

A Haven for Volunteers



Research Report

An evaluation of the
volunteer experience with
Hearing Voices Network

September to November 2006

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Introduction

This report is a result of a joint working between **Hearing Voices Network** and **Volunteer Centre Dundee**.

Hearing Voices Network (HVN) has the overall aim to create acceptance that hearing voices is a valid experience for which there are many explanations, to erase the stigma of voice hearing, and to enable voice hearers to realise their place in a society which knows and understands their plight. Due to organisational progress, HVN would like to know if they are still meeting the support needs of their volunteers, to find out how volunteering with HVN is effecting them and highlight any need for improvement.

Volunteer Centre Dundee (VCD) is the local agency for taking forward the strategic development of volunteering. With a staff of 16 and over 30 volunteers over 3 bases, its activities include a clearing house for volunteers, training & development, delivery of local services by volunteers and researching the volunteer landscape in Dundee.

Pat Webster, coordinator of HVN, and Lidia Dye, Volunteers Coordinator VCD, adapted the Core Volunteer questionnaire in the Volunteering Impact Assessment Tool, (published by the Institute for Volunteering Research, 2004).

It was agreed volunteers would be invited to participate in face to face interviews in order to encourage qualitative responses and create an opportunity for volunteers to discuss their work and ask for clarification.

Interviews were carried out by the Volunteers Coordinator, each interview taking around 1 hour. Appointments were made to suit volunteers, between September and October 2006.

Thanks to the volunteers and staff of HVN who were very hospitable in accommodating this evaluation and contributed willingly.

1. Summary of findings

1.1 General

Numbers

- Of the 26 volunteers at Hearing Voices Network (HVN), 20 took part in an interview questionnaire and contributed to the findings.
- Volunteers at HVN contribute to a whole range of the organisation's activities and most are involved in 3 to 4 different roles.
- Altogether they give 128 hours per week, an equivalent of 3.7 full-time posts.
- Over half of the volunteers had been there for at least 3 years and some had been with HVN for 10 years

Gender & Age

- 70% are female, 30% male
- 40% are aged 25-44, only 5% are aged under 24

Employment & Disability

- 4 volunteers would describe themselves as having a disability
- 2 volunteers described themselves as in paid work

1.2 Support for Volunteers

Volunteers were asked to comment on their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with training, social events and support.

- 70% are satisfied with the support they receive
- 70% recognised the need for more structured support
- 15% are dissatisfied with the support they receive

Most volunteers felt that the co-ordinator was available for support when needed. There was also recognition that the co-ordinator's role was changing and creating other demands on her time.

- 60% are satisfied with their training
- However, at 90% the highest level of satisfaction was with the social events.

"It would be good to have someone who was seen as a volunteer coordinator, if you did have any problems then you could go to them"

1.3 Personal Development

Volunteers were asked to comment on any increase or decrease in their personal development, skills and health & wellbeing.

- 85% experienced an increase in personal development since becoming a volunteer with HVN.
- 70% said their skills had increased
- 70% expressed an increase in health & wellbeing

“I am surprised at the effect it has had on me, perhaps because of my age, I find a greater satisfaction than I thought I would. I have become more accepting of others opinions and ways of being.”

‘I think I have benefited, it’s helped structure my day, benefited my health. I’ve enjoyed it - used to feel bad about not being able to work but now I’m glad to be able to give something back.’

1.4 Social Inclusion

Volunteers were asked to what extent they had increased or decreased their access to new contacts and networks, sense of trust in others and participation in local activities

- 85% stated an increase in their access to new contacts
- 65% had an increased trust in others
- 75% said they took greater part in local activities

‘It’s has a very positive effect on me - I socialise and interact more with other people.’

1.5 Cultural Identity

Volunteers were asked if there had been any increase or decrease in their sense of community, faith or ethnic identity, their appreciation of other peoples cultures and their participation in cultural, environmental or leisure activities.

- 85% had an increased sense of community
- 55% said they had an increased appreciation of other’s cultures
- 50% stated an increase participation in cultural activities

“Rather than appreciation of culture more different ways of life - has made me more open minded.”

2. Conclusions

2.1 High satisfaction levels

A significant number of volunteers at HVN have experienced measurable, positive changes in their lives.

