



VOLUNTEERING: A FAMILY AFFAIR?

FULL REPORT

PART 2

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3. Why? Why and how family volunteering comes about

Key findings

- Families can provide motivations for, routes into and triggers for volunteering, as well as the resources needed to make volunteering possible.
- For example, family can be a motivation for volunteering through a desire to instil or express family values, parents wanting to be effective role models for their children and a desire to spend time together.
- Families can provide routes into volunteering through children's activities and through one family member 'roping' others in.
- Resources for volunteering, time, money and support can be shared on a family basis.
- From the organisational perspective, family volunteering can be developed as a way of meeting mission and strategy, and/or of diversifying engagement.

In this section, we consider why and how family volunteering comes about. First, we look at this from the family perspective: the motivations for, routes into and triggers for families to get involved in volunteering, and the resources that they draw upon to enable them to do so. Within this, we also consider how family can act as a barrier to volunteering. We then consider why organisations get involved in family volunteering, particularly the more actively designed approaches, while also considering what stops others from getting involved or doing more.

3.1 Beyond the individual: Why and how families get involved in volunteering

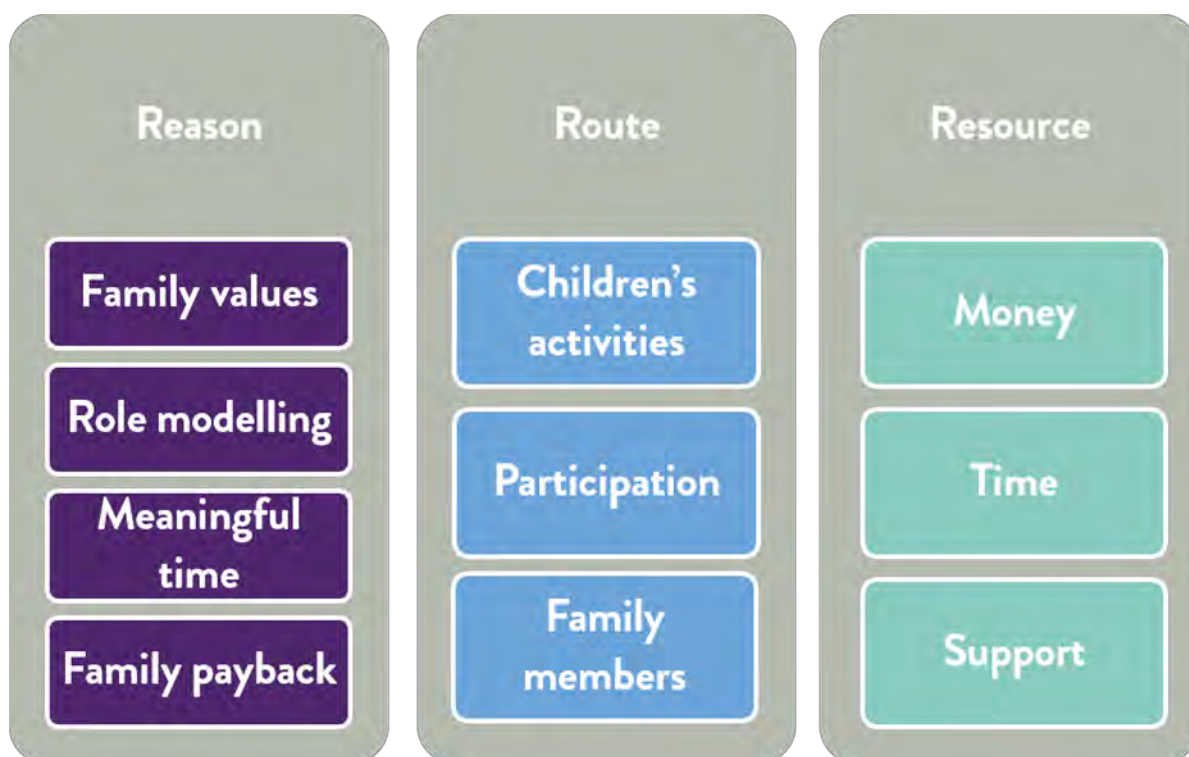
There is already a considerable body of evidence on why people volunteer. Most focuses on individual motivations, but there is also evidence on predispositions and triggers for and routes into volunteering.¹ Common reasons given for volunteering include wanting to help people or improve things, having spare time and wanting to support a group, organisation or cause that they think is important.² We heard many of these types of responses amongst our respondents. Rather than repeating all those findings here, we focus on the motivations, routes in and resources which were particularly related, in one way or another, to family. Each section incorporates findings on how family can also act as a barrier to volunteering.

¹ Musick and Wilson provide a thorough review in Musick, M. and Wilson, J. (2008) *Volunteers: A social profile*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

² See for example McGarvey, A., Jochum, V., Davies, J., Dobbs, J. and Hornung, L. (2019) *Time Well Spent: A national survey on the volunteer experience*. London: NCVO.

www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/policy_and_research/volunteering/Volunteer-experience_Full-Report.pdf (accessed September 2020)

Figure 5: Family as a driver for volunteering



Family as motivation

For some, family was a motivation, or reason, for volunteering. The reasons that people gave for volunteering, for example, included those that specifically related to their children or their sense of family and their role within the family.

Instilling and expressing family values

For some, family volunteering was motivated by family values: for example, the importance of family, supporting each other, hard work, helping others, community, active citizenship and faith. These were not just individually held values, but also collective family values, or at least values that parents wanted to instil in their children, and volunteering was seen as a way to both actively express and transmit them. As one parent put it: 'they can see how things fit in the community and how people work together and that importance of being part of something'. Where parents and children volunteered together or alongside each other, this was seen as a particularly valuable way of expressing and instilling those values: 'You're experiencing it with them and you're showing them that you care for it'. The hope in many cases was that volunteering would become the norm for family life:

"I think it's important for these guys [children] to see. They probably think it's quite normal for someone to run a massive business [charity shop] like we've been doing, for free and [with] no time, while they're doing a job and running a family, they just think that's normal."

Family values and volunteering: The Adair family

Dad (Tom) and mum (Sally) share a strong sense that being part of a local community where you get involved and help one another is important. They have two children (aged five and three). Tom's volunteering is largely based on his interest in running, and he regularly volunteers for GoodGym. Sally gets involved in more informal ways, including coaching on interview skills, CV writing and supporting people in the community who need help. Exposing their children to experiences in the community and instilling positive values was seen as an important part of their children's upbringing: 'We're very much a values-based family where we try and teach values to our children.' Involvement in their community and in volunteering was seen as one way of promoting and teaching these values. They talked, for example, about the importance of getting involved as a family in community fundraising events and activities, such as the yearly Santa Dash: 'It's a good sort of opportunity for us to tell the kids that not everyone is as lucky as they are and that there are some people that need our help and if we can do it, either by passing on skills or helping raise funds or changing something for them'.

Role modelling

For some parents, the motivation for getting involved was a desire to be a good role model for their children. This was also highlighted in our evidence review.³ As one volunteer who brought her child along with her to one of our case study organisations reflected:

"I have no husband here but my kids always copy what their parents do so my son came on Thursday last week because he had an inset day, and it was normal for him to come with me for a couple of years, he made the puzzles, it's good ... it's very important for kids to show [them] how you volunteer, they will copy."

