

vconsultation input

A response from v to the Morgan Inquiry

March 2008

1.1 About v

v is the charity launched in May 2006 to champion youth volunteering in England through the implementation of recommendations set out in the Russell Commission and accepted in full by the Government. Our key objective is to create a significant and lasting change in the quality, quantity and diversity of youth volunteering opportunities.

v was established to build on the excellent work already being undertaken in the youth volunteering sector, both in terms of creating new and additional opportunities, and by extending the reach of existing opportunities to those young people who have not previously volunteered.

To date, we have:

- commissioned over 210,000 new volunteering opportunities (this does not include the opportunities that will be created through vinvolved)
 - developed and launched the site vinspired.com, a one-stop shop web-based portal for young people wanting to access volunteering opportunities
 - established v as a leading youth brand, with awareness of v amongst young people more than doubling in the last six months
 - launched our youth fund vashpoint, putting funding directly in the hands of young people developing initiatives for community benefit
 - assumed management of Millennium Volunteers (MV) from the DfES and building on the best of MV, launched the new National Youth Volunteering Programme, vinvolved. Through vinvolved, we are investing over £75m over three years in:
 - the creation of vinvolved teams across every local authority area in England. These teams will build networks, promote youth volunteering and broker young people into opportunities
 - Youth Action Teams, groups of young people who will work alongside vinvolved teams and be local ambassadors for youth volunteering
 - direct delivery of new youth volunteering opportunities
- The vinvolved programme will be fully operational from April 2008*
- received pledges of over £28 million from the private sector for youth volunteering through the match fund programme

1.2 Introduction

v is delighted to see volunteering so high on the parliamentary agenda but we are surprised by the timing of this new Inquiry and would like to urge against any replication of work carried out on behalf of the Russell Commission and the Commission on the Future of Volunteering.

The Russell Commission, established in May 2004 by the then Home Secretary David Blunkett and the then Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown was a comprehensive exploration of youth action and engagement and dealt with a wide range of issues, from the 'marketing' and image of youth volunteering, to the availability of good quality opportunities for young people. It considered the various incentives (including financial) that could be offered to young people; made recommendations regarding the recognition of skills amongst employers; and stressed the need for a volunteering ethos across educational establishments.

With help from its youth advisory board, the YABsters, the Commission engaged with a wide range of stakeholders including young people, the voluntary sector, business and the media. In total, over 700 responses were received from voluntary and community sector organisations and a further 6,000 responses from young people.

The final report was published in March 2005 and is available on the v web-site: www.wearev.com

v is committed, not only to the implementation of Russell recommendations, but also to the on-going evaluation of our campaigns and programmes. There is a need to reflect on Russell recommendations in light of other social and political developments (for example, Government plans to raise the participation age to 18) and to constantly re-assess the barriers that prevent young people from volunteering. We highlighted some of the areas where further action is needed in our response to the Commission on the Future of Volunteering and will focus on these again in this response and on the questions that are most relevant to our work.

If you have any questions regarding our response, please contact:

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2.1 Morgan Inquiry Questions

2.2 What do you perceive to be the main advantages of getting more young adults in volunteering?

The Russell Commission explored the benefits of volunteering to all of these groups in detail but v would like to take the opportunity presented by this Inquiry to reinforce certain key messages.

Firstly, it is quite clear that there is a significant link between volunteering and skills development. The Russell Commission (recommendation 11) stated that 'the opportunity to improve skills and employability is a powerful incentive for young people to volunteer' and recent research carried out by v has confirmed that both young people and employers regard volunteering as a way of building transferable skills such as communication and team-work.¹ These skills are not a substitute for sector-specific and functional skills but employers repeatedly say that they are absolutely crucial for the work-place and during 2008, v will be working with business to promote the benefits of employee volunteering and to encourage HR departments to give due regard to volunteering experience.

There are of course, a myriad of benefits to young adults and volunteering should not be regarded simply as work-experience or a type of work-based learning. Volunteering is about much more than that as these quotes from v20 (v's youth advisory board) demonstrate:

Why do young people volunteer?

