Measuring the impossible?
Scoping Study for Longitudinal Research on the Impact of Youth Volunteering

Full Report
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Institute for Volunteering Research
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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive summary</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Who are we and what did we do? The aims and methodology of the scoping study</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 The research consortium</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Aim of the scoping study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3. Methodology of the scoping study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What exactly are we looking at? Defining the focus of the study</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Definitions</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 The focus of the scoping study</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Impact on whom?</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 What types of impact?</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The case for longitudinal research</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Limitations of the existing evidence on the impact of youth volunteering on the individual</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Why longitudinal research?</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Why large samples are necessary</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 A discussion of some objections that were raised during the scoping study</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Existing longitudinal surveys</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1. British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2. The Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3. The British Cohort Study (BCS)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4. The Youth Cohort Study (YCS)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5. Understanding Society</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6. The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Options for the future</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Analyse existing longitudinal data</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1. Limitations of existing longitudinal data on volunteering</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2 What analysis can be done on existing data?</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3 What are the resource implications of this type of analysis?</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Improve existing surveys by amending or adding volunteering questions</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Set up a new longitudinal survey of volunteering</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Summary of recommendations and proposed next steps</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Next steps for collecting and analysing longitudinal data on the impact of youth volunteering</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Wider recommendations which emerged from the research process</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendixes</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: More detailed information on each of the surveys discussed in the report</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B Other existing longitudinal data sets</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: How different volunteering questions produce different rates of volunteering</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. References</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword

There is a growing wealth of evidence of the benefits of volunteering. However, the lack of evidence about the long term impact of volunteering remains a challenge. The Big Society agenda provides opportunities to renew our focus on measuring and communicating social value. Longitudinal research provides us the ability to do this, explaining the wider and long term impacts of volunteering upon individuals and communities.

v is committed to building a research legacy for youth volunteering. We believe longitudinal research is an absolutely crucial part of it. It will benefit not only the current generation of policy makers and practitioners, but also future ones. This report provides a number of pragmatic and realistic recommendations. v intends to collaborate with partners and utilise existing longitudinal studies to continue to build a robust evidence base for youth volunteering.

My thanks to all that have already participated in this research. We hope you will take the time to read this excellent report and support the development of this research moving forward.

Terry Ryall
v, Chief Executive
Acknowledgements

The research consortium was made up of:

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Executive summary

Interest in youth volunteering from researchers, policymakers and practitioners has never been higher. This has, in part, been driven by a belief that youth volunteering can help promote a range of benefits in young people. Yet there remains a dearth of quantitative evidence to back up these assumptions. In such a context, The National Young Volunteers Service, commissioned a research consortium (led by the Institute for Volunteering Research) to undertake a scoping study for longitudinal research on the impact of youth volunteering (16-25 year olds). The focus of the research would be on the impact of volunteering upon the young volunteers themselves (as opposed to wider societal impacts).

The scoping study consisted of:
- A literature review of existing publications on the impact of youth volunteering, with a particular focus on how impact is categorised and the different methodological approaches used in trying to understand impact;
- Expert interviews with researchers involved in longitudinal research;
- Deliberative workshops with the youth volunteering sector, policy makers and researchers, and finally with young volunteers themselves;
- A roundtable discussion with a broad selection of stakeholders to discuss and refine the recommendations.

The case for a longitudinal study
The greatest power of longitudinal data is its potential to help us understand change over time at the individual level. Only this type of data can help us to understand the long term impact of youth volunteering on individuals’ lives. It allows us to explore the relationship between volunteering and various other ‘outcomes’ and experiences in later life such as civic engagement, employment and health. By controlling for the pre-cursors of volunteering we can begin to explore causality (as opposed to mere correlation) between volunteering and these outcomes (although it is important to be realistic about the certainty with which conclusions can be drawn about causation).

There are different types of longitudinal research. The proposed research would be with a large scale representative sample, which will allow us to generalise up to the population level and compare volunteers with non-volunteers.

Three options for collecting longitudinal data
This scoping study identified three potential options for taking forward longitudinal research on the impact of youth volunteering.

1. Analyse existing longitudinal data
There are a number of existing longitudinal surveys which ask a question on volunteering, for example, the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS). Yet little analysis has been carried out on this data and we recommend that further analysis could provide better evidence about different patterns of volunteering, why people become involved over time and whether volunteers experience different outcomes in later life.
However, the existing data suffers from two key weaknesses. First, the questions used in the surveys are simplistic and significantly under-represent the full extent of volunteering. For example, the rate for regular formal volunteering (at least once a month) in the BHPS is approximately 10% compared to approximately 25% in the Citizenship Survey which uses a more sophisticated question. Existing surveys also ignore informal volunteering (which is actually more common than formal volunteering). The second weakness of existing surveys is that they do not capture any details about the type of volunteering (e.g. type of activity), a potentially important factor in determining the impacts of volunteering.

2. Improve existing surveys by amending or adding volunteering questions
Due to the limitations of existing data we also recommend the collection of more accurate and reliable data in the future by improving and/or adding questions to existing surveys. This would provide more accurate data on volunteering rates and consequently enable us to carry out more accurate analysis around the impacts of volunteering. The addition of questions to existing surveys requires in-depth negotiations with those who manage the surveys. It is important that the proposed questions fit with the core aims of the survey and are feasible within the constraints of the survey. It is also important that a strong coalition of support is built for amending or adding questions. Sometimes a financial contribution to the core costs of the survey is required to ensure that questions can be added. Due to the high demand for adding questions to these surveys the number of volunteering questions that can be added is low (approximately 4-6). This means that only limited data could be captured around the type of volunteering.

3. Set up a new longitudinal survey of volunteering
This option would allow us to use a sophisticated volunteering question and collect a wider range of information on the type of volunteering (including activities, motivations and support received). While this may sound an ideal scenario, it would suffer from the methodological challenges of retaining non-volunteers over a long period of time (who may become uninterested in questions on a topic which isn’t relevant to them) and of inadvertently encouraging non-volunteers to volunteer through regular questioning (this would then distort the analysis). In addition the prohibitive cost of setting up and running a large scale longitudinal study (hundreds of thousands of pounds for each wave) means that we do not recommend pursuing this option at the present time.

Recommendations for taking the scoping study forward:
1. Build a coalition to support the analysis and further collection of longitudinal data;
2. Carry out further analysis of existing longitudinal data;
3. Develop negotiations with existing longitudinal surveys to improve and/or add volunteering questions;
4. Ensure that the further data is analysed.

Wider recommendations on volunteering research include the need to:
1. Explore the wider impacts of youth volunteering on society;
2. Make the case for volunteering research more generally;
3. Better share research within the field;
4. Think strategically about what research is undertaken.
Introduction

This final report of the scoping study complements a shorter summary paper (available at www.vinspired.com/research) which presents the main arguments in a more succinct and accessible way. This full report provides greater detail on the process of the scoping study as well as the recommendations and how they were reached.

Section 1 introduces the rationale behind the setting up of the scoping study, the consortium which undertook it and the methodology adopted.

Section 2 discusses how the literature review, deliberative workshops and expert interviews shaped the boundaries of the proposed area of study – in particular what is understood by volunteering, the definition of impact and whether to focus on the impact on the volunteer or on wider society.

Section 3 outlines the case for using longitudinal research to explore the impact of youth volunteering. It also addresses some of the misconceptions and concerns about longitudinal research raised during the consultative process.

Section 4 reviews existing longitudinal surveys in the UK which already have, or may in future have, questions related to volunteering.

Section 5 discusses the three options considered as part of the scoping study: namely to analyse existing data, amend or add questions to existing longitudinal surveys, or to create a new one.

Section 6 brings together the recommendations of the scoping study.

The appendixes provide further detail on the longitudinal studies discussed in the report, with a particular focus on the nature of the volunteering questions within them.
1. Who are we and what did we do? The aims and methodology of the scoping study

Interest in youth volunteering from researchers, policymakers and practitioners has never been higher. In part this interest has been driven by a belief that youth volunteering can help promote a range of benefits in young people such as increased civic engagement, skills, employability and well-being along with a generally happier, more cohesive and inclusive society. Yet the evidence backing up these assumptions is underdeveloped. There is certainly a great deal of anecdotal and qualitative evidence that volunteering can have positive impacts but there is a distinct lack of quantitative evidence for these claims and in particular quantitative evidence that explores the long term impacts of youth volunteering.

This represents a clear gap in our knowledge and threatens to undermine current efforts to promote investment and interest in youth volunteering. This gap was acknowledged in recommendation 16 of the Russell Commission National Framework on Youth Action and Engagement (Russell, 2005), which highlighted the integral role of measurement and evaluation to develop a firm evidence base for decision-making and cites longitudinal studies as a crucial evaluation activity.

1.1 The research consortium

As such, v, The National Young Volunteers Service\(^1\) (which was set up to take forward the Russell Commission recommendations) assembled a consortium made up of v, the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR), National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) and Birkbeck, University of London, to carry out a scoping study for longitudinal research on the impact of youth volunteering.

IVR, as lead partner, carried out the majority of the research, with support from:

- NatCen in providing advice on overall research design along with specific challenges around longitudinal studies (through its Longitudinal Studies Unit) and on technical issues around sampling and data analysis (through its Research Methods Unit);
- Dr Linda Milbourne of Birkbeck, University of London, in providing input on the broader context of youth and volunteering, as well as some of the specific challenges of researching young people;
- v, as both commissioner and a consortium member, providing ongoing support and advice, working closely with IVR in guiding and developing the scoping study.

This report presents the findings of the scoping study and sets out a number of options for consideration by all those with an interest in developing a stronger evidence base and clearer understanding around the impact of youth volunteering.