While being a good role model was particularly associated with volunteering that involved parents and children doing something together or alongside each other, it was not limited to that: other forms of volunteering were also felt to offer the potential for positive role modelling. For example, in some families when it was just one of the parents who volunteered, this was enough to stimulate conversations about volunteering and/or to be seen volunteering by children – the role modelling still happened.

Spending meaningful time together

For some, the reasons given for wanting to get involved in family volunteering related to a desire to do something meaningful together as a family within the time they had available or to spend 'quality time' together, as a couple, a family unit of parents and children, or siblings. This was seen to be gaining

³ See for example Bekkers, R. (2007) 'Intergenerational transmission of volunteering', *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 50, no. 2. pp. 99–114.

importance as lives became increasingly busy, meaning that time spent together was more precious.⁴ As one person said:

“Because we’re spending time as a whole family, so I think that’s really important, everyone’s lives are so busy now, we all have our own little things, whereas this we’re all spending that morning together.”

Here, there was an added belief that spending meaningful time together would help to strengthen relationships amongst family members. One family talked about being motivated by a desire to ‘reframe’ their relationships, which had become challenging within the home – it was hoped that volunteering would provide a neutral space to spend meaningful time together and rebuild those relationships.

Time outside of the family

Sometimes, volunteering was motivated by a desire to do something as an individual outside of the wider family or with time that had become available because of changes in family circumstances – volunteering became ‘me time’. For example, for those on maternity leave, volunteering can be motivated by a desire to do something meaningful when paid work has paused, while also providing a reason to get out of the house, meet people, stay connected and do something ‘for me’ rather than with or for the family. We explore this further in the section on triggers/routes into volunteering below. As one person said:

“... I got very involved because ... I very much felt like I needed to do stuff because I’d been working 14/15 hours a day and commuting and then suddenly not ... I felt like I needed to get involved. They were little tiny things – doing the cash for a toddler group [for example, but] that was a job. So I did ‘a job’ to feel like I had a thing to do and it was part of my structure and my week because it had all turned upside down ...”

Family payback

Involvement in family volunteering was also motivated by wanting to give something back to an organisation or a community that the family were a part of or had benefited from. One volunteer talked about being motivated by a ‘huge debt of gratitude’ that they felt for the organisation – in this case the Scouts – for support they had provided to their son at a particularly difficult point in his life. For some parents, this meant volunteering for all the activities their children were involved in, particularly those that were run by volunteers: ‘So I think generally if our children do anything run by volunteers, we always try and do something’. Within this there was a sense of building reciprocity and mutuality across parents:

“After having kids you realise how much it entails – the cost – so giving back to some mothers who are in different situations is quite a nice kind of motivation.”

Similarly, wanting to be part of, or contribute to a community was a commonly cited reason for volunteering, particularly for families within the more rurally located cases. This has a particular family

⁴ Wajcman, J. (2014) *Pressed for Time: The acceleration of life in digital capitalism*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

dimension to it: it wasn't about getting involved in the community individually, but about wanting the family to feel part of the community.

Family life providing multiple routes into volunteering

In common with existing research evidence,⁵ and as indicated in some of the above, we found that family life could often provide triggers for and routes into volunteering.

Children's activities as routes into volunteering

Having children was itself an important trigger for volunteering, and children's involvement in education and leisure activities often provided a route into volunteering for parents. We found many instances of this within our family case studies. This was sometimes actively encouraged by organisations. For some organisations which provide activities/services for young people, becoming a parent helper is almost a requirement; for most, it is more gently encouraged – some do little to encourage or facilitate it, although it may happen by default. In some instances, volunteering had been triggered by an organisation that a child was involved in being threatened with closure if volunteers did not come forward. This left parents feeling as if they had little choice but to step in, and occasionally led them to volunteer in organisations in which they had little: 'Sometimes you do things because you feel you should, not necessarily because you have got a passion for it'.

Sometimes, however, children didn't want their parents, or other family members, involved in their activities: they valued their time apart, and indeed time apart was recognised as an important way for children to develop independence. One couple talked about waiting until their child had left an organisation before volunteering, as he hadn't wanted them to get involved: 'We fancied [volunteering] a little bit before, but with [our son] it was sort of, "Oh, I don't want to be going along there with my dad, let us have my own thing." So we waited a little bit longer until he went off to university before joining it properly.' This was acknowledged by at least one of our case study organisations, which had questioned the extent to which they should encourage parents to volunteer for activities in which their children were involved because they recognised that some young people's involvement represented the first thing that they had done independently of school or family: 'We're the first active decision they take for themselves'. To involve parents could take away from this.

Additionally, while children's activities can provide a route into volunteering for their parents, when those activities come to an end for the children, this can also mean the end of volunteering for parents. This was not always the case – we found examples of parents who had kept volunteering for groups that their children had left many years ago.

⁵ See for example 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 (accessed September 2020)

Children's activities as a route into volunteering: Mr and Mrs Wilson

Husband and wife, Andy and Carmen, first got involved with volunteering at 'Parks Kids' in a casual, ad-hoc way when they took their three children (aged ten, seven and four) to the events: 'So I'd just naturally – I'd run round with my daughter or I'd grab a couple of elastic bands and help them out. Even if it's just standing on a corner giving the kids a high five just to motivate them, you know ... there's nothing better than a little bit of mutual support to keep them going when you can see they're tired'. After going along to the events and helping out for a year, they moved to a new area and approached Kids Run Free to set up a new 'Parks Kids' event in their new community. The children wanted to continue to be involved and the parents valued the enjoyment, exercise and time they spent together as a family: 'That's why I set it up, because they enjoy it, I want to carry that on, and if nobody else is going to do then you may as well do it yourself'.

Participation as a route into volunteering

Being a participant in or beneficiary of an organisation also provided a route into volunteering for young people themselves, sometimes on their own and sometimes alongside their parents. Sometimes there was a blurry line between being a participant and a volunteer, with no clear distinction between the two. In some cases, this move from participation to volunteering had been facilitated by organisations having a clear pathway, or route of progression, from participation into volunteering that was actively encouraged and supported. In others, young people found their own way. We shall return to this in the section below.

Other family members as a route into volunteering

The route into volunteering for some came from being encouraged to help out at an organisation by another family member. Sometimes this was in the form of a husband 'mucking in' to support his wife's volunteering by, for example, helping out at occasional events that his wife was organising, and at other times it was a more committed, sustained involvement. In such cases, while various family members got involved in volunteering, it was primarily driven by one person who got involved and then roped the others in. As one person put it:

"Once you step foot through that door, you don't get out again! And, if your family want to spend time with you, they have to come through the door with you! And, I say that in the nicest possible way, it's one of those things, it's like they see you doing something and, 'Oh I fancy having a bit of that' and they come and they try it, they enjoy it and they join in."