2.2 Measurable outcomes

This survey has been able to show the personal and community outcomes of their voluntary activity in terms of well being, trust in others and appreciation of other cultures. The Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit has been successful.

2.3 Additionality

These outcomes are over and above what is achieved in service provision to non-volunteers.

2.4 Gaps

HVN has rightly recognised that as their main resource, the project co-ordinator, is increasingly engaged in new developments, a gap is emerging in support to volunteers.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Check out findings

In order to check out the benefits of the volunteers' contribution to other service users, HVN should consider utilising the other tools in the Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit.

3.2 Build on success: Hearing Voices Network

HVN can now use the evidence to increase the recognition of the outcomes from volunteering and explore ways of increasing their support and training services for volunteers.

3.2 Build on success: Volunteer Centre Dundee

VCD should use this practical example to disseminate information on the Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit, for example through their website and ebulletins. Additionally, VCD support should be provided for HVN to identify funding to develop their volunteering.

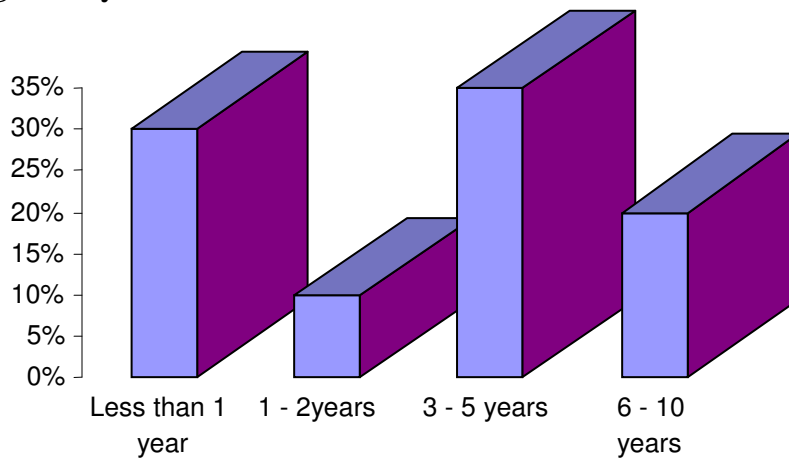
4. Findings

INTRODUCTION

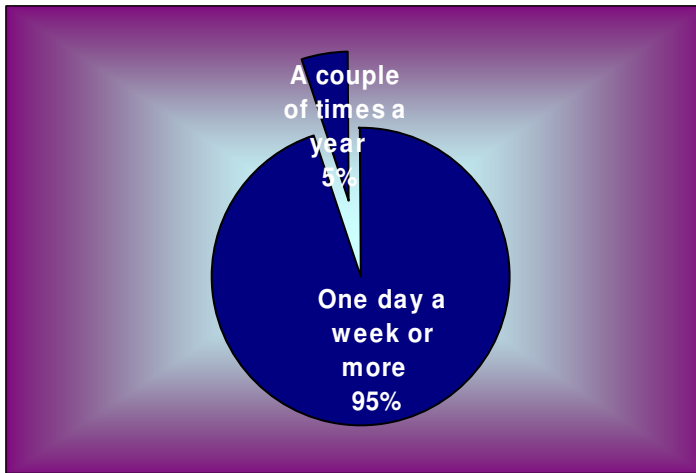
What activities or duties do you carry out as a volunteer with this organisation?

	No of volunteers
Reception <i>answer phones, greet visitors</i>	6
Newsletter <i>edit, type up on computer, stuff envelops, mail</i>	4
Events/festivals <i>staff stalls/ tables, participate in events</i>	6
Befriender	4
Management Committee Member of HVN	5
Committee member of HVN Scotland	1
Training delivery	6
Funding	1
Support <i>telephone/ drop in</i>	4
Drop in <i>welcome people, make tea, speak to people</i>	3
Admin <i>order books and supplies, photocopying, mail</i>	1
Cleaning	3
Walking group	2
Facilitate men's group	1
Conferences	3
Info point <i>keep notice boards up to date, look after resources</i>	2
Publicity <i>use the computer to make leaflets/ poster</i>	1
Help out when needed/ general help/ sick cover	5

How long have you been a volunteer with HVN?



How often do you volunteer with this organisation?



Volunteers estimated how much time they gave according to their usual duties, they did not include events or when filling in for absences

Could you estimate how many hours you give each week?

The estimates ranged from 2 to 18+ hours a week. Added together the total estimates given by those we interviewed indicate HVNs’ volunteers give 128 hours a week (6656 hours yearly)

1. How satisfied are you with your access to the following

- a) Training Courses?
- b) Social Events with other volunteers and/or staff?
- b) Support for your volunteering?



How are you being supported as a volunteer just now?

15 (75%) mentioned the Project coordinator as their support. Several saw her as readily available to them;

"Phone the co-ordinator or see her, if you have a problem you can go to the co-ordinator"

"On demand from the co-ordinator, can phone her at home"

"Have enough contact with the co-ordinator to talk about what is happening for me - resources are available to read - there is a supportive accepting atmosphere"

"The co-ordinator in main support I come in or phone or email as necessary"

"Any problems I just go to the co-ordinator or make an appointment with her"

"The co-ordinator's there for you if you need her"

Some recognised that the co-ordinator had other constraints on her time;

"Ask to speak to the co-ordinator but often she is too busy"

"By the coordinator if and when she is available - by other volunteers, they are great at supporting each other"

"I could speak to the co-ordinator but it's obvious she is busy"

"Could easily access people within HVN to help when I need support"

5 (25%) thought they were not being supported

"Don't think we are here at the moment, but if there is anything desperate we just go and see the co-ordinator, she is usually busy"

"Not really supported at all just now just come in and do reception"

Peer support was recognised by 25% of those interviewed.

"Not being supported, other than peer support"

Could you describe the support you need (or would like) to be a volunteer?

Happy with the way it is

6 (30%) of the volunteers I interviewed said they were happy with supported they are receiving ;

“ Am happy with support as it is”

“Am happy with support as it is, my needs may change as I become more involved.”

Of this 30% volunteers, 20% have been involved with Haven for less than a year.

Support and supervision/dedicated worker/training

14 (70%) of volunteers suggested a dedicated worker for volunteers or/and the need for more training;

“Training to do the volunteering, refresh skills - support and supervision for volunteers”

“It would be good to have someone who was seen as a volunteer coordinator, if you did have any problems then you could go to them”

“Training - appropriate to jobs - a contact person to speak to when I need”

“Someone to give guidance and support on a regular basis”

“Would like access to a worker if there were any problems”

Some acknowledged how busy the project co-ordinator is;

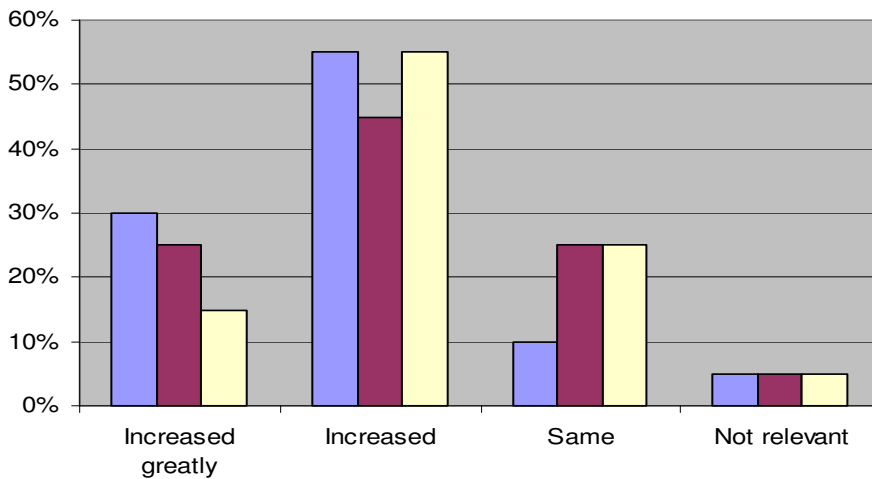
“Easy access to information and people within the network –If I was better trained on computers I could do it myself - access to office and resources as to where things are - One person who coordinates volunteers, one point of contact/ coordinator who wasn't trying to do 101 other things - training courses to bring all volunteers up to speed on what all computers do and what resources are available”

“Should have a support worker for volunteers - because the co-ordinator is busy all the time- a support worker could learn all the ins and outs and offer support”.

2. There are some ways in which people can benefit from being a volunteer.

Have any of the following increased or decreased for you?

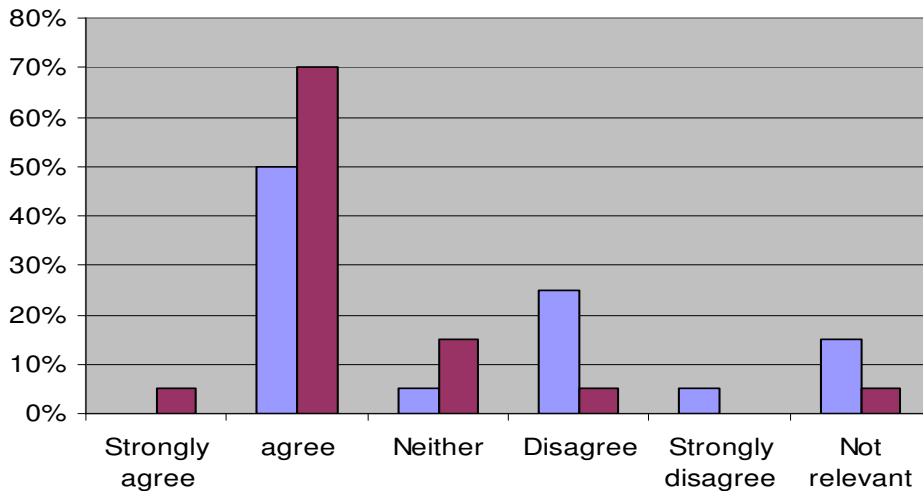
- a) Your personal Development ■
- b) Your skill base ■
- c) Your general health and wellbeing ■



3. Volunteering can effect people financially, both in what you might gain from volunteering, but also in the cost of volunteering.

Could you please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements;

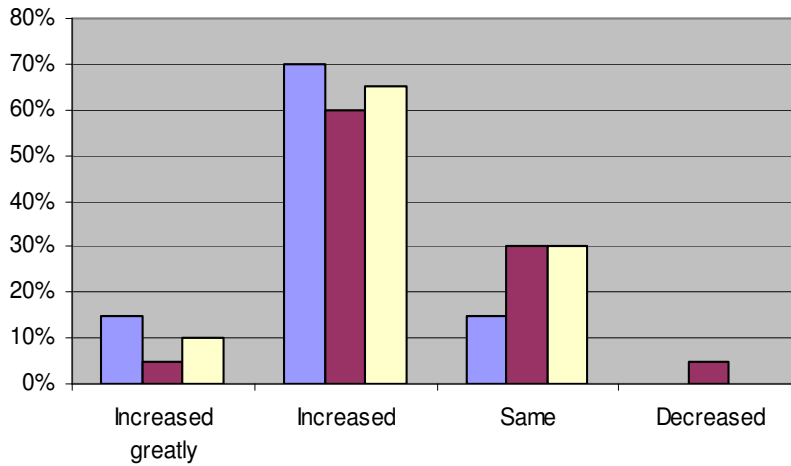
- a) All the expenses I incur as a volunteer are reimbursed. ■
- b) I have access to free training. ■



4. Listed are some of the ways in which people gain through the social links they develop by volunteering.

Please let us know how the following have increased or decreased for you;

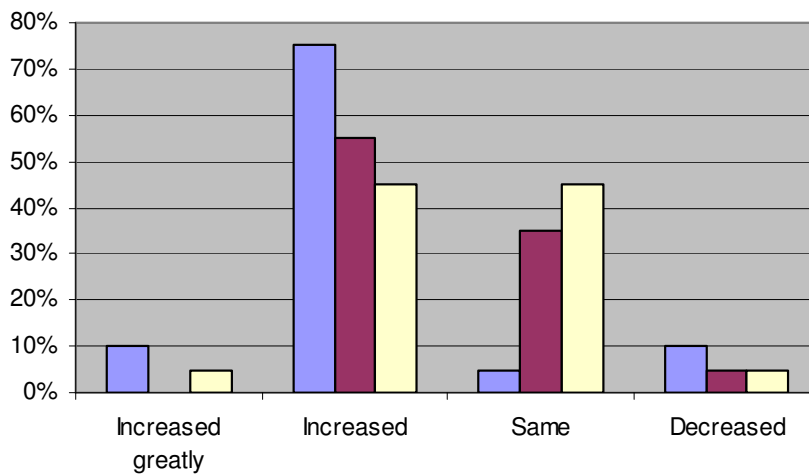
- a) Access to new contacts and networks. ■
- b) Sense of trust in others ■
- c) Participation in local activities ■



5. Volunteering can impact on people’s sense of cultural identity in a number of ways.

Please let us know how much the following have increased or decreased for you;

- a) Your sense of community, faith or ethnic identity. ■
- b) Your appreciation of other peoples cultures ■
- c) Your participation in cultural, environmental or leisure activities. ■



Would you like to add comments to any of these answers?

- There is a sense of value in trying to develop vibrancy in this community with the participation of people who have experience of mental health.
- Rather than appreciation of culture more different ways of life - has made me more open minded.
- HVN has a large religious membership - sometimes this can make me feel on the outside - they participate in religious activities while I am here - at first I felt pressurised into participation.
- HVN are very important to me and other volunteers, it increases a sense of identity and also a oneness/sameness as regards all of the above.
- It would be good to access training on computers for all volunteers who want it.
- There is a need for more training opportunities - we don't get a lot of opportunities for training. It would be good to have information and direction.
- I am a normal human being and I just want to be here for people without prejudice
- Feel we should try to involve people of other cultures in HVN
- As I am involved in other organisations, I have gained a greater insight into community activities. This has not happened at HVN
- If we had a volunteer coordinator we could get more things going, it would take pressure off other workers, we could do charity shops
- This is a good place to volunteer, other volunteers help you out if you need it - all you've got to do is ask

6. Is there anything else you would like to say about the volunteering you have been doing, or the effect it has had on you?

'Changed my life for the better, I am developing as a person through volunteering even although sometimes it's hard.'

'As the volunteers come from different backgrounds, for example no office background, they are reluctant to learn from other volunteers who had experience and look to the coordinator for support at all times.'

'Because of volunteering I became more aware of this client group and how dependent they are on us (society), perhaps they could take more responsibility. Would like to see them encouraged/motivated to have ownership - feel passionately about this'

'It has given me an anchor again, helping in the community.'

'I feel better now that I am volunteering, before I was stuck in the house, I enjoy it.'

'Volunteering has made me more aware of other peoples' problems, more than reading it out of a book has.'

'I think I have benefited, it's helped structure my day, benefited my health. I've enjoyed it - used to feel bad about not being able to work but now I'm glad to be able to give something back.'

'It helps me, gets me out of the house and gives me responsibility beyond just myself.'

'I am surprised at the effect it has had on me , perhaps because of my age, I find a greater satisfaction than I thought I would. Perhaps because of my age I have become more accepting of others opinions and ways of being.'

'Got me out of the house a bit more.'

'It has made me feel better about myself as a person, I look forward to it.'

'It's has a very positive effect on me - I socialise and interact more with other people.'

7. Would you recommend volunteering to other people?

Yes - 95% Can you tell me the main benefits you would emphasise?

- Changes life for the better
- If the nature of the organisation is suitable
- Satisfaction of helping somebody, learning from others, sense of achievement in seeing people overcome a crisis with support, awareness raising
- Gets you out, meet people, can work at home, sense of achievement - making someone laugh or smile
- It is a good way to be part of the community - part of something which helps others
- The company - meeting new people
- Gets you out and about/involved
- Meet new people - especially those you wouldn't normally meet, develops you as a person
- You get to help people less fortunate than you, you a great feel good factor
- I think I have benefited, it's helped structure my day, benefited my health. I've enjoyed it - used to feel bad about not being able to work but now I'm glad to be able to give something back
- It helps me, gets me out of the house and gives me responsibility beyond just myself. Gives you a sense of identity and a place of acceptance
- Meet people, do something useful with your time, gets you doing something regular which could lead onto more if you want it to.
- Community activity - helps social skills/self esteem - confidence, meeting people, work experience
- Increase in self development and well being
- It gives you a confidence boost - people think you can do it - if they think you can do it you can have a go - you find you can do and it boosts your confidence, you feel useful and as you get older that is important to you.
- Meet other people, chance to get some computer skills, gives me a routine - reason to get out of bed
- Meeting people - getting to know them, building contacts and friends, knowing you are contributing to something wider
- Got me back into civilisation/normality, it makes me feel good knowing I am helping
- Gives a sense of purpose, helps you meet people, helps gain skills in a non threatening environment

No - 5% What are the main drawbacks you would emphasise?