"I volunteer because I believe it's important to make a difference in some way to the community you live in, even if it's just a small difference"

"I like to give something back to my community and to the countries and communities that I visit. I also feel that I can acquire new skills and gain opportunities that I might not otherwise be able to do"

"I think the main reason would be the satisfaction that I get from it, knowing that you are doing something worthwhile... on a more selfish level I know that it's good for stuff like your CV and personal statement"

¹ Youth Volunteering: Attitudes and Perceptions (v, January 2008)

It has been clear, through the large number of applications made to the involved programme that an increasing number of third-sector organisations want to involve young volunteers in their work. Volunteers have of course been at the heart of some voluntary organisations for years, but for many other organisations, the involvement of volunteers, especially young adult volunteers, is a new challenge and a new opportunity. As Baroness Neuberger is now exploring, there is also untapped potential for volunteering in the public sector, for example, in education or health and social care. Volunteers should of course, never replace core staff but they can greatly add value and bring additional skills, enthusiasm and experience to the workplace.

It is early days in terms of measuring community impact and while the third sector has anecdotal evidence in abundance, there is potential for developing a more sophisticated methodology for demonstrating the value of volunteering and capturing the social return on investment (SROI). Having said that, the recent report *Volunteering Works* has done an excellent job in bringing existing evidence together to consider the impact of volunteering on community cohesion, social inclusion, quality of life and lifelong learning.² At the end of 2008, v will be launching a new tool aimed at boosting recognition of volunteering – this will allow young volunteers, not only to reflect on the skills developed through volunteering, but also to reflect on the impact that they and their project has had on the community.

2.3 What do you perceive to be the priority areas for the encouragement of young adults in volunteering?

The key recommendation of the Russell Commission was the creation of a new national framework that would give young people access to a ‘menu of opportunity’, including short-term, part-time, full-time and international opportunities to suit the requirements of different young people. v launched the new national youth volunteering programme, involved in November 2007 and this puts in place this new national framework that will seek to engage and additional 500,000 young people in volunteering opportunities.

This new national framework includes the creation of 107 involved teams, hosted by local third sector organisations and covering every local authority area in England. It will also fund direct delivery, with 152 organisations being funded to deliver new and innovative youth volunteering opportunities, particularly focused on tapping into young people’s passions, cares and concerns.

Through the involved programme, v is making a total investment of £75m over three years, the largest-ever single investment in youth volunteering.

The priorities for the national youth volunteering programme, involved, are as follows:

1. Youth involvement
2. High quality delivery
3. Equality and diversity
4. Creativity and innovation

² *Volunteering Works* (IVR and Volunteering England, 2007)

5. Skills development
6. Partnership working
7. Maximised community impact

2.4 What do you see as the main barrier to volunteering for young adults?

v published the report, *Barriers preventing passionate young people acting on their concerns* in 2007 setting out the findings of a survey carried out with 1000 young people aged 16-25 (representing the national demographic in England). This survey showed that young people are deeply concerned about local, national and international issues and predominantly want to make a difference. However, the numbers who have taken positive action remain in the minority across all the issues. When asked about those things that were preventing them from getting involved, they gave the following answers³:

<i>Don't have the time</i>	51%
<i>Not sure how to help</i>	50%
<i>Have nothing to offer</i>	23%
<i>Not sure how to go about it</i>	20%
<i>Transport</i>	17%
<i>Information is confusing</i>	13%
<i>Childcare</i>	6%
<i>Worried what friends think</i>	6%
<i>Other</i>	5%
<i>Nothing</i>	10%

There are also some persistent structural issues that were highlighted by both the Russell Commission and more recently by the Commission on the Future of Volunteering, regarding some of the bureaucracy (particularly CRB checks and other safeguarding measures) and some of the barriers experienced by young people in receipt of benefits.

2.5 What actions would you like to see taken to remove those barriers?

For some young people, 'time' will be a perceived barrier and for others it will be very real and more difficult to overcome. There are two ways in which v is approaching this barrier – firstly, we want to emphasise the benefits of volunteering to young people so that it is seen as a 'must-have' and something worth making time for. Our youth advisory board, v20 have been working on an interactive tool to help young people recognise the benefits of volunteering (Project X) and this will be launched in April this year (2008).