Some volunteers and family members themselves highlighted that they were not choosing to get involved; they felt obliged to help out a partner, for example, or had been told to help out by a parent. As one person said: 'It's more important for me than it is for them, they feel obliged to help me out, they certainly don't need to, but because I'm there every, one Saturday a month, I think my wife particularly has always felt obliged to turn up with me.' Generally, despite some resistance, being 'roped in' was reflected upon positively overall and had sometimes led to a lifelong commitment to an organisation. Indeed, in some cases we heard that while a child's volunteering may initially have been 'driven' by a

parent's, as they were roped in to help, over time this had changed. This was acknowledged by both parents and children:

“They would rather be doing their own thing, if I’m honest. My daughter was like ‘Mum must I?’, but then once she got there she used to enjoy it ... So she was okay once she was there, it was just getting her there that was the challenge.”

“... me mam and dad have been in [this organisation] ... since before I was born and that tends to be how I got involved because they were very, very active with [this organisation] ... it was a case of we got, I wouldn’t say ‘dragged along’ because a lot of the time we quite enjoyed it, but yeah... it’s been part of my life all my life.”

Family members as a route to volunteering: The Brown family

The Brown family – mum (Tina), dad (Alistair) and two children (Anna, 14 years old, and Emily, six years old) have all been involved in volunteering at Little Village to varying degrees. Tina has been quite heavily involved after first hearing about Little Village through another family-oriented charity. She is described by the family as the ‘linchpin’ who got them all engaged in different activities for the organisation, mostly in an ad-hoc way for Alistair, who helps out with some activities, and Emily, who is brought along sometimes. Anna was initially brought along by her mum, but has since been undertaking her own volunteering at Little Village as part of The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award. Initially, she felt her involvement was more motivated by her mum and less by her own choice, but having got more involved, she feels more self-motivated and especially enjoys coming with her friends, though she also sometimes participates with one of her parents: ‘I feel like it’s 60% my choice and 40% my mum’s ... if a teacher had suggested, “Why don’t you pop along?”, I would have said no, but I’m definitely glad I have. At the beginning it was probably 80% mum and 20% me but it has grown, and I definitely choose to come here...it’s a really good way to catch up with friends and at the end you feel satisfied you’ve done something really good, so I really enjoy coming.’

Family as a resource for volunteering

Families also provided a range of resources to enable volunteering to begin. Time and money were particularly highlighted here. Having more of these resources was generally thought to increase the chance of volunteering; having less of them created barriers to getting involved. We touch on how they relate to getting into volunteering here, and we shall return to them in section 4 when we discuss how they affect the ongoing experience of family volunteering.

As evidenced within the literature,⁶ time was thought to be an increasingly scarce resource, and a lack of it was identified as being a key barrier to volunteering by our case study families and organisations. Two developments were particularly highlighted as reducing the time that families had available to volunteer:

⁶ Wajcman, J. (2014) *Pressed for Time: The acceleration of life in digital capitalism*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

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increased working hours, particularly through rising female employment; the rise of children's leisure pursuits. Volunteering together as a family or volunteering alongside a child involved in an activity, however, were recognised as good ways to help to overcome time barriers and reduce time conflicts. Some people, for example, said that they were more likely to participate in volunteering at weekends if their children could be involved in the activity as well:

"On the weekends I'm more open for volunteering if it's something that would involve the kids and it's an experience that they would like... if it's a family activity and it's fun and it gets the kids out, then yeah, I think it's something that we would do more of."

It was also recognised that families often needed a certain level of financial security before they felt that they could volunteer. One member of a couple who undertakes full-time work, for example, may ensure that the family has enough financial resource to enable the other person to work part time and so have capacity (both time and financial security) to volunteer. Similarly, one parent (or grandparent) who looks after children may reduce childcare costs and so enable the other to go out and volunteer. One family, where three generations were volunteering alongside each other in the same organisation, reflected on how the grandmother had stepped back from her own volunteering roles to pick up some of the childcare activities in order to enable her daughter and grandchildren to do their 'activities', including volunteering.

Importantly then, these resources were not just individually held and drawn upon, but also pooled and shared across those families, enabling some or all of the members to engage in volunteering in ways which might not have been possible if they were reliant on their own individual resources. Single-parent families faced particular barriers through a lack of pooled resources. Further, when 'deciding' whether or not to take on a volunteering role, for some it was a conscious, collective, family (rather than individual) decision, made by weighing up all the resources alongside the other roles and responsibilities that they shared as a family:

"... for us it is very much the two of us [making decisions about volunteering] together, because [my husband] works full time, and he works away from home a lot, so I am on my own a lot here. He's really struggling to be chair of governors because he keeps not being here. I feel that I can do stuff on behalf of both of us, so as a family we have this lot of volunteering, maybe three-quarters of that is me doing it, but I can do it because of our situation, [my husband] can't, he's chocka, and when he's home he really wants to spend a bit of time with our daughter, so it's almost like, it's not us doing it individually, it's us as a family, what we can do in the circumstances we have."

For others it was more of an individual decision, although often made in relation to others within the family:

"I make my own decisions, but that's because my husband is still working full time so I'm a free agent to get on and do what I want, eventually it probably won't be like that, but it is at the moment."

We shall return to these points in section 4 when we consider how family resources affect not only access to volunteering but also the experience of volunteering once involved.

3.2 Mission and reach: why organisations get involved in family volunteering

When family volunteering had developed ‘by default’ within organisations, it was hard to identify why this had happened, other than a general sense that it had developed organically as a reflection of the organisation’s general mission, values and activities, and how embedded they are within the local community, for example. When family volunteering had been developed ‘by design’ or ‘extension’ however, two key sets of motivating factors were identified.

Family volunteering as a way to meet mission and values

For some organisations, developing family volunteering was seen as a way to meet its mission, to deliver on shorter term strategies and/or to reflect its values. This included organisations which aimed to educate and empower children, engage with families, be family friendly or embed themselves within the community.

It was suggested that it was those organisations which were particularly orientated to either families or communities through their mission and values that were most likely (and able) to actively encourage and facilitate family volunteering: it was something which naturally aligned to what they did more generally. For family-orientated organisations, for example, making volunteering accessible to families through being flexible, relatively informal, responsive to family needs and balanced in their response to safeguarding measures is easier than for other organisations, as it more closely aligns to what they do and how they work in general. As a respondent from one organisation put it: ‘Making sure it is accessible [for families] is one of the things that’s hard baked into any space we take on, it’s got to allow families to come in.’

For other organisations, family volunteering was seen as a way to help them become more family orientated. Here, involving family groups as volunteers was seen as a form of co-production: family members were encouraged not just to give their time but also to contribute ideas as to how activities could be delivered by the organisation to make them more appealing and accessible for families.

Meeting mission through family volunteering at Kids Run Free

Kids Run Free’s Park Kids programme is all about families and getting whole families involved and active. The 45-minute events, held weekly, fortnightly or monthly, rely on parents and other family members to not only bring their children to the events, but also encourage and motivate them: ‘Having their parents there is really, really important because it just relaxes them and it makes them more confident and comfortable’. Parents also play a key role in running many of the Park Kids events as volunteer race directors or in other formal roles, while others get involved in a more ad-hoc casual basis as and when help is needed: ‘The family for us is a key volunteer and more often than not, our volunteers have children with them, that’s what gets them involved or they’ve come to the event with the kids and they’ve realised that the event needs more volunteers to support it and then they’ll help

with that'. For some family volunteers, their involvement is regular and more formalised, whereas for others, it is informal and flexible. While the 'Parks Kids' events are family orientated, they are also community orientated, and the events aim to appeal to volunteers beyond families of existing participants: 'Although family is definitely at the heart of what we do, we want to appeal to everybody in the community ... so, we want everybody in the community to be involved, but we do also advertise that we're very much a family-friendly organisation; the event itself is for kids'.