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\(1\) v, The National Young Volunteers Service aims to inspire a new generation of young volunteers (aged 16-25 years) in England. For more information on v see www.vinspired.com/about-us
1.2. Aim of the scoping study

The aim of the study was to propose an effective longitudinal research methodology to explore the long term impact of youth volunteering. The initial thinking was that a new longitudinal study might be needed. However, based on initial consultations with stakeholders and experts in the field and in view of the current public funding environment the focus of the scoping study was widened to look at a broader range of possibilities for the collection of longitudinal data. As such the revised aim was to produce a report that effectively 'moves forward' the debate on what kind of longitudinal data and analysis is both needed and feasible in order to address the evidence gap on the long term impact of youth volunteering.

1.3. Methodology of the scoping study

The methodology of the scoping study was made up of the following elements:

a) A project inception meeting at which the consortium met to agree on the parameters of the scoping study and the design and sequencing of the methodology (April 2010);

b) A literature review of existing publications on the impact of youth volunteering, with a particular focus on how these impacts are categorised and the different methodological approaches used in trying to understand impact (May 2010);

c) Expert interviews with researchers directly involved in longitudinal research. The aim was to draw from the experience of existing longitudinal studies in the UK and internationally, as well as to explore how volunteering is addressed. Specifically, the interviews explored the aims and objectives of these existing studies, the methods used, the perceived limitations of longitudinal research, and the successes, challenges and wider implications of the studies. A list of the institutions (and related studies) are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Longitudinal study affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institute for Social and Economic Research (University of Essex)</td>
<td>British Household Panel Survey and Understanding Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Longitudinal Studies (Institute of Education)</td>
<td>Birth Cohort studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department for Education</td>
<td>Longitudinal Study of Young People in England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abt Associates</td>
<td>City Year evaluations in the US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Sector Research Centre</td>
<td>Overview of data on volunteering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d) Deliberative workshops were held in June and July 2010 with the aim of bringing together stakeholders with an interest in the long term impacts of youth volunteering². Each of the three workshops had between 8-13 participants representing a different type of stakeholder and focused on a number of different questions:

² The full list of those who attended is included in the acknowledgements
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Aims of workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth organisations and volunteering organisations AND</td>
<td>1. Generate a better common understanding of what we do and don’t know about the long term impact of youth volunteering?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy makers (from government departments and policy and research bodies related to youth volunteering)</td>
<td>2. Understand what indicators or measures of impact would be most valuable and relevant for each of the represented organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young volunteers (representing a range of organisations and types of volunteering)</td>
<td>3. Develop ideas on how we can build a coalition that will support the study and work towards securing funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Explore the types of impacts we should be measuring in the research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Explore some more practical issues of carrying out this type of research</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Since not all the invitees to the policy workshop could attend, we have carried out a number of follow-up interviews.

e) An analysis meeting in July 2010 at which all consortium members met to consider an interim report. The analysis meeting addressed three key questions:
   - What exactly do we want to find out around the impact of youth volunteering?
   - What is the case for using longitudinal data to answer these questions?
   - How can we collect and analyse this longitudinal data?

f) A roundtable discussion on 7 October 2010. The final part of the methodology was to gather a range of potential partners to consult on how to take the recommendations of the project forward. This event was well attended by representatives from the public, private and voluntary and community sector. The roundtable event had three key aims:
   - To share the findings and recommendations from the project;
   - To receive feedback from the group on the findings and recommendations;
   - To discuss how the findings and recommendations can be taken forward.
2. What exactly are we looking at? Defining the focus of the study

Initially the scoping study adopted an open approach to many of the definitional issues it faced. This section discusses how, as a result of the literature review, deliberative workshops and expert interviews, we narrowed the focus of the scoping study through defining ‘volunteering’, ‘youth’ and ‘impact’. We also set boundaries on the scope of the type of longitudinal data we would be looking to collect in terms of the type of impact and on whom.

2.1 Definitions

2.1.1 Volunteering
The scoping study adopted a broad definition of volunteering in order to capture it in all of its breadth and diversity. This definition is in line with the one outlined in the introduction to the ‘refreshed’ Compact on relations between Government and the Third Sector in England (The Compact, 2009: 7). Briefly, this definition includes any activity which is unpaid, undertaken freely and benefits others or the environment (beyond close family and friends). This broad definition includes both ‘formal’ volunteering (through a group or organisation) and ‘informal’ volunteering (as an individual).

Aware that the type of volunteering and volunteer might be a factor that shapes impact, we also identified some possible ways of categorising types of volunteering and volunteer:

- Formal and informal (volunteering through a group or organisation and volunteering as an individual);
- Intensity of involvement (in terms of regularity of involvement, the number of hours given and the length of time over which an individual is involved);
- Sector (public, private and voluntary and community sector);
- Type of organisation (e.g. sports, arts or health);
- Activity (e.g. fundraising, campaigning or practical help);
- Motivations of volunteers (e.g. skills development, altruism or meeting new people);
- Routes into volunteering (e.g. youth-volunteering project, word of mouth or a volunteer centre);
- Nature of barriers to volunteering (e.g. negative perceptions, time or accessibility);
- Level of organisation of volunteering (e.g. management or support).

There was a strong consensus among stakeholders that we would need to include both formal and informal volunteering in order to capture and recognise volunteering in all of its breadth and diversity. There was also a strong consensus that the intensity of involvement was very important to capture as analysis would need to distinguish between those volunteering in limited ways and those who volunteer more intensively e.g. full time volunteering. These were seen as the two most important dimensions to collect data around, however,
there was a broad consensus that the more information we could have about the type of volunteering the better.

2.1.2 Youth
Whilst there is no one accepted definition of youth, for the purpose of this research we have taken 16 – 25 years as our range of interest in line with the Russell Commission’s National Framework for Youth Action and Engagement (2005), which was adopted by v.

2.1.3 Impact
We define impact to be the long term effects of an activity, in contrast to the more specific and immediate “outputs” and “outcomes”. The following figure illustrates the differences and sequencing between inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact, as defined by the Charity Evaluation Services (Cupitt & Mihailidou, 2009) and using the case of a neighbourhood clean up programme involving volunteers.

Example of a neighbourhood clean up programme involving young volunteers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All resources</td>
<td>All the products and services delivered</td>
<td>All changes, benefits, learning and other</td>
<td>The broader or longer term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>put in by</td>
<td>e.g. Cleaner neighbourhood</td>
<td>effects e.g.</td>
<td>effects e.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organisers and</td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased awareness of effects of littering</td>
<td>Improved community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partners</td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased interaction between youth</td>
<td>environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. Staff and</td>
<td></td>
<td>and community</td>
<td>Reduced anti-social behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volunteers time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>amongst youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved community cohesion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 The focus of the scoping study

2.2.1 Impact on whom?
A critical question in the literature, and one that emerged as a key feature of the workshops, was ‘impact on whom?’ There are four main groups upon whom volunteering may or may not have an impact (IVR, 2010):

- Individual volunteer,
- Volunteer involving organisation,
- Users or beneficiaries of the volunteering activity, and
- Wider community.

In the research, policy and practice of youth volunteering the majority of attention has been given to the impact on the individual volunteer. For example, in Musick and Wilson’s (2008) wide ranging text on volunteering their discussion of ‘the consequences of volunteering’ focuses almost exclusively on the impacts on the individual. Similarly, within the UK policy context, all three main political parties have focused on youth volunteering as a potential corrective for young people going down the path of political apathy, anti-social behaviour and long term
unemployment. Given the policy focus on the benefit to the individual volunteer, there is a clear need to determine the extent to which these assumptions are correct. As such the brief for this scoping study is to explore the potential of longitudinal data to improve our understanding of how volunteering affects the young person who engages in it. The participants in the deliberative workshops and expert interviews were broadly supportive of this focus, though they were also keen to register the importance of exploring the wider impacts upon society of youth volunteering. The consortium certainly endorses the need for more research around this area, however it would require a very different methodology (see, for example, the Real times project\(^3\)) and cannot be captured by the type of longitudinal research (with the individual as the unit of enquiry) that this scoping study is concerned with.

Within the deliberative workshops some felt that a particular focus on certain groups would be beneficial. This might be those not in education, employment, or training (NEET), or other groups who have traditionally been less likely to access volunteering. However, we concluded that data is needed on all types of young volunteers in order to facilitate analysis and understand the behaviour of specific groups in comparison with young people generally. However, in order to be able to compare certain groups it was agreed that there was a need to explore the possibility of booster samples of under-represented segments of the population such as Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) groups.

2.2.2 What types of impact?
In addition to the ‘who’ question, the impact of youth volunteering can also be categorised according to different types of impact. The literature points to a multitude of impacts that volunteering could potentially have upon an individual and based on the literature review three categories were used to frame the discussion in the deliberative workshops:

i) Social and political (civic engagement) – this set of impacts refers to how the individual relates to their social and political environment and includes impacts such as voting, ethical consumerism, membership of groups, crime and objective empowerment.

ii) Economic (employment outcomes) – this is the most tangible set of impacts and focuses upon the individual as an economic agent, including impacts such as employment, income level, skill development and job satisfaction.

iii) Personal (health and wellbeing) – this is by far the broadest set and explores impacts which relate to internal or personal factors which effect an individual’s experience including health, happiness, security and well-being.

The three categories are intended as a framework to help think about and analyse different types of impacts. They are not mutually exclusive and in many cases they will be strongly inter-related. For example, gaining meaningful

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\(^3\) The ‘Real times’ project of the Third Sector Research Centre with studies continuity and change in the nature and activities of third sector organisations
http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/Research/RealTimes/tabid/449/Default.aspx
employment will almost certainly improve someone’s wellbeing. However, the categories are intended to be exhaustive with all potential impacts falling into at least one.

Some participants of the deliberative workshops felt that a longitudinal piece of research would benefit from focusing on certain types of impact. However, there was little consensus over which particular impacts should form the focus of data collection and analysis. Generally, participants welcomed the ambition to capture the whole range of impacts. Proposals in this scoping study are based on the assumption that the longitudinal research would try and capture as full a range of impacts as possible.