³ Barriers preventing passionate young people acting on their concerns (v, 2007)

Secondly, we are currently working with both employers and with educational establishments (HE and FE) to look at how they can promote volunteering and create the space within the structures in which young people find themselves for volunteering to undertaken as a matter of course.

In order to improve the consistency and quality of information and advice that is available to young people, the new national youth volunteering programme, **vinvolved**, will create teams covering every local authority area in England. These **vinvolved** teams will promote volunteering, offer support and guidance, and broker young people into suitable volunteering opportunities. This will also mean that every young person, regardless of geography, has access to the support they might need to get involved in volunteering. In addition, it will be essential that those organisations delivering the Connexions service (under the newly proposed arrangements) are actively signposting young people to both their local **vinvolved** teams and to **vinspired** (see below).

Another key Russell recommendation was the creation of a national volunteering portal to ensure that young people have ready access to information on volunteering opportunities. In our first year as an independent charity, **v** launched the portal **vinspired.com** which incorporates a search for volunteering opportunities, backed by the National Volunteering Database (NVD) but also includes other functions for blogging and social networking. In December 2007, we achieved 40,000 unique visitors to the site and of those registered on the site 59% are new to volunteering. We are about to launch a consultation with our young site users, to look at ways of improving the site but we cannot stress enough, that in order for the site to be successful, it is reliant on delivery organisations putting their volunteering opportunities onto the NVD and referring young people to **vinspired**. In some instances, the sector is actually working against Russell's vision of a one-stop shop by setting up other websites that compete rather than work with **vinspired** and this is counter-productive to the implementation of Russell recommendations. It is only by everyone in the sector working together that Russell's vision of a one-stop shop will be realised.

Russell also recommended a series of campaign to promote awareness of volunteering and to encourage young people to register on the national portal. The marketing campaign **whatsyourv?** has been developed in order to challenge the myth that 'I have nothing to offer'. By linking volunteering to young people's passions and interests, we are sending out a clear message that everyone has something to contribute and by driving young people to **vinspired**, they are then able to look for opportunities on-line that are linked to their interests and passions.

On bureaucracy, we welcome the proposal put forward by the Commission on the Future of Volunteering to create a cross-government working party to explore ways of removing unnecessary or disproportionate obstacles to volunteering. This group should also ensure that the new vetting and barring system will not create any additional barriers to volunteering.

v is clear in its understanding of volunteering as something that is unpaid, but we also want to ensure that young volunteers are able to fully cover their expenses. In our recent response to the BERR consultation on the National Minimum Wage and Voluntary Workers, we made the following points:

1. That young volunteers should be able to claim an allowance from the outset, based on reasonably estimated expenses. Not all young people will be able to pay upfront costs, even if these are reimbursed.
2. That childcare should be incorporated into the definition of a 'reasonably estimated expense'.
3. That the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) should acknowledge the link between volunteering and employability and ensure that all Jobcentre Plus staff fully understand policy on volunteering.

Furthermore, we urge the DWP to revisit its policy on full-time volunteering and how it interacts with the New Deal for Young People to ensure that young volunteers who are contributing positively to their communities and learning new skills, are not compelled to seek employment before their placement is finished.

2.6 Are there any structural or organisational changes in the voluntary sector that in your view would assist the development of voluntary services?

One of our vinvolved programme priorities is partnership-working and we have actively invited bids from consortia that could include public sector organisations working alongside those in the third sector. v sees partnership-working as absolutely critical to the success of the national youth volunteering programme and we would urge other commissioners (for example in a local authority) to adopt a similar approach.

2.7 In your view, what impact/influence does the voluntary sector have on the overall UK economy?

NCVO has done extensive mapping in this area and estimates that the sector has a paid workforce of over 608,000 people and an annual income of £26.3 billion. The recently published document, *The Future Role of the Third Sector in Social and Economic Regeneration* (HMT, Cabinet Office, 2007) covers this issue in more detail. As mentioned above, the social return on investment cannot be measured purely in economic terms but there are financial savings to be made in other areas through investment in volunteering and the voluntary sector. For example, by investing in a preventative programme with young offenders, Government could be making huge potential savings.

2.8 What changes would you wish to see in the financial arrangements for voluntary organisations to help incentivise young adults to volunteer?

It goes without saying that longer-term funding can help organisations develop and improve their volunteering programmes. v is dependent on the funding settlement that it is offered by central Government (based on the CSR cycle) and in turn, is committed to the Compact. All grants made through the vinvolved programme are for three years.

2.9 Should young adults be offered financial incentives to encourage them to look upon volunteering more favourably?

v believes that volunteering should always be unpaid and that incentives or financial rewards should never become 'expected'. We regularly revisit this issue with members of v20 who remain unanimously opposed to the idea of direct financial incentives (over and above reasonable expenses) but who are open to other ways of recognising and rewarding youth volunteering, including one-off treats and in-kind awards.

Below are some comments from v20 that highlight people's reasons for volunteering:

"I think everyone who is able should be encouraged to volunteer in some way or another – volunteering allows people to give something back to the community"

"It doesn't suit everyone – different people have different interests and you shouldn't impose volunteering on people if they don't want to do it – the whole concept is that it should be voluntary"

"I think everyone should have the opportunity to volunteer and should know how they could get involved... but I don't think everyone should volunteer – what makes volunteering so special is that everyone is there because they want to be"

"I don't believe it makes you a 'better citizen'. However, I do believe that it makes you a more aware citizen. It makes you appreciate the smaller things especially if you've spent 5 hours gardening in a near-by carpark cutting back weeds!"

"In a culture of take take take I think people should be encouraged to see the value in giving and not expecting anything material in return"

"In volunteering you are doing a service for someone out of the goodness of your heart and that makes you a better person in general, let alone a better citizen"

2.10 What do you think could be done to improve the perception of volunteering among young adults?

Attitudinal change does not happen overnight but through our national campaigns v is already starting to alter perceptions of volunteering. In order to evaluate the **whatsyourv?** campaign, we have already conducted two waves of research with 1000 young people, 50% of whom are volunteers and 50% of whom are not. When asked about the v brand, 65% of young people now say that it is *important*, compared to 22% in the first wave. 52% say that it is *cool*, compared to 32% in the first wave, and 49% say that they will *tell their friends* about it, compared with 32% in the first wave. The campaign adverts are impacting on young people's likelihood to volunteer with 31% of young people more likely to volunteer having seen the ads.

2.11 Whose responsibility is it to enhance the perception of volunteering among young adults?

We hope that the national campaigns will go some way to enhancing the perception of volunteering among young adults but this is of course everyone's responsibility. Employers, careers advisors, Jobcentre Plus Advisers etc... all need to give due regard to volunteering and speak positively about the opportunities available to young people. There is also a responsibility on providers to offer good quality volunteering opportunities – if young people experience volunteering in a negative way then their attitudes will not shift.

2.12 What are the expectations of today's young adults in relation to volunteering? How do you think this has changed in the past five/ten years?

v, in partnership with TimeBank is completing a piece of research that looks at how volunteering should respond to the needs of today's young adults. The background has been considered in the NFP Synergy report *The 21st Century Volunteer: a report on the changing face of volunteering in the 21st Century* (November 2005).

2.13 What do you think employers see as employees' transferable skills, gained from their experience in volunteering?

Through our survey carried out with employers (371 HR Departments), the following skills were identified as those most likely to be developed through volunteering:

Team-work	88%
Communication	88%
Self-confidence	88%
Listening skills	80%
Taking responsibility	79%

2.14 In your opinion, do enough employers make it easy for volunteers to take time off to pursue voluntary work?

As the Commission on the Future of Volunteering pointed out, there are real opportunities for extended employer-supported volunteering and we support the Commission's recommendations on this.

v has been working with a large number of employers through the match-fund programme and there are some examples of good practice in this area which should be promoted. We would like to see other large employers follow suit and we are encouraging vinvolved teams to build links with local businesses, including SMEs.