- It is a personal choice. They would have to know exactly what they are volunteering for and not go into it blindly

5. Questionnaire

Volunteer Interview Questions Hearing Voices Network 2006

We would be very grateful if you would answer these questions to help us assess the impact of volunteering with HVN. Your answers will be used to assess how volunteering with the HVN is effecting you and highlight any need for improvement.

Your answers will be used as statistics and perhaps quotes, they will not be identified with you. Please ask me to repeat or rephrase any questions that are unclear to you.

Thank you for your participation.

INTRODUCTION

What activities or duties do you carry out as a volunteer in this organisation?

How Long have you been a volunteer with this organisation?

Less than 1 yr 1-2 yrs 3-5 yrs 6-10 yrs

How often do you volunteer with this organisation?

1 day a week or more 1 or 2 days a month A couple of times a year

Very occasionally Only Once

Could you estimate how many hours you give each;

Week Month Year

IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING

1. We have listed some of the things that people have access to as volunteers.

How satisfied are you with your access to the following things?

a) Training courses

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not relevant
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b) Social events with other volunteers and/or staff

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not relevant
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c) Support for your volunteering

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not relevant
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How are you being supported as a volunteer just now?

Could you describe the support you need (or would like) to be a volunteer?

2. There are some ways in which people can benefit from being a volunteer.

Have any of the following increased or decreased for you?

a) Your personal development (such as confidence, self esteem, self management)

Increased greatly / Increased / Same / Decreased / Decreased greatly / Not relevant

b) Your skill base (such as ability to work with people, computers)

Increased greatly / Increased / Same / Decreased / Decreased greatly / Not relevant

c) Your general health and well-being?

Increased greatly / Increased / Same / Decreased / Decreased greatly / Not relevant

3. Volunteering can effect people financially, both in what you might gain from volunteering, but also in the cost of volunteering.

Could you please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements;

a) All the expenses I incur as a volunteer are reimbursed

Strongly agree Agree Neither Disagree Strongly disagree Not relevant

b) I have access to free training?

Strongly agree Agree Neither Disagree Strongly disagree Not relevant

4. Listed are some of the ways in which people gain through the social links they develop by volunteering.

Please let us know how the following have increased or decreased for you;

a) Access to new contacts and networks

Increased greatly / Increased / Same / Decreased / Decreased greatly / Not relevant

b) Sense of trust in others

Increased greatly / Increased / Same / Decreased / Decreased greatly / Not relevant

c) Participation in local activities

Increased greatly / Increased / Same Decreased / Decreased greatly / Not relevant

5. Volunteering can impact on people's sense of cultural identity in a number of ways.

Please let us know how much the following have increased or decreased for you.

a) Your sense of community, ethic, faith or religious identity

Increased greatly / Increased / Same / Decreased / Decreased greatly / Not relevant

b) Your appreciation of other peoples cultures

Increased greatly / Increased / Same / Decreased / Decreased greatly / Not relevant

c) Your participation in cultural, environmental or leisure activities

Increased greatly / Increased / Same / Decreased / Decreased greatly / Not relevant

Would you like to add comments to any of these answers?

ISSUES

6. Is there anything else you would like to say about the volunteering you have been doing, or the effect it has had on you?

7. Would you recommend volunteering to other people?

Yes / Can you tell me the main benefits you would emphasise?

No / What are the main drawbacks you would emphasise?

ABOUT YOU

This information is to help us build a profile of our volunteers

	Male	Female		
Age	24 or under	25-34	35-44	45-54
	55-64	65-74	75 or over	
Do you consider yourself disabled?	YES	NO		
Do you have a paid job?	YES	NO		