In the workshops we raised the idea of using specific concepts in describing and analysing the impacts of youth volunteering, such as ‘social capital’ or ‘social inclusion’. Generally speaking, across the workshops, there was no strong steer towards any particular concept and many voiced the opinion that the research should not be too explicitly linked to any one concept or public policy agenda.
3. The case for longitudinal research

This section examines the case for using large scale longitudinal research as the approach for understanding the full range of impacts of volunteering on the individual volunteer. It begins by outlining some of the limitations of the existing evidence on impacts. It then goes on to discuss the potential of large scale longitudinal research to overcome these limitations and the section ends by directly addressing some of the concerns about longitudinal research that were raised during the scoping study.

3.1 Limitations of the existing evidence on the impact of youth volunteering on the individual

The existing data on the impact of youth volunteering on the individual can be characterised as exhibiting one or more of the following limitations.

- **Anecdotal** – while there is enormous value in the knowledge held by experienced practitioners across the volunteering sector, it does not provide systematic evidence for the impact of youth volunteering;

- **Project based** – a huge amount of research evidence on the impacts of volunteering is gained through carrying out project evaluations. This can tell us a lot about the impact of youth volunteering, but because it is specific to a particular project it cannot tell us about the impact of youth volunteering more generally;

- **Qualitative** – this type of research offers the power to understand volunteering in great depth. It can offer us a detailed picture of how and why people become involved. However, the very context-dependence which gives qualitative research its richness means that it is much more difficult to generalise across a wider population;

- **Self-reported** – the majority of existing impact assessment relies on the perceptions of volunteers themselves regarding the impacts of their own experiences. This is certainly important due to the privileged insights which individuals can give about their own experience. However, perceptions can only offer one side of the story. Individuals may under or over-state the impact of certain experiences, which may not be borne out by exploring the links between volunteering and actual outcomes such as academic attainment and job outcomes.

- **Cross-sectional** – much evidence of impact is cross-sectional (captured at one moment in time) and this type of data cannot track change over time in the individual. Much cross-sectional research speaks to volunteers either during or at the end of their involvement and therefore cannot explore the long term impacts.
• **Only involves volunteers** – this makes any comparison to non-volunteers extremely difficult. This characteristic means we also do not have data collected on individuals before their involvement in volunteering.

### 3.2 Why longitudinal research?

Longitudinal data has a number of advantages over other kinds of research and the potential to overcome the aforementioned limitations in existing evidence. The key advantage of longitudinal studies is their ability to capture change at the individual level over a long period of time (sometimes there is a considerable time delay between an experience and the full realisation of its impacts). Longitudinal research into the impact of youth volunteering offers us the ability to examine the impact of volunteering over time and assess whether (and how) volunteering brings about long term changes in individuals’ behaviours and experiences.

Only by following individuals over time and collecting a wide range of data from them (such as volunteering activities, educational status/attainment, employment status, income, attitudes and levels of satisfaction) can we carry out analysis which is capable of demonstrating a link between volunteering and future outcomes. For example, we may wish to explore questions such as:

- Are those who volunteer at 16 years more or less likely to have a job when they are 25 (compared to those who have never volunteered)?
- Are those who volunteer between 16-25 years more or less likely to be satisfied with their employment when they are 25 (compared to those who have never volunteered)?

By using clearly defined measures from our data and designing analysis which controls for the relevant ‘pre-cursors’, or associated variables, of volunteering (such as socio-economic status, parental income and schooling), we would have the opportunity to answer these kinds of questions and thereby demonstrate the value of youth volunteering. While delivering on this requires that the longitudinal study be set up correctly, and it could fall short of this potential, other kinds of research that do not track individuals over time fundamentally cannot measure the long term impact of volunteering.

The potential for large scale, quantitative longitudinal research, which has a representative sample (including non-volunteers) and explores actual outcomes (as opposed to just perceptions) is clear and the power of this type of research has been seen in other fields. For example, in the area of education, the longitudinal Effective Pre-School and Primary Education (EPPE) project took a group of 3 year old children in 1997 and followed their development until 2004. The study aimed to understand what impact pre-school education had on their later schooling and development. The longitudinal approach enabled us to monitor this impact, and by controlling for other factors, it demonstrated that the duration and quality of their pre-school education made a significant contribution to academic progress and social behavioural development by the age of 7 years.
This led to significant policy changes and increased provision of pre-school education.

### 3.3 Why large samples are necessary

We would need a sizeable sample of young people in order to answer these questions (typically 10,000 - 20,000 people at the beginning). There are a number of reasons why longitudinal studies of this type require large samples and they include:

**Small changes can be important**

Although volunteering may have a dramatic impact on individuals it may manifest itself in relatively small quantitative changes across a whole population. For example, if volunteering increased the chances of gaining paid employment by a small percentage (say 2 or 3 percent), many policymakers would view that as a fairly important impact. However, this makes it necessary to have a large enough sample for such small differences to be statistically significant. Moreover, large samples provide the statistical power to control for the numerous confounding factors which may impact young people’s behaviours and experiences (such as parental income or schooling).

**The need to compare between different groups**

We must ensure that our sample includes sufficient numbers of volunteers and non-volunteers in order to be able to meaningfully quantify the impacts of volunteering. Large samples may also allow us to compare different types of volunteers. These could be defined from a range of factors including demographics (e.g. ethnicity, age, gender) and the type of volunteering undertaken (e.g. full time, formal, how often it is undertaken). Many longitudinal surveys use booster samples of groups such as BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) in order to make meaningful comparisons amongst different populations. This can also increase the required sample size.

**Attrition**

Finally, large samples are especially important for longitudinal research due to the effects of attrition. The number of participants will decline at each successive wave as initial participants drop out of the survey because they no longer want to take part or cannot be contacted by the survey practitioners. There are well established mechanisms for reducing attrition but a sizeable percentage of initial participants will always be lost, particularly if we wish to track them over relatively long periods of time. Moreover, young people aged 16-25 are a challenging group to study, particularly longitudinally, as they are less likely than older people to take part in surveys generally and more likely to move address frequently.

### 3.4 A discussion of some objections that were raised during the scoping study

Here we address some of the specific objections that were raised by workshop participants about the need for longitudinal research.
We already know the impact of youth volunteering

Many of the practitioners involved in this research had considerable knowledge and experience of the potential impact of volunteering and many supported the pursuit of longitudinal data. However, some practitioners felt that many of the impacts that a longitudinal survey would explore are, to some extent, already known from their day-to-day work in the volunteering field and that the availability of “hard” evidence would not inform their practice and therefore would not be of great value.

This is not an objection to longitudinal research per se. Rather it suggests a lack of appreciation more generally of the value of research evidence over anecdotal evidence derived from individual experience. Suffice to say, the kind of evidence we are arguing for is objective and based on measurable outcomes (as opposed to subjective and judgement-based). This is the kind of data that is needed to respond to calls for rigorous impact assessment and evidence-based policy-making.

Much of the evidence comes from existing work

Some projects and organisations already carry out surveys and evaluations to find out about the impacts of their projects, including tracking studies of their volunteers. These can be invaluable for exploring volunteer experiences and perspectives of a project and ways of improving implementation. However, in general, such evaluations and tracking studies suffer from a number of limitations in understanding the impact of volunteering in comparison to large-scale longitudinal research. As discussed in section 3.1, these studies are project-based and often cross-sectional, only involve volunteers, and based on perceptions.

The results take too long to appear

This concern was primarily voiced in the policy workshop. It represents a key challenge for funding of any new study, as short-term funding arrangements (3-5 years) and policy priorities make it difficult for government departments or organisations to fund long term research, the results of which may not appear for many years. As such it is a serious consideration for the process of building a coalition to support the collection of longitudinal data.

We concede that, by its nature, a study into long term impacts will necessarily take years to bear fruit. However, it is worth pointing out that the data from each wave would be released at regular intervals with each new wave consolidating and adding to the evidence base from the existing waves.

Too expensive

As anticipated, cost was seen by some as the single greatest barrier to carrying out new longitudinal research in this (or any) area, particularly given the current economic climate and cuts in public spending. There is no doubt that longitudinal research can be expensive compared with cross-sectional and evaluative studies. Some existing longitudinal studies can cost millions of pounds for each wave of research. Even though the vast majority of participants felt that the value of collecting such data was clear, many had reservations that the sheer cost of
such a project could be prohibitive. This is why we have explored a broader range of options for using longitudinal data to understand the impact of youth volunteering (outlined in the succeeding sections).

**Longitudinal data can only show correlation and not causation**

This objection emerged from the roundtable discussion and challenges the ability of longitudinal data to deliver evidence of causation (i.e. volunteering is the cause of a particular impact). The objection has two strands. Firstly, it is argued that we cannot tell the direction of causation between volunteering and other experiences as it could run either way. For example, if there is a higher incidence of political participation among volunteers is it the volunteering which causes the increased political participation or the other way round? Secondly, it is argued that there may be an additional (unacknowledged) factor which happens to coincide with the two variables between which a correlation has been observed. Using again the example of volunteering and political participation, could it be that an additional factor such as a certain personality trait is actually driving the two variables independently?

It is certainly wise to be cautious about the power of longitudinal research to deliver evidence around causation and it is important not to overstate the certainty with which conclusions can be drawn from the data. However, it is also important not to understate its potential. If the sample size is large enough it should be possible to control for some of the pre-cursors of volunteering (such as demographics and personality traits). This then allows us to compare the experiences of two very similar individuals who differ only in respect to volunteering. This type of analysis is complicated but can help us to gain invaluable insights into causation. Furthermore, there is a danger that this objection has overly high expectations of what constitutes evidence around causality. In the social sciences no data is ever going to be able to provide definitive proof of causality and instead a picture is built up through a range of methods both at the individual level and the level of large scale surveys. Longitudinal data contributes a unique and important part of that picture.
4 Existing longitudinal surveys

This section outlines existing longitudinal data sets that are of relevance to our scoping study, as the basis for then exploring options for taking forward longitudinal research on the impact of youth volunteering.

There are four existing longitudinal studies in the UK which collect some data on volunteering (for a brief discussion of other longitudinal data sets which we have decided not to discuss in this report please see the appendix B).

- The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)
- The Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE)
- The British Cohort Study (BCS)
- The Youth Cohort Study (YCS)

There are also two further longitudinal studies, which have not yet collected long term longitudinal data on volunteering but that either have begun to or could have the potential to do so:

- *Understanding Society*
- The Millennium Cohort Study

What follows is a summary of each of these six surveys, outlining their scope, sample, methodology, existing volunteering question and the extent to which analysis has been carried out using this volunteering question. More details of each of the surveys are included in Appendix A.
### 4.1. British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)

The BHPS aims to further understanding of social and economic change at the individual and household level in the UK. The survey was funded by the ESRC between 1991 and 2009. A total of 18 years of panel data has been collected (making it one of the longest running panel surveys in the world). The survey was conducted annually with a volunteering question appearing every two years from 1996 onwards.

#### Areas of focus
- household composition
- housing conditions
- residential mobility
- education and training
- health and the usage of health services
- labour market behaviour
- socio-economic values
- income from employment, benefits and pensions

#### Sample
The BHPS has a sample of about 5,500 households recruited in 1991, containing a total of approximately 10,000 individuals, which equates to approximately 1,500 16-25 year olds. Household members become eligible for interview at the age of 16. Since 1994, children aged 11-15 also complete a short interview. Extension samples were added in 1999 (Scotland and Wales) and 2001 (Northern Ireland).

#### Methodology
The study uses face to face interviews with all members.

#### Volunteering question
*For each of the following leisure activities, please tick the box to show how often you do each of these things.*

Participants are given the option of *Do unpaid voluntary work (At least once a week, at least once a month, several times a year, once a year or less, never or almost never)*

#### Existing analysis of volunteering data
Some analysis has already been carried out on the volunteering data, however, none has related specifically to the impact of youth volunteering. Much of this research has focused on the link between volunteering and the labour market (for full details of the research undertaken see appendix A).
### 4.2. The Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE)

The LSYPE (also known as Next Steps to its respondents) was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (now Department for Education) in 2004. The study aims to improve understanding of the factors affecting young people’s transitions from compulsory education through further education and training into the labour market and other outcomes. To date the study has tracked a single cohort of young people from age 13/14 to 19/20. In addition to the young person interview, in its first four waves, at least one parent was also interviewed.

#### Area of focus

Multiple topics are covered, including:

- household and demographic information
- languages spoken in the home
- attitudes to the young person’s school and involvement in education
- extra-curricular classes
- year 10 subject choices
- special educational needs
- parental expectations and aspirations
- family activities
- parental relationship with young person and contact with services
- reasons young person does not live with natural parents
- household responsibilities and resources (self-completion)
- risk factors (absences, truancy, police contact, bullying) (self-completion)
- individual parent questions
- risk behaviours including smoking, drugs, alcohol, teenage pregnancy and antisocial behaviours

#### Sample

The initial wave one sample consisted of more than 15,000 young people. Respondents were selected to form a representative sample of young people in England from a target population of those in Year 9 (or equivalent) in February 2004 who were born between 1\textsuperscript{st} September 1989 and 31\textsuperscript{st} August 1990. In addition, the initial sample involved boosts of some sub-groups (some ethnic groups and deprived groups) and a further boost was added at wave 4 for some ethnic minority groups.

At the end of wave 7 (Autumn 2010) over 8,600 young people remained active in the study.

#### Methodology

A mixed methodology is used. In waves 1-4 face to face interviewing was conducted with both young people and their parents/guardians. From wave 5 onwards, parents/guardians were no longer included in the study and sequential mixed mode interviewing was introduced. For all those respondents where a valid email address was given, respondents have been invited to take part in a web questionnaire. For those without internet access or who did not complete a web survey, telephone interviews are offered.
Finally if respondents haven’t used the previous two methods, face to face interviewing is used.

**Volunteering question**

Questions on volunteering have been included in wave 1, 2 and 7 of the survey (though the question changed notably in wave 7). The below is the volunteering question used in wave 7 (for the question used in wave 1 and 2 please see appendix A).

(Apart from donating money to charities or good causes some young people also /Some young people) provide help to groups, clubs, organisations or individuals which is unpaid. This can include things like helping out with or raising money for charity, campaigning for a cause you believe in, visiting or looking after people, providing transport or doing household jobs for someone. Have you provided any such help to anyone in the last 12 months that was unpaid?

1. Yes
2. No
   Don't know
   Don't want to answer

**Existing analysis of volunteering data**

None to date.
### 4.3. The British Cohort Study (BCS)

The 1970 British Cohort Study is a longitudinal study which has as its participants all those living in England, Scotland and Wales who were born in one particular week in April 1970. Since the initial birth survey there has been six further encounters with participants (at ages 5, 10, 16, 26, 29 and 34).

#### Area of focus

The focus of the study depends upon the wave but questions have been included on a wide range of areas including:

- physical development
- educational development
- social development
- economic development

#### Sample

The initial sample was 17,200 taken from all the babies born in a particular week in 1970. This had fallen to approximately 10,000 in 2004.

#### Methodology

The methodology of the survey has varied dramatically between encounters including such instruments as face to face interviews, self-completion questionnaires, diaries, parental questionnaires, school class and head teacher questionnaires and medical examinations.

#### Volunteering question

Initial searching revealed that a volunteering question appears on only one of the research encounters. It appears in the 1986 study (aged 16).

*Have you done any visits in the local community organised by your school since September 1984? (include working with the elderly, with young children, with the handicapped etc...)*

*How many times have you been?*

*What did you do?*

*I helped/ visited hospitals; I visited/ helped elderly people; I helped with nurseries/playgroup; I visited community care centres or homes; I helped with handicapped people; Other things, what?*

#### Existing analysis of volunteering data

None to date.
### 4.4. The Youth Cohort Study (YCS)

The Youth Cohort Study (YCS) is a series of longitudinal surveys that contacts a cohort of young people in the spring following completion of education and usually until they are aged 19 or 20. The first survey was carried out in 1985. The most recent cohort was started in 2007 and completed in 2010. In total the YCS covers thirteen cohorts and over forty sweeps of data collection.

The methodology of the surveys varies between cohorts, however, generally they involve three sweeps of young people between the age of 16-17 and 19-21.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Labour market experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Qualifications</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Some other socio-demographic variables</td>
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<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sample size also changes between cohorts. The sample size for cohort 13, sweep one, was 10,930 (achieving a response rate of 69%).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Methodology</th>
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<tr>
<td>The methodology for the survey varies between cohort and sweep. In cohort 12 a mixed methodology is used (including a telephone interview, postal survey (the postal questionnaire was also available for completion on the internet) and computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI)). At cohort 13 the sample was taken from the same academic cohort as the LSYPE in order to facilitate analysis of merged data sets.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Volunteering question</th>
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<tr>
<td>The volunteering question does not appear in every sweep of the survey nor is it asked of every cohort. This question is taken from cohort 11.</td>
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*Besides your main activity, are you doing any of the following on a regular basis? (by regular we mean once a month or more often)*

*One of the choices is:*

*Doing voluntary work? Yes/ no*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing analysis of volunteering data</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None to date</td>
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</table>
4.5. Understanding Society

*Understanding Society* is a genuinely world leading longitudinal study that explores the lives, experiences, behaviours and beliefs of people in Britain. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and run by the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER). A volunteering question is already planned to be included in the survey every two years.

**Area of focus**
- Peoples' state of health
- Experiences of crime
- Personal finances
- Bringing up children
- How involved we are in our local community
- Working lives
- Views and outlook, including about the political system

**Sample**
*Understanding Society* is an annual survey of a nationally representative sample of about 40,000 households (about 100,000 individuals).

The youth sample is approximately 15,000 people.

**Methodology**
Face to face interviews as well as administrative records.

**Volunteering question**
*In the last 12 months, have you given any unpaid help or worked as a volunteer for any type of local, national or international organisation or charity?*
1 Yes (Yes)
2 No (No)

*Including any time spent at home or elsewhere, about how often over the last 12 months have you generally done something to help any of these organisations?*
On 3 or more days a week; Twice a week; Once a week; Once a fortnight; At least once a month; Quite often but not regularly; Just a few times; One-off activity; You helped or worked on a seasonal basis

*And in the last 4 weeks approximately how many hours have you spent doing unpaid or voluntary work for any organisation?*
### 4.6. The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS)

The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) was commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), whose funding has been supplemented by a consortium of Government departments and the Wellcome Trust. Four surveys of the cohort have been carried out so far – at age nine months, three, five and seven years. The next sweep of the study is planned for 2012.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Area of focus</th>
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<tr>
<td>The MCS has a diverse range of topics including parenting, childcare, behaviour and cognitive development and income and poverty. There has been no volunteering questions as yet, however, as the focus of the survey develops it is likely that questions will be included on:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Education, school and cognitive assessments</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Child activities, well-being, behaviour and lifestyle</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Family Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Family demographics, family relationships and parenting</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Social and community context</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Genetics/Biomedical</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Ethics and methodology of surveying children</td>
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<th>Sample</th>
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<tr>
<td>The sample for the survey is 19,000 children born in the UK in 2000/01. Unlike the NCDS and the BCS the sample is taken from children born throughout the year and therefore controls for any season-of-birth effects on children’s development. The sample includes booster samples of certain subgroups including those living in disadvantaged circumstances, those from minority ethnic backgrounds (in England) and those from the smaller countries of the UK (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Methodology</th>
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<tr>
<td>The study has already used a range of methods to collect data and it is likely to adopt a whole range of methods in the future including face to face interviews, self completion questionnaires, administrative data, diaries, parental questionnaires, school class and head teacher questionnaires and medical examinations.</td>
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5. Options for the future

This section discusses three options for taking forward longitudinal research on the impact of youth volunteering. The consortium was open minded as to whether a new study was absolutely necessary and was particularly interested in the views of the contributors to the deliberative workshops, roundtable and, in particular, the experts on longitudinal study. The result was that the consortium carefully considered three options, each of which will be discussed in turn:

- analyse existing longitudinal data
- improve existing surveys by amending or adding volunteering questions
- set up a new longitudinal survey of volunteering

5.1 Analyse existing longitudinal data

The first option available to us is to analyse existing longitudinal data on youth volunteering. As outlined in section 4, there is a relatively large amount of data that has been collected, including on some volunteering questions, but there has been very little analysis carried out. Our scoping study suggests that although the existing data has important limitations, initial analysis of this resource could yield valuable evidence and help to inform the collection of future longitudinal data on youth volunteering.

