

Volunteering for Stronger Communities

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What I'll cover

- Brief introduction to VSC and NCVO
- What the projects delivered
- The evaluation findings
- Outcomes
- Sustainability – for the VCs and for the work
- Advice for similar projects
- Links to further information

Background

- NCVO invited Volunteer Centres to be a part of this 2 year national programme
- Funded by BIG Lottery Fund
- 2 aims:
 - to use volunteering as a way to engage and support disadvantaged individuals
 - to provide an opportunity for VCs to try out a new area of work

What did the projects do?

ALL delivered – a core ‘Brokerage Plus’ recruitment service:

- Outreach and promotion
- One to one support
- Introduction to volunteering courses

PLUS new forms of support:

- Employability support, e.g. Writing CVs to include volunteering experience, interview practice
- Training for volunteers
- Mentoring – short or longer term
- Training voluntary volunteer coordinators
- Support for VIOs

Where we are now?

- Projects finished between October and December 2013
- Fantastic evidence collected – challenges of gathering this much robust data
- Some VCs have gone on to secure new funding to deliver work that has grown out of or developed on from the VSC projects

The evaluation

- Independent
- Methodology
- Impact
 - Volunteering
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Employability

Outcomes

- Outcomes for individuals
- Outcomes for organisations
- Outcomes for volunteer centres

Progress against 'shared targets'

TARGET	Q8 cumulative target	Q8 cumulative achieved	% or target met (except where indicated by *)	
Numbers of individuals new to volunteering taking part in the project	4674	5114	109.4	
Numbers of volunteers supporting the project	222	305	137.4	
Numbers of volunteers trained/awarded qualifications	803	1206	150.2	
% of individuals supported that have started volunteering*	25%	33%	+ 8 percentage points	
Number of individuals participating in the project from groups defined as disadvantaged in the labour market	3568	4485	125.7	
% of individuals in target group that have started volunteering*	25%	34%	+ 9 percentage points	
New volunteering roles created	702	1100	156.7	
New volunteer involving organisations supported	259	382	147.5	

Volunteering

- 69% of all participants engaged in volunteering
- Volunteering was sustained: 54% still actively volunteering after 12 months
- 96 per cent said VSC had been important in helping them to volunteer (8 months)

'I was not sure how to go about volunteering but the [project worker] sorted it all out for me. Without them I would never have known how to get into it'

- 91 per cent of non-volunteers said support had improved their confidence about volunteering in the future (8 months)

Health and well-being

Benefits reported include:

- **improved confidence, well-being and esteem:** *'Before I started volunteering I had no confidence. Now I've got enough confidence to put myself forward'.*
- **enhanced social interaction and peer support:** *'It helped me to develop some confidence because when you're unemployed it's easy to spend a lot of time at home alone. Getting out and being on a course like that was good because you are around other people who are in the same situation as you'.*
- **a sense of routine and structure:** *'It gets me up in the morning. I have to go even if I'm not feeling good. It's a routine which is very important'.*