Family volunteering as a way to widen participation

Some organisations had designed family volunteering schemes with the intention of widening participation in their organisation, particularly – but not limited to – diversifying their volunteer base. Family volunteering, for example, was seen to have the potential to overcome time pressures for people by enabling couples, or parents and children, to volunteer together, which would enable a wider range of people to get involved. Similarly, explicitly encouraging parents to bring children was seen as a way to overcome childcare as a barrier to volunteering and so widen participation. Encouraging parents and children to volunteer together was recognised as a way to overcome some of the concerns that organisations had about safeguarding when children were unaccompanied.

In some cases, it was hoped that there would be a wider knock-on effect, in terms of engaging more diverse volunteers through family volunteering and subsequently using this to demonstrate that they were an open and relevant organisation. One organisation, for example, talked about encouraging parents and children to volunteer together as a way to engage people from minority ethnic communities (particularly refugee groups) where the child is the main English speaker and so can act as an interpreter for a parent who would otherwise be/feel unable to participate due to the language barrier.

Little Village: Family volunteering as a way to widen participation

Volunteers within Little Village have to date been predominantly white and typically from a higher socio-economic background. To address this, the charity has been actively trying to diversify its volunteer base, particularly in terms of being more reflective of the community that it supports. In 2018, it received a grant to diversify volunteering, some of which was used to provide a crèche for one of its two family-friendly volunteering sessions. This was aimed particularly at enabling (and increasing) participation among beneficiary families that might not be able to afford childcare, yet were most likely to benefit from participating in volunteering. The crèche is run by two qualified childcare professionals, who also started out as former beneficiaries of Little Village before becoming volunteers and now staff members. Providing a secure environment, where parents can feel reassured of their child's safety, means that volunteers have choices about whether they have their children with them or in the crèche while volunteering. Providing this service for volunteers has also supported the organisation's conversations with referral partners, as it can provide a free, accessible, professional, safe space for children that partners can recommend to individuals in the community who might benefit. Although it is still early days, the initiative already seems to be attracting a more diverse pool of volunteers,

including people who had previously been service users. Attracting men, however, is an ongoing challenge.

Organisational barriers and limits to developing family volunteering

We heard from a number of organisations that wanted to develop family volunteering initiatives, but had experienced or perceived barriers to doing so. Reflective of the perception that family volunteering is about parents and children volunteering together, often these barriers were created through concerns about involving children or young people as volunteers: for example, would they be able to get insurance? How would they ensure they met safeguarding regulations? What roles or activities would or could children volunteer within? Would they be able to cope with the extra administration associated with the regulations around involving young people? Would they have the physical space to accommodate parents and children volunteering together? Sometimes these concerns reflected wider organisational cultures which themselves created barriers to the involvement of children. Concerns were also raised by some organisations about their capacity to manage family volunteers, perceiving family volunteering to be more resource intensive than other forms of volunteering.

Overcoming concerns and widening participation through family volunteering: the National Trust

The National Trust oversees cultural and conservation activities in heritage properties across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its engagement with family volunteers is one of the most well-known examples of family volunteering by design in the UK. Having incorporated inclusion into its last volunteering strategy in 2013, families are seen as important for diversifying its volunteering base.

The National Trust actively promotes [family volunteering](#) via its website and provides videos and case studies that mention how multiple families or different generations can volunteer together and a search engine for suitable opportunities. However, local properties are responsible for creating family volunteering activities at a local level based on their priorities. These family-friendly activities tend to involve practical outdoor activities, like harvesting vegetables and planting trees, and one-off events, like chalking the [White Horse](#).

The regional volunteering and participation consultants support local National Trust properties that want to develop family volunteering with guidance on designing activities and incorporating volunteering into local conservation plans. Despite initial scepticism about including families and managing additional insurance costs and DBS checks, local staff have been positive about what families have achieved.

The National Trust intends to hold a strategic review in the near future, which will explore ways to strengthen links with community groups and businesses, work with urban communities on green-space conservation and apply the new young people's strategy, which will all consider the role of family volunteering.

4. How? How family and organisational contexts shape family volunteering experiences

Key findings

- Family circumstances can make a considerable difference to the experience of volunteering.
- With ever-busy family lives, fitting volunteering in can be difficult, particularly when it is not given as much priority as other roles and responsibilities.
- There were important gender dimensions to volunteering within families.
- Sharing resources, including physical and emotional support, amongst families can be influential in sustaining volunteering: it becomes a team effort.
- What organisations do and how they do it can also make a difference to the opportunities for, experience of and outcomes of family volunteering.
- Creating a 'family-friendly' environment is significant. This included: actively encouraging families to get involved through a range of flexible opportunities; developing pathways through participation; supporting volunteers in ways which recognise and accommodate not just their individual circumstances, but also their family circumstances.
- Some organisations grapple with how to balance a desire to be inclusive, particularly of children, with a need to ensure safeguarding measures are followed.

Volunteering is a situated practice,⁷ shaped by the context in which it takes place. Here, we consider family context, particularly focusing on how people fit volunteering into their family lives or their lives around volunteering, and the importance of family as a source of emotional and practical support for volunteering. We then consider how the organisational context can affect families' experiences of volunteering, with a focus on elements that were highlighted as either enabling or constraining family volunteering.

4.1 How family life affects the volunteering experience

Fitting volunteering in

Volunteering is one of many roles and responsibilities that families juggle on an ongoing basis. People we spoke to talked about the busyness of their family life, particularly in terms of pressures from paid work, combined with a growing array of children's sporting activities, clubs and interests. Reflective of national evidence,⁸ many felt that families were getting busier and more rushed, and that it was increasingly difficult to juggle everything. This was affecting the experience of volunteering for families. These wider developments were exacerbated for those who felt that the demands of volunteering itself were

⁷ Cornwall, A. (2002) 'Locating citizen participation', *IDS Bulletin*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 49–58.

⁸ See for example Wajcman, J. (2014) *Pressed for Time: The Acceleration of Life in Digital Capitalism*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

intensifying. When volunteering was less intense, less frequent and/or more flexible, this was less of an issue.

Volunteering was often something that families fitted in, as and when they could, around other roles and responsibilities, such as paid work, caring responsibilities and leisure activities. Some made space for volunteering by fitting it into certain slots of time they had available around those other roles and responsibilities, such as during the school day on non-working days. What other roles and responsibilities people had to fit volunteering around depended in part on family life stage and changed over time. For some, there was a sense that it got easier to fit volunteering in as children got older and became more independent.