2.15 Is that something they should be doing in any case?

See above

2.16 If not, what steps could be taken to improve this?

See above

2.17 Should employers' consider granting time off for voluntary work e.g. a regular allowance? If not, should flexible working be a more widely available option?

A regular allowance could be one way in which to increase the time available for volunteering, as is a 'community day', an idea recently proposed by the TUC and voluntary sector organisations. For many people however, volunteering will be something that they want to do on a regular, rather than an occasional basis and for these employees, flexibility will be the key enabling factor. It is important that all employers (not just those in the private sector) play their part and as a third sector employer, v allows up to 4 days every year for employees to volunteer.

2.18 How much time do you think employers should set aside for volunteering?

See above

2.19 What steps could be taken to improve employers' views of staff taking time out of the office to pursue voluntary work? e.g. tax incentives, awards

We would refer the Morgan Inquiry to a recent study conducted by the Institute for Volunteering Research and the National Centre for Social Research, which found that 50% of employees questioned said that having paid time off would encourage them to participate in volunteering. 42% also pointed to the range of activities and said that greater variety in opportunities would make a difference.

2.20 Should organisations be given financial incentives to encourage them to look upon volunteering more favourably?

Financial *incentives* are not appropriate for this purpose but there may be the demand for funding that allows organisations to implement and properly manage their volunteering programmes.

2.21 Should non-academic skills gained through volunteering be given a greater recognition amongst employers?

Employers regularly say that non-academic transferable skills are essential in the workplace. In v's own survey, employers gave some of these skills including communication, team-work and listening skills, very high ratings and this is backed by a recent CIPD survey⁴, where employers were asked to list the key attributes that they look for in school-leaver recruits. The top three of these were communication, work ethic and personality – interestingly, these rated above functional skills such as numeracy, literacy and ICT.

Critically, these skills need to be recognised not only by employers, but also by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and by Job Centre Plus and Connexions staff who are advising young people of their options on a daily basis.

2.22 How would you say the business community regards volunteering?

⁴ CIPD/KPMG, *Labour Market Outlook*, August 2006

The v survey also showed however, that while employers recognise that volunteering can contribute to skills development, this does not always actually translate into action and attention when considering job applications.

32% of HR departments responded to the survey saying that volunteering experience is only relevant if directly linked to what their business / organisation does. This indicates that the business community needs more help in assessing individual cases and that young people themselves, may need more encouragement to reflect on and articulate the skills that they have developed whilst volunteering.

From a slightly different perspective, we know that the business community are very interested in supporting youth volunteering as a public agenda and through the match-fund programme, v has been able to build some very successful relationships with the business community. To date, we have received pledges of over £30m for youth volunteering from the private sector, which has included some in-kind contributions from companies such as GCap that have given the **whatsyourv?** campaign significant airtime.

2.23 What extra skills do / can young adults bring to their careers through voluntary work – and vice versa?

In addition to the transferable skills already noted, it is worth recognising that volunteering can also help young people develop sector-specific skills (such as childcare or horticulture) that lead them into education, employment or training.

2.24 How do people who volunteer benefit the organisations that they work for?

This has already been dealt with in 2.2

2.25 Are the skills young people acquire while volunteering sufficiently recognised by further / higher educational establishments?

The *Attitudes and Perceptions* survey shows that there is high regard within FE and HE establishments for volunteering. Respondents from these sectors gave the statement “*Volunteering adds value to a young person’s skills or experience*”, an average rating of 8.6.

2.26 Are further / higher educational establishments doing enough to encourage young adults to volunteer?

v believes that there is greater potential within FE and HE establishments for the promotion of youth volunteering opportunities.

On HE, v will be working with the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, hosted by the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England to develop a framework for student volunteering.

On FE, we would like to point to the work carried out by Volunteering England and funded by the LSC, which proposes a **'Sector-wide volunteering strategy - To support a more co-ordinated way of working all FE stakeholders need to come together at a cross-sector conference to launch work on a sector-wide strategy for volunteering. Steering groups of FE organisations, colleges and providers would guide the conference and then take the lead on pledging to a strategy which enhances learners' abilities to access quality volunteering opportunities.'**

v will be working with Volunteering England to deliver this conference.

2.27 Should careers advisors in further / higher educational establishments inform students of potential career benefits of volunteering?

v's *Attitudes and Perceptions* survey also asked young people and employers whether or not they are agreed with the statement, "*Volunteering is a valuable activity that could have a positive effect on career progression*".

87% of employers and 76% of young people agreed with this statement, showing that this is extremely relevant for careers advisors. Interestingly, agreement was even higher amongst volunteers (84%) which indicates a positive first-hand experience of the effect amongst those who are already involved.

2.28 How can youth groups help improve the perceptions of the voluntary sector among young adults, businesses, stakeholders and the wider general public?

The voluntary sector still retains high levels of trust but the general public can be unaware of the substantial contribution that the sector makes to society (through delivery of programmes). As far as volunteering is concerned, this message can be best communicated by young people themselves – this is why we always seek to involve v20 in speaking opportunities as they are without doubt, the best advocates for our work.

2.29 Young adult volunteers are seen as positive role models to the members of youth groups they volunteer for (agree / disagree)

The 10-Year Strategy for Positive Activities, *Aiming High for Young People* (HMT, DCSF, 2007) highlighted the important influence not only of parents and families, but also of peer groups and other young people. v would agree that young volunteers supporting other children and young people are often highly regarded as positive role models. We hope that there will be additional outcomes that result from our mission to inspire a new generation of young volunteers, including positive impact on Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes and on community cohesion.

2.30 What benefit do these role models have for local communities and for the number of young adult volunteers in the UK?

See above

2.31 What impact can youth groups / voluntary organisations centred around young people, have on young people's development?

v is a youth-led charity, led by the cares, interests, passions and beliefs of young people. We believe that by empowering young people in this way, we will achieve better results, communicate more effectively with young people and fund volunteering opportunities that are relevant and inspiring. We also know that real responsibility for decision-making can build confidence and leadership skills amongst young people and have therefore asked all organisations applying for v funding, to demonstrate how they have involved young people in development of the project.

2.32 Do you believe that there is currently enough public information available to young adults who would like to get involved in volunteering?

The intention of v-inspired.com and of the v-involved teams is to ensure that all young people have access to information about volunteering but it requires buy-in from the whole sector to properly function.

2.33 Where would you say the first port of call would be for a young adult interested in volunteering?

- Youth information websites
- Youth charities such as v
- Local charities
- Colleges or universities

As already noted above, Russell recommended the creation of an on-line one-stop shop so that all young people could access volunteering opportunities. This will only be successful if all organisations offering volunteering opportunities put their opportunities onto the National Volunteering Database (NVD). We would also suggest that the creation of other information websites is counter-productive to the strategy set out in the Russell Commission and would encourage all voluntary organisations to contact v directly to talk about ways in which v-inspired could be improved to meet their needs. Less than one year-on since its launch (in March 2007), we are greatly encouraged by the statistics on the site which is now receiving in excess of 40,000 hits every month.

For some young people, face-to-face contact will be the preferred way of finding out about volunteering opportunities. For this reason, the national youth volunteering programme v-involved is creating teams across every local authority in England and contact details for these teams will also be listed on v-inspired. These teams will be making active links with local schools, colleges and charities. As already stated, they will be looking to engage a wide range of partners including local businesses.

2.34 Do you think that the way volunteering vacancies are presented has an impact on whether young people sign up? Should organisations be, for example, more up-front about time commitment and regulatory requirements?

As already stated, volunteering opportunities clearly need to be presented in an attractive manner and we have tailored vInspired to make the NVD search more relevant to young people. As far as individual opportunities go, it is important for a young person to know exactly what is being offered from the outset and to have clarity over the time commitment and opportunities for accreditation. As a matter of good practice, young people should be offered an initial interview in order to discuss expectations and requirements of the placement.

2.35 Any other issues?

Only to reiterate the importance of allowing time for full implementation and evaluation of the Russell Commission recommendations and not replicating existing work.