5.1.1. Limitations of existing longitudinal data on volunteering

They do not capture all volunteering activity

The quality and nature of ‘the volunteering question’ has a significant impact upon the level of volunteering that is reported (Staetsky, no date) and it is widely recognised that not everyone who volunteers (in the sense of freely giving their time without pay and for the benefit of others) considers themselves to be ‘volunteers’. By using the term ‘volunteer’ we run the risk of not capturing all of the volunteering that takes place. The longitudinal surveys we reviewed suffer from this and related shortcomings: in particular the use of terms such as “volunteering” or “voluntary work”, the lack of explicit prompts capturing the full variety of volunteering and the exclusion of informal volunteering. The result is lower recorded levels of volunteering. For example the extent of regular (once a month or more) formal volunteering captured by the BHPS is only approximately 10% compared to approximately 25% in a survey such as the Citizenship Survey which uses a more sophisticated question (ibid). When we add to this the 40% of young people who regularly informally volunteer (Kitchen, 2009) we can see that the question contained in the existing surveys grossly underestimates volunteer numbers.

Without fully capturing the extent of volunteering, we are therefore limited in capturing the impact it may or may not be having. These low positive response rates may also be distorted by certain types of volunteers being more likely to respond (who may experience different impacts) and limiting the sample size of volunteers that can be taken from the surveys (please see more detailed
information on the impact of different types of questions on the percentage of positive responses around volunteering in appendix C.

They capture very little detail about the type of volunteering
Volunteering is a varied activity and can be categorised in a number of ways (see section 2.1.3). However, none of this variation is captured by the existing longitudinal data (with the exception of the intensity of involvement). This information would arguably be of as much interest to researchers, policymakers and practitioners as the findings for volunteering more generally.

5.1.2 What analysis can be done on existing data?
Despite these limitations, the existing data offers analysts the potential to make initial explorations into the link between volunteering and a huge range of other social variables contained in the studies including education, employability, health, well-being and civic engagement. Another advantage of analysing existing data is that it would require relatively modest resources. Based on the existing data there is potential to carry out the following type of analysis:

What are the different patterns of volunteering?
Most evidence about volunteering comes from cross-sectional studies which do not allow us to look at longer-term individual changes. It may be possible to enhance our understanding of the different types of volunteer (e.g. early starters, those who dip in and out of volunteering, long term volunteers or late starters). This would be based on an analysis of volunteering questions, making use of those studies where these are repeated across waves.

Do different types of people become volunteers/non-volunteers (or different types of volunteer)?
This could extend beyond what we already know about differences in socio-economic characteristics between current volunteers/non-volunteers to look at pre-existing characteristics (e.g. family background, prior attitudes/aspirations). There may be interest in more complex modelling to identify the early driving factors behind the propensity to volunteer. For example, we could look at volunteering at a given age, and see whether any pre-existing characteristics or experiences (measured at an earlier wave of the survey such as compulsory community service programmes at school or citizenship education) are associated with higher/lower volunteering.

Do volunteers/non-volunteers (or different types of volunteer) have different outcomes in later life?
Again, we could look at outcomes (such as being in employment, educational attainment, measures of health and wellbeing) at one point in time, and see how far these are associated with earlier measures of interest. In particular we could explore earlier involvement in volunteering although we would also need to explore other socio-demographic measures known to be associated with such outcomes (e.g. earlier attainment). Multivariate analysis techniques could then be used to control for other factors and isolate the impact of volunteering. While it is important to bear in mind the limitations and inherent difficulties of this type of exercise, longitudinal research does have the unique potential to unlock the answers to this type of question.
5.1.3 What are the resource implications of this type of analysis?

The exact resource requirements would vary depending on the complexity of the analysis, and the number of variables (and time points) included in the analysis. Broadly, we would estimate:

- around 3-5 days (£2000-3500) identifying the feasibility of analysis;
- around 10 days per study (£6500) per analysis question for more simple regression analysis (e.g. including two time points);
- around 20 days (£13,000) per study set per analysis question for more complex analysis making use of longitudinal data elements.

This is based on the assumption that the analyst is familiar both with analysing longitudinal data and also, ideally, the survey series being analysed.

The two surveys which offer the most to researchers are the BHPS and the LSYPE. The BHPS is limited by its relatively small youth sample (approximately 1,500) but it contains a huge amount of additional data on potential impact variables. Furthermore, the volunteering question has been included consistently (every two years) since 1996. The LSYPE suffers from sporadic questioning on volunteering: it surveyed respondents on this topic only at ages 14, 15 and 20 and has a very limited volunteering question. However, the large youth sample (over 15,000 at wave 1) will allow for more complex modelling than the BHPS.

5.2 Improve existing surveys by amending or adding volunteering questions

The second approach to collecting longitudinal data that we explored is to amend or add volunteering questions in existing longitudinal surveys.

Three studies stand out as having potential for improving or increasing the volunteering questions and in doing so generating more longitudinal data on youth volunteering.

- *Understanding Society*
- Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (dependent upon cohort 2 being commissioned)
- The Millennium Cohort Study

The main advantage of this option is that the existing infrastructure of the survey will be in place and therefore this is an efficient and cost effective way of collecting the range of non-volunteering data required for exploring impacts. As such, this option will be considerably cheaper than undertaking a separate new longitudinal study. However, the demand to place additional questions in existing longitudinal studies is intense and those responsible for these surveys are rightly protective of them.

Through our initial discussions it became clear that it is important for additional questions to meet a strict set of criteria:
a) the questions must fit with the aims of the survey in order that they do not divert from its core focus;
b) there must be a strong research and policy consensus around the need to add or alter questions. In part this simply adds weight to the argument but the survey coordinators are also keen to see a commitment to future analysis of the data;
c) the number of questions proposed must be feasible. Surveys are often at or approaching capacity in terms of the number of questions. Additional questions increase the risk of attrition and respondent fatigue, jeopardising data validity and quality.

If the proposed additions or alterations fit these three criteria then it is possible to make some changes without necessarily requiring additional funding. For example, V successfully lobbied for the addition of volunteering questions to later waves of the first cohort of LSYPE. However, some surveys will require a contribution to the core cost of the survey and the demand for additional funding is even more likely if the three criteria are not met. It is impossible to place a specific figure on this as it will differ depending upon both the survey approached and the questions added, although clearly it will be a challenge to find substantial funds during a time of public funding cuts.

Through our conversations with survey coordinators it also became clear that only a limited number of questions could be added to the surveys. The full range of questions exploring all different types of volunteering would not be possible. Again the specific nature and number of questions which could be added to the surveys would depend upon the survey approached, however, our conversations suggest that the number of potential questions is likely to be in the order of 4-6. The limited number of questions that could potentially be added to existing surveys means that the full range of question areas needs to be prioritised:

- A clear consensus emerged around the need to fully capture volunteering in all its breadth and diversity. This would require at least one question on formal volunteering and one on informal volunteering. The most sophisticated questions to capture these two phenomena are contained in the Citizenship Survey and these questions have the advantage of effectively capturing the phenomena. However, these questions are extremely lengthy and it is unlikely that they would feasibly fit into an existing survey. As such it would be necessary to develop efficient and effective questions that fully capture the phenomena. Some work has already been carried out around this. For example, researchers from Sheffield Hallam University suggest that the long list of activities contained in the Citizenship Survey questions could be grouped into smaller categories without a significant loss in positive response (Gilbertson and Wilson, 2010). This type of questioning would also provide information on different types of activity.

- It was also thought to be particularly important to collect data around the intensity of volunteering which includes the dimensions of how often? (e.g. once a week, once a month or once a year), how much? (e.g. the number of hours per session, week or month) and for how long? (e.g. short term,
episodic, one year or ten years). This information is important to collect in order to explore how this then affects the impact volunteering has on the volunteer.

It would therefore be unlikely that further questions on outcomes of volunteering could be added, thus any analysis of impacts would have to use those measures that are already in the surveys. In general these are fairly broad ranging and often covered thematically by existing surveys, however, they may not mirror exactly the full range of potential impacts which emerged from the literature review, expert interviews and deliberative workshops.

The type of analysis that could be carried out from amending/adding questions to other surveys is largely the same as that which could be carried out on existing data but with clear improvements due to the inclusion of more tailored measures of volunteering (i.e. in better identifying volunteers or providing more detail of different types of volunteer). The costs of this analysis would also be similar to that outlined in section 5.1.3 (although the potential cost of adding questions to the study also needs to be included).

As a result of our findings from the project we have ranked studies to which we could potentially amend or add questions. We have discussed the possibility with all of the surveys discussed. However, it is important to note that these discussions only represent initial conversations and any specific details of questions, commitments and costs would only emerge further along in the negotiation process.

The table overleaf summarises the pros and cons of the three potential studies from the perspective of adding or amending questions on the impact of youth volunteering.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Choice 1: **Understanding Society** | - A large youth (16-25) sample (approximately 15,000);  
- Respondents are surveyed from 10 years old to the end of their life. This will allow analysis of relevant factors before youth volunteering and the impacts of youth volunteering across the whole life cycle;  
- Face to face interviews;  
- Respondents are surveyed every year providing regular information;  
- The sociological focus of the study fits very well with a broad range of potential impacts from volunteering;  
- The survey is continuous which will allow comparison between different eras e.g. those born in the ’90s with those born in the ‘00s. | - Demand for adding questions to the survey is intense.                                           |
| Choice 2: The LSYPE (cohort 2 – if commissioned) | - Large youth sample size (over 15,000 at wave one);  
- Annual surveying  
- The precise content of the survey has not yet been finalised which could potentially make the negotiation of additional volunteering questions easier;  
- The survey explores a wide range of impacts on young people and their development and transitions to adulthood. | - The survey only explores the young people whilst they are young (usually 16-25), which means no information before or after will be collected;  
- The use of an online questionnaire makes the addition of a sophisticated volunteering question difficult (as the Citizenship Survey requires a face to face survey);  
- The focus of the survey is centred around the policy aims of the Department for Education;  
- Not certain if it will be commissioned in the future. |
| Choice 3: The Millennium Cohort Study | - A large sample (19,000);  
- A wide ranging remit of questions that is subject to change at each wave means that those in control of the survey could be relatively open to additional questions;  
- With respondents currently being 11-12 years old this could be a once in a generation chance to add questions to a birth cohort survey;  
- Face to face interviews  
- Data will be collected on respondents from ‘cradle to grave’. | - Irregular surveying (it is not certain when each wave of the survey will take place). |
5.3 Set up a new longitudinal survey of volunteering

The final option we considered would be to undertake a new independent longitudinal study of youth volunteering. In particular it would overcome the main limitations discussed for the previous two options. Optimal and detailed measures of volunteering could be included, along with tailored outcome measures and background variables.

However, launching a new study would entail an extremely high cost, and given the current funding environment this cost is an even greater concern. The cost for some of the existing large surveys gives an indication of the magnitude of investment required. It should be noted that these figures do not include the initial development and set-up costs, or analysis costs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Method of collection</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Society</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>Approximately 10 million each full wave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennium Cohort Study</td>
<td>15,000-20,000</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>Approximately £2.5 million each wave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSYPE (wave 7)</td>
<td>8,600 (remained active in the survey)</td>
<td>Online, telephone and face to face (sequential mixed mode design)</td>
<td>Approximately £700,000 for data collection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample size of any new survey – although potentially smaller than those listed above - would need to take into account, amongst other things, the likely rate of volunteering and size of potential impacts. It would therefore need to be considerable with high associated set-up and running costs.

However, cost would not be the only issue facing a new independent survey. If a new survey was to be set up, one methodological challenge would be to ensure the study was equally appealing to both volunteers and non-volunteers. It is critical to represent both groups to a sufficient extent in order to make reliable judgements about levels of impact between groups. It would therefore be important not to over-focus on volunteering as a topic. To counter this (and perhaps to encourage more diverse funding) one option for a new study is to open the focus up to wider ‘interventions’ which are likely to have similar impacts to volunteering (e.g. the ‘positive activities’ agenda) to see if a collaborative and co-funded study could be feasible.

Although it is important to keep the set up of a new independent survey in mind as an ideal, we have not pursued this option further, particularly in the light of the current funding climate and the existence of alternative ways to collect data through existing studies.
6. Summary of recommendations and proposed next steps

This section makes concrete recommendations for taking these options forward. The second part of this section will also briefly discuss some distinct but related wider recommendations which emerged from the research process.

6.1 Next steps for collecting and analysing longitudinal data on the impact of youth volunteering

After careful consideration of each of the three options, discussions with key stakeholders and the feedback that we received from the roundtable event, we propose the following next steps.

1. Carry out further analysis of existing longitudinal data. This scoping study highlighted the existence of useful data especially from the British Household Panel Survey and The Longitudinal Study of Young People in England. Further analysis of this data is a cost effective solution to providing valuable evidence on the long term impact of youth volunteering as well as helping to inform the collection of further longitudinal data. The expectation is that funding for such analysis could be achieved through applications to grant making bodies. This work will require a high level of skill and experience in the analysis of longitudinal data.

2. Build a coalition of support for the collection of further longitudinal data. From negotiations with those who coordinate existing longitudinal surveys it is clear that the weight and credibility of requests to add questions is greatly enhanced by a coalition of support behind the request. This coalition could include members from the volunteering and youth sectors, policymakers, and wider interests (e.g. the private or higher and further education sectors). As part of the project a loose coalition has already begun to be built but this support needs to be formalised in some way (e.g. a signed letter or a collective briefing paper to the coordinators of existing surveys). If additional funding is required to add or alter questions the coalition could be mobilised to raise funds.

3. Continue and develop negotiations with existing longitudinal surveys. This project has highlighted three longitudinal surveys to which amended or additional questions could be introduced (dependent upon cohort 2 of the LSYPE being commissioned). This would lead to clear improvements in the quality of data as compared to existing longitudinal data. We have ranked these surveys in order of potential value for collecting additional data – Understanding Society, The Longitudinal Study of Young People in England, and The Millennium Cohort Study. These negotiations can happen simultaneously with analysis of existing data given the potentially many years it might take to negotiate with, test out and then introduce questions into such surveys (e.g. if an approach to Understanding Society was successful the
questions may not be added until 2013). This process of negotiating with existing surveys could include significant resources (e.g. time taken to engage in the co-development of questions) and therefore there must be a commitment from some members of the coalition to take this work forward.

4. **Ensure that the further data is analysed.** All too often longitudinal data is collected but not analysed. The coalition should make a commitment to analysing the data which emerges from the longitudinal studies and develop plans for attracting resources to complete this analysis.

### 6.2 Wider recommendations which emerged from the research process

A number of wider recommendations emerged from the research process. These recommendations do not directly relate to the core aims and objectives of the research but they do provide valuable insights for volunteering research more generally. These include the need to:

1. **Explore the wider impacts of youth volunteering on society.** Throughout our consultations with stakeholders they were keen to emphasise the need to explore the impact of youth volunteering on organisations, beneficiaries and the wider community (as well as the individual volunteer). In particular there exists a research gap for the impact of volunteering upon the wider community and society as a whole.

2. **Make the case for volunteering research more generally.** Throughout our consultations we experienced some resistance to the need for more research into volunteering (and longitudinal research in particular). There is clearly a need to continue to make the case to practitioners and policymakers of the importance of volunteering research. In part this is a need to communicate the value of rigorous independent research and in part it is a need to make research findings more relevant and accessible to these groups.

3. **Better share research within the field.** Throughout our consultations it was often apparent that there was a relatively low level of knowledge among practitioners and policymakers about the amount of research into volunteering that exists and a lack of awareness of how to access such research. Some progress has been made towards this recommendation with the recent launch of IVR’s Evidence Bank (www.ivr.org.uk/evidencebank). However, currently this only includes publications produced by IVR.

4. **Think strategically about what research is undertaken.** There are a range of organisations conducting research into volunteering. This project has highlighted both areas where strong evidence exists and where critical gaps lie. With resources becoming increasingly scarce it is important for the sector to act strategically in commissioning and undertaking research. For example, this review has shown that we are relatively well endowed with project based evaluations of volunteering programmes. Clearly these are important but no more important than ensuring that the key deficiencies in our evidence base
are filled by strategic and coordinated thinking from the sector. For example, the Department for Communities and Local Government are currently consulting on the proposed cancellation of the Citizenship Survey. This would represent a critical loss for the sector, however if this does happen the sector should act strategically to lobby on behalf of different types of research (such as longitudinal research) which can provide us with crucial insights into volunteering and ultimately allow us to carry out better informed and improved practice, policy and research in the future.
Appendixes

Appendix A: More detailed information on each of the surveys discussed in the report

The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)

The BHPS aims to further understanding of social and economic change at the individual and household level in the UK. The survey was funded by the ESRC between 1991 and 2009. A total of 18 years of panel data has been collected (making it one of the longest running panel surveys in the world). The survey is conducted annually.

Areas of focus

The core questionnaire covers a broad range of social science and policy interests including:

- household composition
- housing conditions
- residential mobility
- education and training
- health and the usage of health services
- labour market behaviour
- socio-economic values
- income from employment, benefits and pensions

There is also a variable component containing questions which need to be asked less frequently than annually, new questions engendered by changing policy and research issues, and questions to elicit retrospective data on panel members’ life histories before the first interview. These have included a lifetime history of marriage, cohabitation and fertility; lifetime job history; questions on wealth and assets, additional health measures, ageing, retirement and quality of life, children and parenting, neighbourhood and social networks (the questionnaires can be found at http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/survey/bhps/documentation/questionnaires-and-survey-documents).

The sample

The BHPS has a sample of about 5,500 households recruited in 1991, containing a total of approximately 10,000 interviewed individuals. The sample is a stratified clustered design drawn from the Postcode Address File and all residents present at those addresses at the first wave of the survey were designated as panel members. These same individuals are re-interviewed each successive year and, if they split-off from original households to form new households, they are followed and all adult members of these households are also interviewed. Similarly, new members joining sample households become eligible for interview and children are interviewed as they reach the age of 16. Since 1994, children aged 11-15 also complete a short interview.
Extension samples of 1,500 households in each of Scotland and Wales were added to the main BHPS sample in 1999 to enable independent analysis of each country. In 2001 a sample of 2,000 households was added in Northern Ireland. The total sample size for the BHPS including the extension samples is now around 10,000 households across the UK. The extension samples allow for country specific and comparative research within the UK.

**The volunteering question**

*For each of the following leisure activities, please tick the box to show how often you do each of these things.*

*Do unpaid voluntary work (At least once a week, at least once a month, several times a year, once a year or less, never or almost never)*

**Further information**

For more detailed information please see [http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/files/bhps/quality-profiles/BHPS-QP-01-03-06-v2.pdf](http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/files/bhps/quality-profiles/BHPS-QP-01-03-06-v2.pdf)

Some analysis has already been carried out on the volunteering data, however, none has related specifically to the impact of youth volunteering. The majority of this research has focused on the link between volunteering and the labour market (for full details of the research undertaken see below).

Analysis already carried out on the BHPS around volunteering:

- **Volunteering and social inclusion: interrelations between unemployment and civic engagement in Germany and Great Britain** (Suzanne Strauss, 2008)
- **Volunteering in Germany and Great Britain - spring-board back to the labour market?** (Suzanne Strauss, 2009)
- **Working at home and involvement in voluntary groups: a gender perspective (preliminary findings)** (Daiga Kamerade, 2007)
- **Part-time work and activity in voluntary associations in Great Britain** (Daiga Kamerade, 2009)
- **Voluntary association involvement and trust: addressing the causal relationship -PhD Thesis-** (Hazemi, Leila, 2008)
The Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE)

The LSYPE (also known as Next Steps to respondents) was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills, (now the Department for Education, DfE). The study of young people brings together data from a number of different sources, including annual interviews with young people and their parents (for the first four waves of interviewing) and administrative sources. The study aims to improve understanding of the factors affecting young people’s transitions from compulsory education through further education and training and into the labour market or other outcomes.

Areas of focus

The survey covers a broad range of social science and policy interests including:

- household and demographic information,
- languages spoken in the home,
- attitudes to the young person’s school and involvement in education,
- extra-curricular classes,
- year 10 subject choices,
- special educational needs,
- parental expectations and aspirations,
- family activities,
- parental relationship with young person and contact with services (self-completion),
- reasons young person does not live with natural parents,
- household responsibilities and resources (self-completion),
- risk factors (absences, truancy, police contact, bullying) (self-completion),
- individual parent questions.

Sample

The initial wave one sample consisted of more than 15,000 young people. Respondents were selected to form a representative sample of young people in England from a target population of those in Year 9 (or equivalent) in February 2004 who were born between 1st September 1989 and 31st August 1990. In addition, the initial sample involved boosts of some sub-groups (some ethnic groups and deprived groups) and a further boost was added at wave 4 for some ethnic minority groups.

The volunteering question

Questions on volunteering have been included in wave 1, 2 and 7 of the survey (though the question changed notably in wave 7).

The question used in wave 1 and 2:

*Here is a list of some more things people do when they are not at school. Can you please tell me which, if any, you have been to or done in the last four weeks?*
Done community work (such as helping elderly, disabled or other dependent people; cleaning up the environment; helping volunteer organisations or charities)

The question used in wave 7:

(Apart from donating money to charities or good causes some young people also /Some young people) provide help to groups, clubs, organisations or individuals which is unpaid. This can include things like helping out with or raising money for charity, campaigning for a cause you believe in, visiting or looking after people, providing transport or doing household jobs for someone.

Have you provided any such help to anyone in the last 12 months that was unpaid?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   Don’t know
   Don’t want to answer

Further information

- DfES scoping study and development work report: www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/RRP/u014200/index.shtml
- 'Next Steps' respondent web site: www.nextstepsstudy.org.uk

An LSYPE sampler data set has been created which serves as an introduction to the main data: www.esds.ac.uk/findingData/snDescription.asp?sn=5677.

Users are also able to explore some of the data from the LSYPE at the iLSYPE (interactive-LSYPE) site available at: https://ilsype.gide.net/workspaces/public/wiki/Welcome
The British Cohort Study

The 1970 British Cohort Study is a longitudinal study which has as its participants all those who living in England, Scotland and Wales who were born in one particular week in April 1970.

Area of focus

The focus of the study depends upon the wave but questions have been included on a wide range of areas including:

- physical development
- educational development
- social development
- economic development

Sample

The initial sample was 17,200. Originally the survey was sponsored by the National Birthday Trust Fund in association with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

There have been six further encounters with participants. The focus of the study has varied between encounters.

- Age 5 - physical and educational development;
- Age 10 and 16 - physical, educational and social development;
- Age 26, 29 and 34 - economic development and other wider factors.

The methodology of the survey has varied between encounters. The 1986 survey (at 16 – which includes the volunteering question) was carried out by the International Centre for Child Studies and named Youthscan. In this sweep, sixteen separate survey instruments were employed, including parental questionnaires, school class and head teacher questionnaires and medical examinations (including measurement of height, weight and head circumference). The cohort members completed questionnaires, kept two four-day diaries (one for nutrition and one for general activity), and undertook some educational assessments.

The table below indicates the target and achieved samples for each follow-up. These figures were revised in the light of an exercise conducted within CLS between the 29-yr and 34-yr sweeps, to examine the changes in the NCDS and BCS70 populations and samples over time, which is available as a CLS Technical Report. For a detailed breakdown of the sample for each wave of the survey please see the table on the following page.

The volunteering question

Initial searching revealed that a volunteering question appears on only one of the research encounters. It appears on the 1986 study, which involved participants aged 16 in the life and leisure questionnaire. For the purposes at hand this is
clearly an excellent point at which to have volunteering data on the participants (although it will refer to activity between the ages of 14 and 16), however, the volunteering question is particularly weak and only captures community work organised by school on a number of non-exhaustive list of potential volunteering activity (‘unpaid voluntary activities’). This is likely to exclude a huge amount of volunteers and although exploring the relationship between the incidence of this activity and other social variables would be interesting it would only relate to a minority of volunteers. The volunteering questions below are taken from the 1986 study – life and leisure (questionnaire J).

B9. Since 1984 have you taken part in any of the following activities arranged by school? Option (f) Charitable activities – yes in this school year, yes in last school year.

B.10 Have you done any visits in the local community organised by your school since September 1984? (include working with the elderly, with young children, with the handicapped etc..)

How many times have you been?

What did you do?

I helped/ visited hospitals  
I visited/ helped elderly people  
I helped with nurseries/playgroups  
I visited community care centres or homes  
I helped with handicapped people  
Other things, what?

C10. Have you ever taken part in any of the following spare-time activities? (do not include anything if you were paid):

Babysitting for younger brothers and sisters  
Babysitting elsewhere  
Helping old people  
Voluntary conservation work (helping with nature)  
Helping single parents  
Other voluntary activities in the community (what?)

Scale – never or hardly ever/ sometimes/ often

Further information

More detailed information on the sampling and methodology of the survey data can be found on the BCS website at:  
http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/studies.asp?section=0001000200020004
The Youth Cohort Study

The Youth Cohort Study (YCS) is a series of longitudinal surveys that contacts a sample of an academic year-group or cohort of young people in the spring following completion of education and usually until they are aged 19 or 20. The survey looks at young people’s education and labour market experience, their training and qualifications and a wide range of other issues, including socio-demographic variables. The first survey was carried out in 1985 and the most recent in 2007 (completing in 2010). In total the YCS covers thirteen cohorts and over forty studies.

The methodology of the surveys varies between cohorts and sweeps, however, generally they involve three sweeps of young people between the age of 16-17 and 19-21. In cohort 12 a mixed methodology is used (including a telephone interview, postal survey (the postal questionnaire was also available for completion on the internet) and computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). At cohort 13 the sample was taken from the same academic cohort as the LSYPE in order to facilitate analysis of merged data sets.

Area of focus

The survey focuses on a range of areas including:

- Education
- Labour market experience
- Training
- Qualifications
- Some other socio-demographic variables

Sample

The sample size also changes between cohorts. The sample size for cohort 13, sweep 1, was 10,930 (achieving a response rate of 69%).

Volunteering question

The volunteering question does not appear in every sweep of the survey nor is it asked of every cohort. The question below is taken from cohort 11.

Besides your main activity, are you doing any of the following on a regular basis? (by regular we mean once a month or more often)

One of the choices is:

Doing voluntary work? Yes/ no

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This information is taken directly from the Economic and Social Data Service website at http://www.esds.ac.uk/findingData/ycsTitles.asp
Further information

Further information can be found at
http://www.esds.ac.uk/findingData/ycsTitles.asp
**Understanding Society**

*Understanding Society* is a genuinely world leading longitudinal study that explores the lives, experiences, behaviours and beliefs of people in Britain. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and run by the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER).

**Areas of focus**

The survey will tell us about:

- Peoples' state of health
- Experiences of crime
- Personal finances
- Bringing up children
- How involved we are in our local community
- Working lives
- Views and outlook, including about the political system

**Sample**

*Understanding Society* is an annual survey of a nationally representative sample of about 40,000 households (about 100,000 individuals). While each wave of the survey will take two years to complete, the waves will overlap so that sample members are interviewed annually. There are four elements to the sample:

- General population sample (28,000 - 29,000 households)
- Innovation Panel sample (1,500 households)
- Ethnic minority boost sample (1,000 adult individuals in each of five main ethnic minority groups - Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Caribbean and African)
- British Household Panel Study sample (8,400 households)

The sample will naturally stay representative of the population resident in the UK (subject to weighting and except for new immigrants to the UK).

*Understanding Society* started with a sample of addresses. The members of private households living at these addresses are called Original Sample Members (OSM). Information is collected on all OSMs at each round of interview and new people joining their household in subsequent waves will become eligible for interview as Temporary Sample Members (TSM). If OSMs move away from their original household they will be followed to their new address (as long they move within the UK) and all members of their new household will become eligible for interview as TSM. If TSMs move away from the household of an OSM, they are not followed.

**The volunteering question**

Although *Understanding Society* includes the sample from the BHPS the volunteering question has developed slightly. As with the BHPS it appears that
In the last 12 months, have you given any unpaid help or worked as a volunteer for any type of local, national or international organisation or charity?
1 Yes (Yes)
2 No (No)

Including any time spent at home or elsewhere, about how often over the last 12 months have you generally done something to help any of these organisations?
1 On 3 or more days a week (On 3 or more days a week)
2 Twice a week (Twice a week)
3 Once a week (Once a week)
4 Once a fortnight (Once a fortnight)
5 At least once a month (At least once a month)
6 Quite often but not regularly (Quite often but not regularly)
7 Just a few times (Just a few times)
8 One-off activity (One-off activity)
9 You helped or worked on a seasonal basis? (You helped or worked on a seasonal basis?)

And in the last 4 weeks approximately how many hours have you spent doing unpaid or voluntary work for any organisation?

Further information

Further information can be found at http://www.understandingsociety.org.uk/
Millennium Cohort Study (MCS)\(^5\)

The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) was commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), whose funding has been supplemented by a consortium of Government departments and the Wellcome Trust. Four surveys of the cohort have been carried out so far – at age nine months, three, five and seven years. The **next sweep of the study** is planned for 2012.

**Areas of focus**

The MCS has a diverse range of topics including:

- parenting;
- childcare;
- school choice;
- child behaviour and cognitive development;
- child and parental health;
- parents’ employment and education;
- income and poverty;
- housing, neighbourhood and residential mobility;
- and social capital and ethnicity.

As the participants enter adolescence and adulthood the focus of the study is likely to change. The MCS website makes this clear “Major questions about the prospects for children born in 2000-1 concern poverty and wealth, the quality of family life and its support by public policy and the broader community. The health and well being of parents and infants will be located in the context of the rich socio-economic data to be collected in the study. Issues to emerge for future sweeps of the cohort will include: advantage and disadvantage in education, health, employment and the parenting of the next generation. Besides changing family forms, there are social and economic changes in the labour market, technology, social polarization, gender roles, and the ideology of individualism” ([http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/studies.asp?section=000100020001](http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/studies.asp?section=000100020001))

**Sample**

The sample for the survey is 19,000 children born in the UK in 2000/01. Unlike the NCDS and the BCS the sample is taken from children born throughout the year and therefore controls for any season-of-birth effects on children’s development. The sample includes booster samples of certain sub-groups including those living in disadvantaged circumstances, those from minority ethnic backgrounds (in England) and those from the smaller countries of the UK (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

\(^5\) Taken from directly from the MCS website http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/studies.asp?section=000100020001
The volunteering question

As one would expect there have so far been no questions on volunteering included in the studies. However, this may change in the future as the focus of the study changes over time. The next sweep of the MCS is scheduled to take place in 2012 when the cohort will be aged 11 (final year of primary school). The survey will include interviews with both parents (where co-resident), cognitive assessments and physical measurements of cohort members, a self-completion questionnaire for cohort members and a survey of class teachers in England and Wales. A consultative conference has already been held where the findings from each of the advisory groups for the following areas were presented:

- Health
- Education, school and cognitive assessments
- Child activities, well-being, behaviour and lifestyle
- Family resources
- Family demographics, family relationships and parenting
- Social and community context
- Genetics/Biomedical
- Ethics and methodology of surveying children

The programme, presentations and notes on the discussion are available to download from here.

Further information

Further information on the study can be found at http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/studies.asp?section=000100020001.
Appendix B Other existing longitudinal data sets

National Child Development Study (NCDS)

The National Child Development Study (NCDS) is a continuing, multi-disciplinary longitudinal study which takes as its subjects all the people born in England, Scotland and Wales in one week in March 1958. NCDS has its origins in the Perinatal Mortality Survey. Information was gathered from almost 17,500 babies. NCDS was the second in a series of four such perinatal studies, the others being based on a week's births in 1946 and 1970, and on births in selected wards in 2000/01. Each has formed the basis of a continuing longitudinal study.

Following the initial birth survey in 1958 there have been 8 further waves of research on participants.

The sample was all babies born in a certain week in the UK in 1958. However, for the first three follow-ups (NCDS 1-3) immigrants born in the week of the sample were augmented onto the study. A detailed exploration of the sampling can be found in the CLS Technical Report.

Americorps

Americorps is a U.S. federal programme that was created in 1993. More than 85,000 individuals join Americorps annually. The programme is aimed at 18-24 year olds and involves intensive service. The placements are volunteering although they do involve substantial benefits to participants, most importantly a large educational grant on completion. The programme is notable in the research community as it has carried out a number of longitudinal pieces of research on alumni of Americorps. For example ‘Serving country and community: a longitudinal study of service in Americorps’ (Jastrzab, 2007)

These studies (which are based on the same cohort) provide valuable data to the body of evidence surrounding the impact of youth volunteering. They explore the impact of participation in Americorps on civic engagement, careers, educational attainment and life satisfaction. The sample consisted of 1,717 participants from the AmeriCorps State and National programmes and 475 from the NCCC programmes. A comparison group was used which consisted of 1,524 individuals for the State and National programme and 401 individuals for the NCCC programme.

6 This information is taken directly from the NCDS website at http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/studies.asp?section=000100020003
Appendix C: How different volunteering questions produce different rates of volunteering

The table below provides a demonstration of the impact that the type of question has on the rate of volunteering captured which was discussed in section 5. The volunteering questions from three surveys have been given in full. For a further discussion of the different rates of volunteering registered by different surveys please see Staestky (no date).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Question (exact question)</th>
<th>Rate of regular formal volunteering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>6.1 Formal Volunteering</td>
<td>29% in 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.1.1 Which of the following groups, clubs or organisations have you been involved with during the last 12 months? That's anything you've taken part in, supported, or that you've helped in any way, either on your own or with others. Please exclude giving money and anything that was a requirement of your job. [Fgroup]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Children's education/ schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Youth/children's activities (outside school)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Education for adults</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) Sports/exercise (taking part, coaching or going to watch)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5) Religion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6) Politics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7) The elderly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8) Health, Disability and Social welfare</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9) Safety, First Aid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10) The environment, animals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(11) Justice and Human Rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(12) Local community or neighbourhood groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(13) Citizens' Groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(14) Hobbies / Recreation / Arts/ Social clubs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(15) Trade union activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(16) Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(17) None of these</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.1.2 In the last 12 months have you given unpaid help to any groups, clubs or organisations in any of the following ways? [Funpd]

(1) Raising or handling money/taking part in sponsored events
(2) Leading the group/member of a committee
(3) Organising or helping to run an activity or event
(4) Visiting people
(5) Befriending or mentoring people
(6) Giving advice/information/counselling
(7) Secretarial, admin or clerical work
(8) Providing transport/driving
(9) Representing
(10) Campaigning
(11) Other practical help (e.g. helping out at school, shopping)
(12) Any other help
(13) None of the above

6.1.3 Overall, about how often over the last 12 months have you generally done something to help this/these group(s), club(s) or organisation(s)? [Funoft]

(1) at least once a week,
(2) less than once a week but at least once a month,
(3) or less often?
(4) Other

(Taken from the 2005 survey)
We are interested to know about the unpaid help people give.

Please think about any group(s), club(s) or organisation(s) that you've been involved with during the last 12 months. That’s anything you’ve taken part in, supported, or that you’ve helped in any way, either on your own or with others. For example, helping at a youth or day centre, helping to run an event, campaigning or doing administrative work.

Please exclude giving money and anything that was a requirement of your job.

Q15 Overall, about how often over the last 12 months have you given unpaid help to any group(s), club(s) or organisation(s)?

Please only include work that is unpaid and not for your family.

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

At least once a week………
Less than once a week but at least once a month……
Less often………………
I give unpaid help as an individual only and not through groups(s), club(s) or organisation(s)………..
I have not given any unpaid help at all over the last 12 months………..
Don’t know………………..

(Taken from 2008)

23% in 2008
We are interested in the things people do in their leisure time, I'm going to read out a list of some leisure activities. Please look at the card and tell me how frequently you do each one.

a) Play sport or go walking or swimming
b) Go to watch live sport
c) Go to the cinema
d) Go to a concert, theatre
Or other live performance
e) Have a meal in a restaurant, cafe or pub
f) Go for a drink at a pub or club
g) Work in the garden
h) Do DIY, home maintenance
or car repairs
i) Attend leisure activity groups such as evening classes, keep fit, yoga etc
j) Attend meetings for local
groups/voluntary organisations
k) Do unpaid voluntary work

(At least once a week; at least once a month; several times a year; once a year or less; never / almost never)
(Taken from wave 18)
Informal volunteering question in the Citizenship Survey.

In the last 12 months have you done any of the following things, unpaid, for someone who was not a relative? [lhlp]

This is any unpaid help you, as an individual, may have given to other people, that is apart from any help given through a group, club or organisation. This could be help for a friend, neighbour or someone else but not a relative.

(1) Keeping in touch with someone who has difficulty getting out and about (visiting in person, telephoning or e-mailing)
(2) Doing shopping, collecting pension or paying bills
(3) Cooking, cleaning, laundry, gardening or other routine household jobs
(4) Decorating, or doing any kind of home or car repairs
(5) Baby sitting or caring for children
(6) Sitting with or providing personal care (e.g. washing, dressing) for someone who is sick or frail
(7) Looking after a property or a pet for someone who is away
(8) Giving advice
(9) Writing letters or filling in forms
(10) Representing someone (for example talking to a council department, or to a doctor)
(11) Transporting or escorting someone (for example to a hospital, or on an outing)
(12) Anything else
(13) No help given in last 12 month
References


Staetsky, L. (no date) Individual voluntary participation in the United Kingdom, Third Sector Research Centre