While some felt that volunteering was a distinct, separate activity, to be fitted in alongside other activities for others it was either an extension of or combined with those other activities, roles and responsibilities, making 'juggling' feel like less of an issue. For some, for example, volunteering was not seen to conflict with leisure time; it was a form of (serious) leisure⁹ which extended from an interest such as sport, dance or music, and was talked about as a passion, something that was fun and enjoyable, if at times demanding. When parents and children were involved in the same activity – through volunteering for an activity that children were attending, bringing along children or volunteering together – this was seen as an effective way of combining both caring responsibilities and volunteering, and of enabling participation. Indeed, in this context, some volunteers said they didn't feel like they were volunteering at all, they were simply spending time with their children and having fun. Family volunteering became part of the family routine, part of family life, rather than something that needed to be made to fit in, as volunteering separately might. As one person reflected:

"I think it's about finding ways to include families because for a lot of people, it's how they balance that family time. They balance that family time because their kids are involved so it's okay for them to come along and do their [volunteering] stuff as well. We get a lot of single parents that join because their children are part of the youth units and the single parents join because actually, other than coming along to the youth unit, the only time they get adult interaction is when they drop their kids off at school. So, they join and they become a youth helper and they get, it gets them out of the house, they get a little bit of social time, they get, it has benefits for them."

In order to make volunteering fit, particularly when multiple family members were involved in multiple roles, people talked about the importance of being very organised, carefully planning their time and managing diaries across the whole family rather than just on an individual basis. Often the responsibility for managing the 'family schedule' fell to women, adding to their 'mental load'.¹⁰ During a group interview with one family, the father reflected:

⁹ See for example Stebbins, R. (2015) *Serious Leisure: A perspective of our time*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

¹⁰ 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 (accessed September 2020)

"there are some choices to be made of how things fit together and this lady here [wife] looks after the structure of the week and makes sure that it sort of fits."

Fitting family life around volunteering

For a few families, rather than fitting volunteering around other roles and responsibilities, they fitted family life around volunteering: 'So, yes, it wasn't [this organisation] being part of our lives, it was our lives fitting in with [this organisation].' For some, this meant sacrifices had been made: there was an opportunity cost for volunteering. Some, for example, felt they had neglected housework, gardening or leisure activities, as they had prioritised volunteering. We came across a couple of families that had delayed or cut short holidays to ensure they could meet their volunteering commitments. Reflecting on the level of commitment the family has made to volunteering, one person said: 'We also don't do anything outside volunteering, like normal family things are like very few and far between.' While this was generally reflected upon warmly within families (a standing family joke about having a messy house, for example), it could cause tensions within families when other things get neglected. This was particularly so when one part of a couple was more involved in volunteering than the other: 'It could be that the wife comes to do something but the husband doesn't and the husband says: "Well, I don't want you going every week to do something," it could be the reverse.' We return to these points in section 5 on the outcomes of volunteering.

For some, the juggling and meeting volunteering commitments can get too much, particularly when volunteering roles carry considerable levels of responsibility and/or at times when the demands from other roles are especially intense. As one person reflected, volunteering can become a 'job' that you have to fit into your 'spare time'.¹¹ A number of respondents talked about finding it hard to say no to requests to volunteer, whether to take on a new role or whether to increase their commitment within an existing one. For some, volunteering carried with it a considerable sense of duty, responsibility and obligation; to say no could be associated with feelings of guilt. These pressures felt particularly intense within families that were involved in multiple volunteering roles. It was suggested that these already 'busy people' were the most likely to be asked to volunteer, and there was a risk that they would feel pressured to go on taking on more and more until they reached breaking point. Once involved, some people found it hard to leave, particularly when their whole families were deeply embedded within an organisation. Some felt that the only thing to do was to break all connection with the organisation – to make a dramatic exit:

"...people kept saying, 'We know you don't want to do this and you're a bit too busy, but they've left and they've left and they've left...' and then I just got to the point where I said, 'I'm sorry, I can't do this anymore.'"

Fitting life around volunteering: The Taylors

The Taylor family – mum (Susan), dad (James), Graham and Eleanor (in their early 20s) are all involved as volunteers in St John Ambulance. Graham was the first to get involved in a Badger youth

¹¹ This chimes with other research, such as NCVO's 2019 [Time Well Spent](#) study, which found that one in five volunteers felt that their volunteering was becoming too much like paid work (p.9.)

group. They describe their family as 'busy', and 'very community orientated'; it is soon clear why. Last year, Susan and James volunteered for a combined total of nearly 3,000 hours with St John Ambulance. And this is only one of the organisations for which they volunteer. Susan also volunteers as a youth leader and on the council for her church; she is a school governor and heads up the local Women's Institute. Both Susan and James work full time, so most evenings are spent volunteering, with weekends spent preparing for the next week's volunteering activities. This doesn't leave much time for anything else: 'We also don't do anything outside volunteering, like normal family things are very few and far between.' They manage to fit everything in through being very organised: Susan manages the diary, keeping on top of everyone's schedules and planning the family calendar six months ahead. She said: 'In our diary we've actually got a list of all the duties that we expect to get and we plan around them, but that's our choice to plan around them, because you can always say no... so, as much as it does control our lives, that's our choice for it to control our lives, because we could say we're not doing any of those things'. For Eleanor, time to volunteer is juggled with her passion for dancing, which tends to take priority, university studies and paid work. They all talk enthusiastically about their volunteering, the opportunities it has given them, what they have achieved and the fun they have had along the way. For Susan and James, the opportunity to volunteer together after the children left home was particularly valued, after years spent supporting separate activities that the children were involved in.

Family support

The level of support for volunteering within/across a family can have an important influence on the possibilities for and experience of volunteering; this is critical if the volunteering role is particularly intense. This included both practical and emotional support.¹² Practical support can include: directly helping with a volunteering role that one member of the family leads on (we heard of children baking cakes or helping to prepare resources for a parent's voluntary role, husbands helping out with more physically demanding aspects of a role and wives doing the catering at events associated with their husband's voluntary role); providing transport or childcare to enable someone to volunteer.

Emotional support was also important. Families can be an important source of encouragement for volunteering, recognition and validation, a boost in confidence, an ear to listen after a stressful session, a shoulder to cry on and a person to vent to. As one person said of her partner and his support of her volunteering:

"He's a great sounding board so there are times when I've done a lot of stuff on my own and it's really nice to actually have that bit of stress alleviation, even if it is like having a bit of a yell at somebody sometimes but actually just take some of the pressure off me a little bit."

¹² Wider research evidence recognises the emotional and practical support that family members provide each other, in different contexts – see for example Swartz, T. (2009) 'Intergenerational family relations in adulthood: Patterns, variations, and implications in the contemporary United States', *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 191–212.

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In supportive families, volunteering was described as a 'team effort', even when they weren't physically volunteering together:

"... as a family I think I sort of feel like we're a team and we'll support each other in stuff and we quite enjoy being together and doing things together when that happens but there aren't that many situations where we're explicitly volunteering together at the same time in the same place."

"... when I took on the chairmanship, I said to him [husband], 'What do you think?'; because I knew it was going to be taxing, shall we say. And he said, 'I think you can do it,' so that was good, and he realised, and he was such a support, he really was a very great support to me".

Even when volunteering wasn't physically done together, for some there was a sense that the psychological commitment to volunteering was a collective commitment.

A lack of support can cause tensions and resentments, making the continuation of volunteering difficult. We spoke to a number of people who had continued volunteering despite a lack of support for it from other family members, with knock-on effects on other areas of their lives. This lack of support can be reflective of underlying perceptions of and attitudes towards volunteering. Reflecting on conversations she had had with other volunteers, one person said:

"... .. it does...can cause quite a lot of tensions and sort of resentment, 'What are you doing that there for? You're not getting paid for this,' and I suppose it's the mind set isn't it?"

Levels of support for volunteering varied within and between families according to a number of factors, such as the nature of the relationships within families, the balance of other roles and responsibilities, family values, expectations within the family of certain individuals (often gender related) and the relative status of volunteering.

Family support: The Williams family

The Williams family consists of mum (Edith) and her two daughters (Jessica and Amelia) who are in their late 20s/early 30s. They all work and volunteer in a range of health, care and educational roles across the local community. Edith's parents were a big influence on the whole family's volunteering: her dad used to volunteer at a day-care centre and at the church they attended, while her mother was a Brownie leader. Edith used to help out with both. This has led to a lifelong passion for and commitment to volunteering and community support: she has been involved in the Brownies ever since. Edith is also heavily involved in St John Ambulance, a role that her daughters support her in both emotionally and practically. Jessica and Amelia, for example, both help to deliver youth work activities when they can, and when they can't attend sessions with their mum, they help her with the preparations for the session at the weekend. Talking about everything together also helps to take the burden off each other if things do get too much. They describe it as using each other's talents and interests, as working it out between them to make it happen and as being reflective of a wider sense that they have 'got each other's backs'. They describe themselves as a close-knit family who are intuitive about each other's needs. They reflect that not only does volunteering together 'feel good',

and represent a 'constructive use of time', it also 'teaches you a way of living and learning' and has contributed to them being a 'small family with big networks'. Enjoyment, they suggest, is key.

The status of and priority for volunteering

Within many of these findings are implicit or explicit messages about the relative status of volunteering, particularly compared with paid work. In general, it was suggested that societal changes, such as increased costs of living, were meaning that paid work was given priority over everything else, including volunteering. For some, this meant that it was hard to justify prioritising volunteering. For example, while it was generally seen as acceptable to ask grandparents to help out with childcare for paid work, this was not extended to volunteering. As one (very committed) volunteer, who was a single parent to three children, reflected:

"... my mam and dad have stepped in [to look after children] since I've started work. The volunteering never interfered, if that makes sense. It wasn't very often that me mam and dad needed to step in when I was volunteering; it was only if I was going on a training course over the weekend that they would step in then. But, school runs and things like that, the volunteering never got in the way of, I always made sure of that. Whereas paid work is paid work and you can't pay the mortgage without working."

The relative significance of and priority given to different roles and responsibilities was not static; it fluctuated and was influenced by different stages in family life. There was also a clear gender dimension within this. It was suggested, for example, that for many young couples (indeed young adults in general), paid work was the priority, as it was important to establish careers, and that demanding careers, particularly when involving a commute, left little time for volunteering. As one person put it: 'We didn't volunteer as young adults because we just worked'. Priorities and pressures changed with the arrival of children, and indeed grandchildren. Some changes led to volunteering being reprioritised (for example, supporting children's activities); others had the opposite effect. Other key 'moments' included: moving house and wanting to integrate into a new community; changing jobs; retirement; having ageing/ailing parents. Volunteering doesn't necessarily stop and start as people move through various family life stages but often changes as people readjust their priorities and commitments.

The relative status of volunteering was raised as a particular issue for women volunteering when on maternity leave or while working as homemakers. Some women, for example, suggested that volunteering was given a lower status than paid work, with implications for whether their partners would support their volunteering and whether they themselves felt that they could legitimately expect others to share their other roles and responsibilities in order to be able to volunteer:

"There's a hierarchy and volunteering doesn't come up as high as I'd like it to, it's something that you do, you go to Pilates and you do a bit of volunteering, it feels a bit like that...that's why I try and talk about it a lot and it's becoming something more valid...my husband will get his company to put money into it so that feels like it's a validity that's beginning to take on but that full support of 'you've got to go and do that, so I'll have to pick up the slack' – that doesn't exist."

In some families, volunteers actively chose to talk about their volunteering as ‘work’ or as a ‘job’ in an attempt to raise its status and to justify their involvement to themselves and/or to others within their family and beyond:

“I really pushed that, I call it ‘I’m going to work’ and I make [my husband] do the school run on the days I work so that Wednesday morning is counted as ‘I’m working’. I do get pushbacks sometimes that ‘it’s not really’, not because they’re mean but that’s just because that’s what it’s seen as but then [my husband] and I really correct them and say ‘Not just because I don’t get paid doesn’t mean it’s not work.’”

Different perceptions of volunteering: Asma and her family

One family we spoke to came from Pakistan to live in Manchester six years ago. The status of volunteering within the family illustrates how understandings of volunteering may vary according to people’s cultural background. Asma volunteers for the Whitworth several times a week, and sometimes she volunteers with her younger brother. Her father has not been supportive of her volunteering for a range of reasons – partly because it’s not paid, partly because he wants his daughter to give priority to her duties at home, but also because it’s not something he is familiar with. In the UK, a lot of emphasis is placed on formal volunteering in an organisational setting like the Whitworth. But volunteering also happens more informally through people helping out and supporting each other or carrying out charitable actions, and this is what Asma’s father has been used to and sees in a positive light. For instance, during Ramadan, Asma cooks extra food and goes with her brother to give it to the homeless, and the family has helped neighbours who recently arrived in England with administrative tasks such as registering at the local GP surgery and school. Despite a lack of support from her father, Asma has pressed ahead with her volunteering, often working late into the evening to ensure her domestic duties are met so that she is free to volunteer. Indeed, she has now encouraged her teenage brother to volunteer with her during the school holidays, another brother to participate in activities at the gallery and her mother to come along to various events and exhibitions. Volunteering has been beneficial for Asma’s mental health and transformative for her relationships within the family.

4.2 How organisation affects families’ volunteering experiences

A range of organisational features were also identified as being particularly significant in shaping families’ experiences of volunteering.

A family-friendly approach

Creating a family-friendly environment and approach to volunteer involvement was a way of enabling and enhancing the family volunteering experience, particularly when the focus was on the involvement of parents and children. This included providing childcare facilities, enabling parents to bring children with them, ensuring volunteering roles and activities were fun and enjoyable for all ages and inviting family members to volunteer training days or celebration events. Putting such things in place helped to support

the involvement of people who would otherwise not be able to volunteer, including parents of young children. Comments included:

“...so it’s that real feeling of doing something good and I think that’s what also keeps them there and the fact that their children are having a great time, naturally enough you’re going to keep bringing them back, aren’t you?”

“I’m worried that I might just get in the way in just being there, but I think everybody here was like you do what you can do around your baby and any bit of help does help!”

It was suggested that one of the keys to making family volunteering work was the recognition and understanding of the context of families – ‘being mindful of what else pulls on them’ as one person put it. In particular, this meant being mindful of some of the challenges around the unpredictability of family life, organising childcare and the limited time that parents have, and the benefits that volunteers can gain whether volunteering with their family or as an individual in a family context.

Being family friendly was not limited to organisations with specifically designed family volunteering schemes, nor was it limited to volunteering. Indeed, for some organisations it reflected their wider ethos and/or mission, and this had contributed to an extensive engagement with family volunteering by default. One person talked about it as reflecting the ‘organisational personality’, whereby bringing family members along – whether you were a volunteer, a member of staff or a participant/service user – had become ‘part of the socially acceptable narrative’.

Family-friendly opportunities: Little Village

Reflective of the organisation’s mission and ethos, Little Village offers a family-friendly environment, in which family volunteering is actively encouraged. On two mornings a week, special sessions are run to enable volunteers to bring their children along with them. As one volunteer said: ‘Everyone here is particularly family oriented so that is a big part of it that I’m able to bring the children, a lot of people have been DBS checked by the process so as much as you can in any large social situation, they are with you, near you.’ While volunteers can bring children to both these sessions, with volunteers often looking out for each other’s children, on one day a week a crèche is provided to enable volunteers to focus on their volunteering while feeling reassured that their child is being looked after nearby. More generally, the organisation is flexible and provides a range of opportunities across the week for different family members. Older children of adult volunteers, for example, can volunteer as part of The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award and/or during special sessions in the summer holidays; younger children are found age-appropriate tasks to help out with: ‘Depending on the age of the children, we will get them involved...we’ve got puzzles they can pair, a knife, fork, spoon they can match together. We try and make sure that if children are involved and part of their experience of volunteering, that we look at what they can get out of it, what they can do together, can they do something together that is at the right level for a child of three.’ Volunteers are encouraged to bring family members along with them to social/celebratory events. Creating family-friendly opportunities had been particularly important for

the inclusion of their volunteers who were former beneficiaries of their service, who may want to give back to the organisation but do not have childcare.

Flexibility and variety

Being flexible was frequently identified as being an important way for organisations to enable families to volunteer, ensuring that volunteering can fit around other commitments. Flexibility was important in terms of the time commitments required of volunteers, for example creating roles that could be undertaken at different times of the day and week (school hours suited some; evenings and weekends suited others) or not requiring a regular commitment but allowing more episodic involvement. This helped to reduce barriers to participation, making it easier to fit volunteering around family life. This was recognised by organisations and volunteers alike:

“We try to make sure that we’re offering really flexible opportunities through the week that will fit with people’s lifestyles and they can fit volunteering in and it balance, not being too much of something or the other, so volunteering that fits with family life.”

“This charity, you can come here with your baby or you can also come once a month or every two weeks, so the commitment is flexible, so that was one of the reasons why [I volunteered].”

Allowing family members to share volunteer roles was also identified as being an important form of flexibility. Sharing a volunteer role (especially when it was particularly onerous) with another family member, or indeed with someone else from the local community, was highlighted as a way for volunteers to manage the volunteering commitment and balance it with family life: ‘That really supported my family and my lifestyle and commitments outside of [volunteering in this organisation]’. Similarly, it was suggested that organisations should be mindful of family preferences regarding volunteering together or alongside, being flexible enough to enable a balance between the two. Some families expressed frustration that they had been volunteering alongside each other within an organisation, but had not had the opportunity to see each other or do anything together, making them feel like they were being treated more like workers than volunteers:

“I think that’s the thing with volunteering isn’t it? Sometimes people, people in management roles within volunteering organisations, sometimes they forget that we’re volunteers, and I see that not just in [this organisation]. They forget that you’re volunteering and actually you don’t have to, and I bet that happens in all volunteer organisations. It becomes as if it’s your work, but it’s not your work. Actually if it’s not what you want to do, you’ll not do it. So it could be that if we want to spend some time together, we could say ‘Well, if we’re not together, we’re not coming’.”

Flexibility was also talked about in terms of enabling volunteers to engage in a wide range of roles and activities, ensuring that there was enough variety to suit different – and changing – interests, needs and time constraints. Having a variety of flexible opportunities was seen as particularly important when engaging with different generations: different roles and activities were needed to suit different age groups. As one respondent reflected:

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"... it's the family as a unit but also individuals within that and ... if a family is coming in, it's not necessarily that they're coming in as a one point to do the same thing, it's allowing that opportunity for each of the family members to come and do the bits that they enjoy and the bits that they're wanting to do..."

Being flexible also meant organisations recognising that volunteering isn't static: it changes with people's life course. It was important for them to consider how they might accommodate potential breaks in volunteering (for example, no longer having time to volunteer due to the arrival of a new baby or taking care of a sick relative), keeping in touch when appropriate and welcoming people back when their situation altered.

Almost complete flexibility at the Whitworth

Within its discrete family volunteering programme, volunteering at the Whitworth is very flexible, allowing volunteering to slot in around family needs. Most of the volunteers in the scheme have young children, and this flexible approach allows them to fit volunteering around children's routines and the somewhat-unpredictable nature of family life. Indeed, the activities that family volunteers are involved in are structured so that they could run if the family volunteers didn't turn up: no activity is entirely dependent on the family volunteers, as other volunteers or members of staff are also involved. There is a degree of formality with some processes in place around recruitment and health and safety, but the gallery prioritises the needs of family volunteers and is able to adapt. The gallery's approach to family volunteering has been largely influenced by the volunteer manager's own experience, as she has a young family and volunteers with her three-year-old daughter. Because of the very flexible approach and tailored support provided to volunteers, family volunteering is considered more resource intensive than other forms of volunteering. Staff at the gallery believe that they could attract more families if they promoted family volunteering more widely, but they don't feel they currently have the capacity to manage this potential growth.

Diversity and inclusion through flexibility and variety within family volunteering: the Scouts

Throughout its history, the Scouts have involved parents as volunteers for events, camps and outdoor activities. In recent years, it has responded to changing family needs with a more flexible and varied volunteering offer. For example, in response to being approached by families from Muslim communities, it has assisted them to set up over 200 local sections nationwide. To support this, it established the Muslim Scouts Fellowship to train parents to become Scout leaders and allows them to bring their families along to weekend training events where it provides children's activities.

It has also been involved in a Department for Education-funded [early years pilot](#) to address child attainment gaps across five English locations. Adults over 18 bring a four- to five-year-old close relative – mostly parents with their child – to a Scouts location where they are supported and trained by a volunteer to deliver communications group activities (both written and verbal). Pilots have benefited from a flexible definition of close relatives – for example, a grandparent can take a

grandchild to events held after school or on weekend days if a parent has work or childcare responsibilities.

Progression and pathways

Alongside providing a variety of flexible roles and activities, supporting progressions within them was also seen as important. Creating a pathway for people to come into an organisation and gradually move through different forms of engagement, roles and responsibilities was seen as being particularly important for facilitating: young people's move from participant/service user to volunteer; parents' move from helping out with activities their children were involved in to a wider, more sustained engagement. This enabled family volunteering to move from 'do for', to 'do together', to 'do alongside'. As one person reflected:

"...effectively that's how you end up with whole families being involved because you get young ones that are attending class, middle aged, you know older teenagers who are helping out as young helpers and then parents who might be on a committee or volunteering as an adult helper from a ratio point of view."

Having pathways into different roles was also important for those who, due to age, ill health or changes in circumstances and family needs, needed to step back from a role that had considerable responsibility or was particularly physically or emotionally demanding, but wished to keep helping out in less intense ways. Finding ways to continue to involve people in new roles more suited to their changed capability and/or capacity was felt to be particularly important when volunteers – and their families – had been involved for long periods of time and the family had become particularly embedded within the organisation. This could be a sensitive issue and could sometimes mean moving people on from a role or organisation, or helping them to allow themselves ('giving them permission') to step back, which could have considerable ramifications for that person:

"So, if something happens and we take that away from them, that's ultimately putting somebody into a situation where you're taking their whole social and their whole meaning away from them."

Some organisations we spoke to had clear routes, or pathways, into and through volunteering, particularly those that provided services and activities for young people (encouraging young people who attended activities to gradually take on responsibility for supporting, delivering and leading those activities, for example). In others, it felt more as if the volunteers were left to find their own way. There was a suggestion in some organisations that traditional pathways, which had previously facilitated family volunteering, had begun to break down due, in part, to societal changes, but also to a lack of attention or leadership. In one case, it was suggested that there used to be a 'natural migration' of parents from volunteering to help with activities in which their children were involved to wider roles within the organisation, and of young people from attending an activity as a participant to volunteering to help with the running of that activity and then to wider roles. However, this 'flow' had been neglected, and opportunities to engage families, and build involvement across generations, had been missed.

Natural progression: Family volunteering at St John Ambulance

As a large organisation that is heavily reliant on volunteers, St John Ambulance has a broad range of opportunities. As well as being focused on different activities and practical tasks, opportunities carry with them various levels of responsibility and require different skills, competencies and time commitments. This is seen to facilitate the involvement of multiple family members within the organisation, while also enabling the progression of individual family members, both of which contribute to volunteer retention. As one person reflected: 'So, you can bring your whole family to Saint John because we have offers for different ages, we have offers for different intensities. Because we work outside of the working day, in the evenings and the weekends and stuff, it is something you can do on family time.' Another said: 'So, the structure if you like is quite volunteer-focused and volunteer-led, so there's lots of opportunities for volunteers to progress and take increasing responsibility in the charity, which is probably one of the things that opens up this kind of sense of where families can get involved in lots of different ways, lots of different areas, etc.' While the organisation has never had a specifically designed scheme for family volunteering, it is implicitly welcomed, encouraged and celebrated: 'But, we celebrate it, we talk about it wonderfully, it's an organisation that celebrates and recognises long service, it's an organisation that recognises the value of this and that holds up young people as these wonderful examples to society and to a future.' Recently, St John Ambulance has done more to actively encourage parents of children attending the youth groups to become leaders, through for example the 'three week challenge'. As one person explained: 'You say, "Can you come and help us for three weeks?" and the chances are by three weeks you've either fallen in love with it or somebody has press-ganged you into doing something else so then that's it, that's how you do it, you recruit by stealth!'

Balancing risk and regulation

A particular challenge identified for family volunteering was risk and regulation (especially safeguarding), as well as wider associated processes of formalisation and professionalisation. These tended to work against the enabling elements outlined above, such as flexibility and allowing volunteers to bring children along. The balance that organisations struck between risk and regulation, and flexibility and formality, was influential. Due to safeguarding concerns, some organisations had adopted blanket policies on the involvement of young people which effectively ruled out volunteering amongst under-16-year-olds, creating a barrier to certain forms of family volunteering. Fears and uncertainties about what was and wasn't allowed in terms of involving young people had led some organisations to be particularly cautious. Others had adopted a more nuanced approach, acknowledging that there was a 'fine line' between making sure volunteering opportunities were accessible, flexible and informal and having robust safeguarding and health and safety policies and procedures in place. Overall, it was suggested that safeguarding concerns were making it harder to involve young people as volunteers, for parents to bring children along when they volunteered and for parents to help out in activities in which their children were involved:

"... ..When I was [my daughter's] age, grandparents, parents and kids would be in together, because it was okay for kids to come along. Whereas now, it's not so much okay so when I was a

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young adult, so when [my children] were born, they would come along to the events with me ... whereas that's not okay anymore. "

Even when policies allowed for young people to volunteer, concerns about safeguarding held by staff or other volunteers could create a resistance to volunteering alongside young people. As one young volunteer reflected:

"To be fair, like when I go out on duties because ... I'm still a [young volunteer], there has to be certain numbers and it kind of feels as if people like dread having [young volunteers] there because they need to worry about paperwork, safeguarding, not leaving them alone and stuff which can sometimes make you feel like a bit of a burden ..."

More broadly, it was suggested that over the past couple of decades, the tendency had been for organisations to become more formalised, professionalised and centralised, which had worked against flexibility and inclusivity, and against family volunteering by default or by extension. A growing amount of 'red tape' created barriers and was contributing to a suggested decline in multigenerational family volunteering in particular. For some organisations, the introduction of a specifically designed, discrete family volunteering scheme had been a way to overcome some of these developments.

Developing opportunities while managing risks: Royal Voluntary Service

Royal Voluntary Service is a charity that encourages volunteering through supporting people in hospitals and helping to improve the wellbeing of older people in the community. The charity has shifted towards recruiting a more diverse pool of volunteers by addressing barriers to participation, one of which is childcare responsibilities for parents and grandparents.

To accommodate this, Royal Voluntary Service has changed the way that it both recruits and engages volunteers. First, volunteer recruitment campaigns are tailored to appeal to parents and are clear they are able to volunteer with their children. Second, Royal Voluntary Service uses a non-prescriptive recruitment model based on what the individual wants to do and brokers arrangements where volunteers can bring or volunteer with any child below the age of 14.

These approaches have resulted in major challenges to managing risk. Royal Voluntary Service has worked with its insurance company to demonstrate that it could manage the safeguarding risks. For example, depending on the role, the charity allows children to participate in lower-risk home companionship or community group activities – especially where children can bring a special type of interaction with older people – but not with higher-risk people like those recovering from illnesses or a stay in hospital.

Helping organisations overcome barriers to engagement: Family Volunteering Club

The Family Volunteering Club's launch was motivated by one mum's experience of how difficult it had been to find opportunities to volunteer with her child. Starting in Lambeth and Southwark, the Family Volunteering Club has been working with organisations to create family volunteering events in local communities that are easy and fun to be involved in. A core part of its mission is connecting families and children with their communities – especially in a more transient city like London.

As part of its community-centred mission, Family Volunteering Club started by engaging with local families and organisations. During its three-month pilot in late 2019, it advertised at schools, libraries and community centres, asked families to complete a questionnaire on what they wanted to do and approached local volunteer-involving organisations to discuss and organise events. Successful activities included maintaining a miniature railway at the London Transport Museum, sorting donations at Ronald McDonald House, gardening at Draper Hall and carolling for Waterloo Foodbank.

Initial feedback indicates that families value their contribution to the community, seeing children learn about what local charities do and charitable giving, and, for families without access to their own garden, being exposed to new activities like gardening. Going forward, Family Volunteering Club will be growing its programme in London with a focus on widening participation for groups such as families with English as a second language, as well as piloting the programme in other locations across the UK.