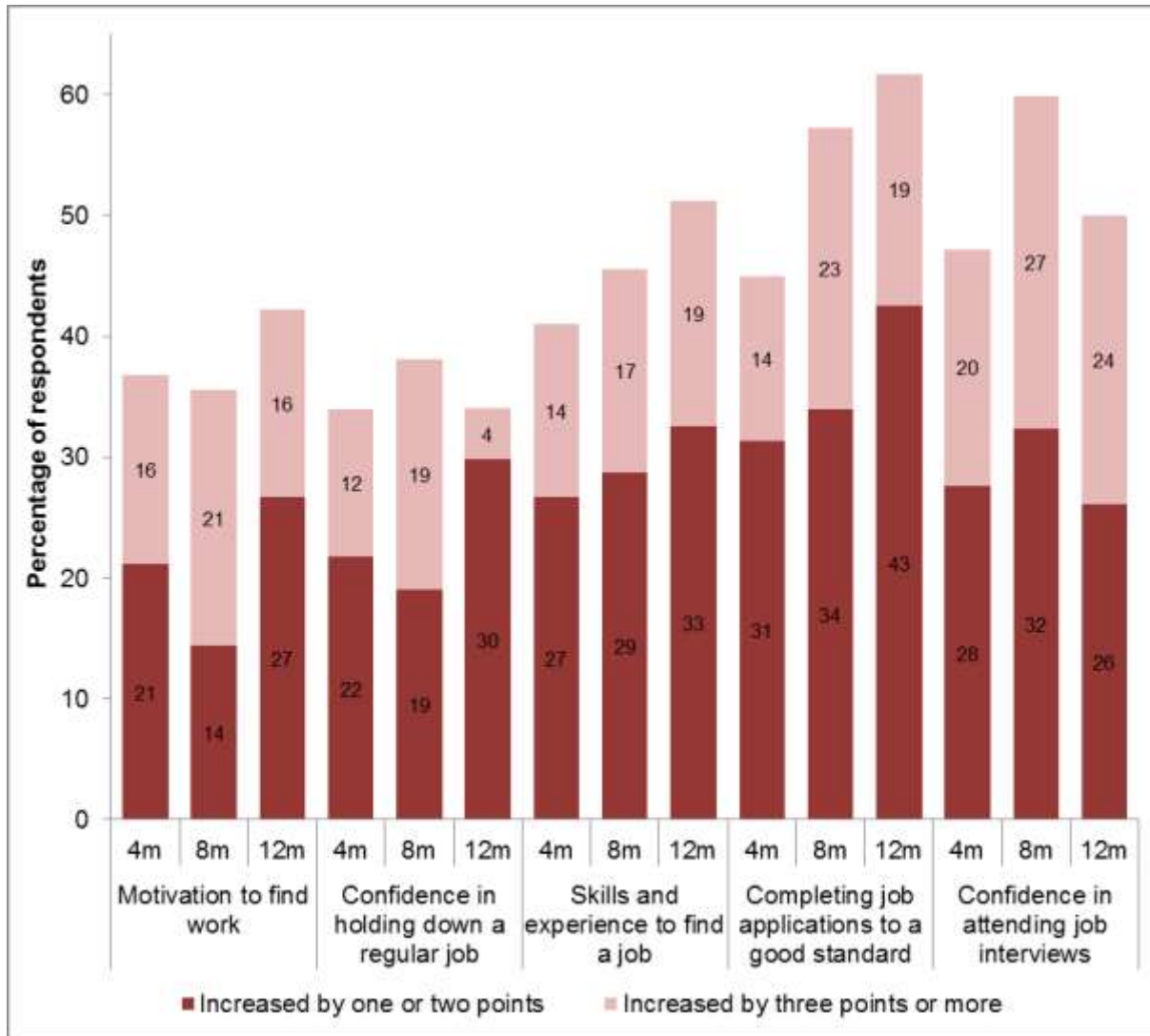
Employability

- VSC helped participants to:
 - improve job search and interviewing skills
 - acquire experience in a working environment
 - expand networks as a source of information on jobs
 - gain confidence and motivation:

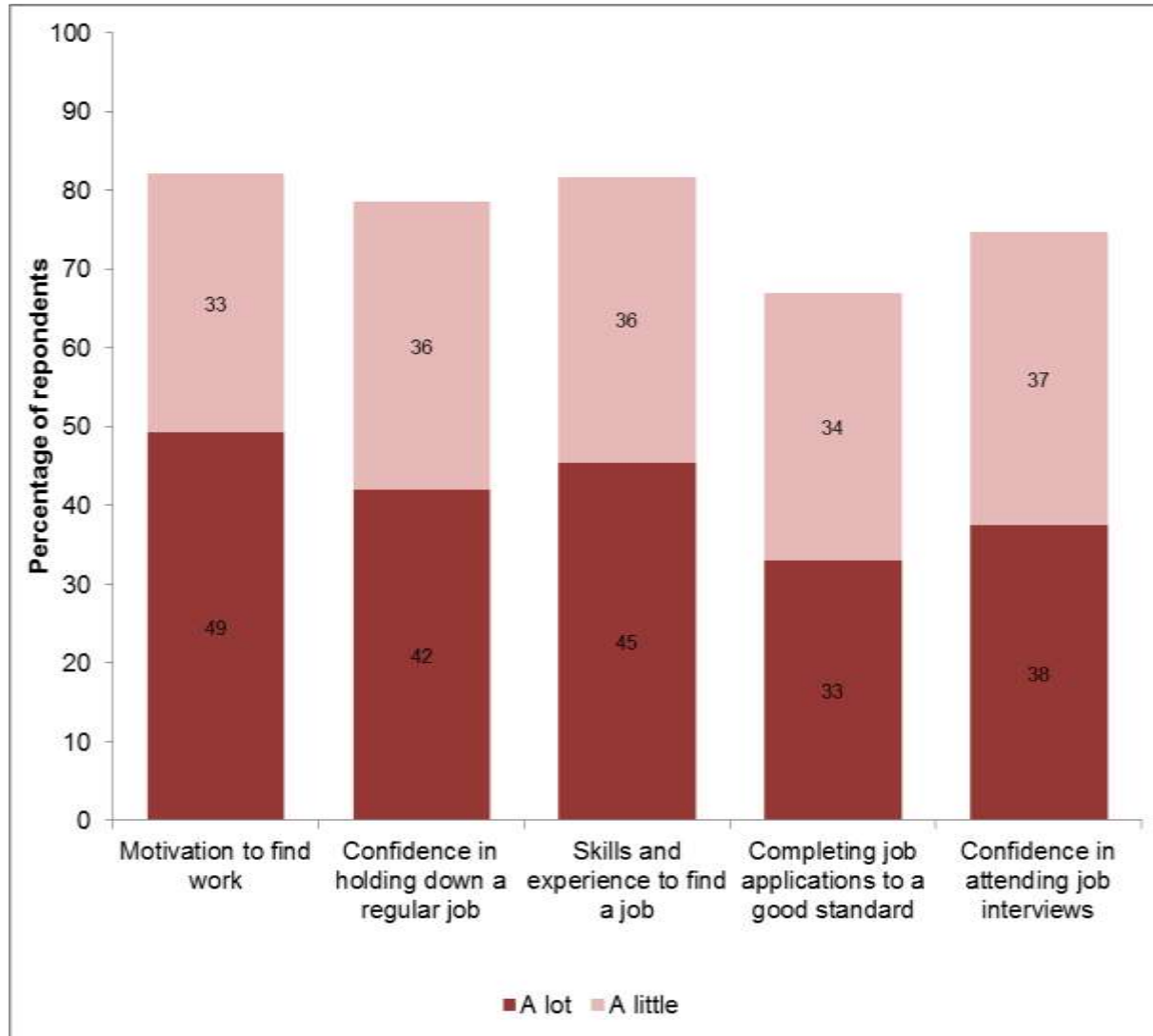
'I doubt that I'd be back in the workplace if I had not volunteered. My confidence definitely improved'.

- 80 per cent of job seekers said VSC support made them more confident about finding work

Proportion of participants making positive progress to employment



Proportion of participants who feel VSC support 'made a difference' around employability



Employment

- 22 per cent found paid work (Work Programme = 14.7 per cent)
- Many distanced from the labour market:
 - 58 per cent had been out of work for over 12 months
 - 72 per cent 'disadvantaged in the LM'
- