she supports the local Scouts group, which Roger was also involved in the past, and a local singing group and takes on various voluntary roles in the church.

### **Talking about family volunteering**

Throughout this report, when we talk about ‘family volunteering’ we are talking inclusively about all five categories within the typology, although sometimes we differentiate between them by specifying certain types when they are pertinent to the point being made. We recognise that this is different to the much narrower understanding of family volunteering as family members (typically parents and children) volunteering together within the same organisation, which is more commonly used and much closer to

our 'do together' category.<sup>23</sup> As noted above, these categories are not mutually exclusive, and families may engage in multiple forms of family volunteering at any one time or over time. Often, they move between them as their circumstances change. For some families, volunteering is a small part of what they do – one of a number of activities, roles and responsibilities that they engage in as a family. For others, it is a key part of who they are as a family, representing a significant investment of time and energy, often across multiple roles and organisations. We explore these experiences of family volunteering in section 4.1.

### Family volunteering at the heart of the civic core:<sup>24</sup> the Edwards family

The Edwards family – mum (Olivia), dad (Graham) and two teenage children (Stuart and Catherine) – are all active volunteers. When the children were little, a lot of their volunteering fitted within our 'bring along' category: at the church, for example, they brought their children along with them. Now that their children are older, they ask them if they want to come along: 'it's about enjoying time together, rather than getting them volunteering'. Some of their volunteering is now 'done together'. They are all, for example, involved in the local youth club, although Catherine is involved more as a beneficiary than a volunteer. Olivia and Graham also volunteer together at a local toddler group – they enjoy going back to support the group that they ran when their children were small. They also do things 'alongside' each other – they are all, for example, involved in the local church, but while Olivia spent a number of years running the church shop, Graham has been more involved in the pastoral side, and Catherine helps with services for young people. They also do some things separately: Graham, for example, helps out with the local cricket club. As one of them said: 'We do like spending time together and so we do quite a lot of things together, but we also do quite a lot of things apart.'

## 2.2. Organisational approaches to family volunteering

There were also different approaches to involving family members as volunteers from an organisational perspective. The key dimension here was the extent to which organisations had intentionally sought to encourage family volunteering within their organisation. We suggest that there was a spectrum of approaches taken by organisations ranging from discrete, designed family volunteering programmes, to

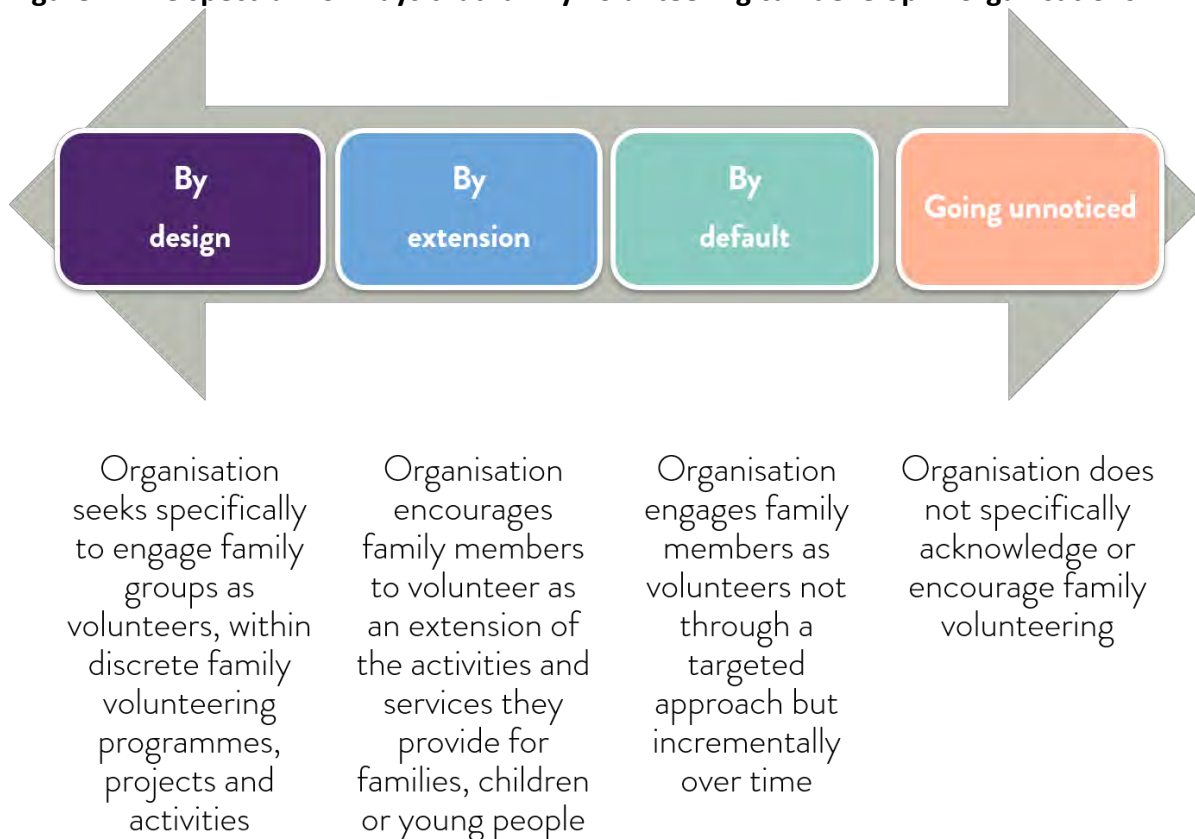
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<sup>23</sup> In our literature review, for example, we found that Porritt (1995: 2) defined family volunteering as being: 'when family members volunteer together in community service activities. They may come from different generations, in combinations such as parent/child or grandparent/parent/child, or from the same generation, such as adult partners, or brothers/sisters'. While we think this is a useful starting point, particularly its emphasis on different family groupings, we would encourage a broader definition reflective of the broader types of engagement we found through this research. Porritt, K. (1995) *Family Volunteering: The Ties That Bind: An Introduction to Preparing Your Agency for Family Volunteers*. Ottawa: Department of Canadian Heritage [volunteeringculture.or.kr/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/Family-Volunteering.pdf](http://volunteeringculture.or.kr/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/Family-Volunteering.pdf) (accessed September 2020)

<sup>24</sup> Mohan, J. and Bulloch, S (2012) *The Idea of a 'Civic Core': What are the overlaps between charitable giving, volunteering, and civic participation in England and Wales? Working Paper 73*. Birmingham: Third Sector Research Centre.

family volunteering by extension and family volunteering by default, to family volunteering going unnoticed within organisations (see figure 4).

**Figure 4: The spectrum of ways that family volunteering can develop in organisations**



**By design: organisations specifically seek to engage family groups as volunteers, within discrete family volunteering programmes, projects and activities**

Some organisations reported developing discrete activities and programmes designed specifically to encourage family volunteering. Our mapping work suggests that family volunteering by design remains relatively uncommon, but it does appear to be on the increase, with a number of organisations having dedicated sections on their websites, for example, to promote and recruit family volunteers. The examples we found were concentrated, but not exclusively, within organisations working in the fields of the environment, and heritage and culture. Where organisations had specific family volunteering programmes, projects or activities, these generally fell within our ‘do together’ or sometimes our ‘do alongside’ categories. Most of the examples that we found focused on engaging parents and children, rather than couples or other family groupings. Some ran continuously throughout the year; others provided opportunities for more discrete, episodic engagement, for example in events during summer, school term breaks and occasional weekend events. We explore the reasons why organisations have developed such schemes in section 3.2.

### Family volunteering by design at the Whitworth

As part of a drive to become more relevant, representative and embedded within the local community, the Whitworth has designed interventions specifically aimed at engaging families as both visitors and volunteers. The family volunteering scheme has developed incrementally, building on the success of existing activities targeted at families, including a well-established early years programme. There is a specific family workshop volunteer role (not exclusively for people wanting to volunteer with members of their own family) and parents can bring their babies when volunteering. They are also able to volunteer together, with children of a very young age being encouraged to help with small tasks. All are given a volunteer t-shirt, even the babies. The families that are volunteering are predominantly mothers (in their 20s and 30s, often on maternity leave) with one young child (over two-thirds are babies and toddlers), although there are a few cases of older children being involved and some mothers volunteering with several children. In one instance, siblings are volunteering together, and there have also been some grandparents volunteering with their grandchildren, but this isn't common. Overall, working with and for families is helping to make the gallery more open and relevant, and has enabled it to reach out to people who wouldn't usually get involved.

### **By extension: family members are encouraged to volunteer as an extension of the activities and services that organisations provide for families, children or young people**

Rather than having a discrete, specifically designed family volunteering scheme, some organisations actively sought to engage family members as volunteers as an extension of the activities and services that the organisation provided for families, children or young people. Typically, this was parents being encouraged to volunteer to support activities that their children were involved in, not within a discrete family volunteering initiative but as part of the organisation's wider volunteer involvement. While family-friendly practices might be put in place to facilitate this and organisations might mention the possibility of family members volunteering together on a volunteering page or frequently asked questions section of their website, it is part of a general volunteering offer rather than being contained within a specially designed family volunteering programme/activity or exclusively for family members. We found examples of this approach within uniformed youth groups and sports groups. We also came across examples in care homes, where the family members of residents were encouraged to volunteer to support various activities.

### Family volunteering by extension at Kids Run Free

Recruiting and retaining families is key to Kids Run Free's organisational mission and model. Its aim is to involve children in outdoor running activities, and it relies on the support of parent volunteers, although other volunteers are also encouraged to get involved. The organisation recognises the important role played by families in the scaling up of the programme into new communities, particularly in setting up new 'Parks Kids' events: 'The family is going to be integral for years because without them, we can't get in to the next community because there's only so many of us here I suppose, so we need

them to want it and to, I suppose to run it as well, so we need them to take the lead on their event'. It has not, however, set out to develop a discrete family volunteering programme. Indeed, the organisation wants to keep volunteering opportunities open to all in the community and this is reflected in its marketing for volunteers. As one staff member said: 'So from that aspect it happens unintentionally if that makes sense, but I don't think as an organisation we've ever talked about the idea of, well can we engage families to volunteer, because I don't think we've even thought that that was a concept that could happen'.

### **By default: multiple members of the same family volunteer within an organisation not through any targeted approach but incrementally over time**

Our research suggests that many organisations engage multiple members of the same family more by default than by design. Here, family volunteering had often evolved over time within the organisation; it was not something that the organisation had actively set out to achieve, although it may have implicitly encouraged it through its general ways of working, but multiple family members had been attracted to volunteering within the organisation. We frequently heard stories of couples volunteering together and of generations of the same family volunteering for an organisation, without ever having been specifically encouraged to do so. Some organisations had, however, implicitly acknowledged and therefore potentially encouraged family volunteering through, for example, recognising volunteering families within organisational materials or generally working in ways which were 'family friendly'. We found examples of this approach within uniform organisations, local community-based groups, including churches and sports clubs, and particular volunteering roles such as fundraising and environmental clean-ups. As we shall discuss below, there was concern amongst some organisations that had historically involved families more by default than by design that there was less family volunteering now than in the past,<sup>25</sup> leading some to consider whether they needed a more active approach to sustain it.

#### Family volunteering by default at St Mary's church

Families have always been involved in volunteering at St Mary's church, which reflects the nature of the organisation. Like all volunteering at the church, however, this is largely organic, self-organised and not formally 'managed'. There has been no drive to specifically encourage families to volunteer and no discretely designed family volunteering project. Instead, families have got involved in the church over the years by default: they come to the church together and get involved together; roles are often shared out amongst family members or passed on from one generation to the next. This has been further facilitated by the church having a range of activities which tend to focus on different age groups, enabling an informal pathway through participation (see section 4.2). Although St Mary's remains an active, lively church, as congregations dwindle and families face increasing pressures on their time, concerns have been raised that family volunteering is declining and if left unchecked will likely continue to do so.

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<sup>25</sup> Reflective of what Hustinx and Lammertyn refer to as a wider move from 'collective' to 'reflexive' volunteering. Hustinx, L. and Lammertyn, F. (2003) 'Collective and reflexive styles of volunteering: A sociological modernization perspective', *Voluntas*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 167–187.

### **Going unnoticed: family volunteering is not explicitly acknowledged or encouraged by organisations**

Our research suggests that some organisations may engage with multiple members of the same family as volunteers without giving it active thought or explicit acknowledgement: family volunteering goes unnoticed. It is hard to judge the scale of this or its significance, although with our analysis of the 2014/15 Time Use survey identifying that one-third of formal volunteering households volunteer together, the indication is that family volunteering may happen more than is acknowledged by organisations. Our mapping work, for example, highlighted that many volunteer-involving organisations made no mention of family on their volunteering webpages or social media feed.

### **A spectrum of approaches to family volunteering**

As noted above, although we have presented discrete approaches, they fall along a spectrum, with organisations often focusing more or less on families and on family volunteering at different points in time, depending on a range of wider organisational and contextual factors. It was possible to follow the journey that some organisations had been on – from family volunteering largely having occurred by default, through to a more proactive approach whereby they had designed a specific programme to target families. For other organisations, the journey was less linear and more fluid. There was also considerable variation within these approaches according to whether the family volunteering tended, for example, to be planned or spontaneous, regular or episodic, formally organised and managed or organically led. In the sections below, we explore some of the factors which seemed to influence the approaches adopted by different organisations and the motivations behind them.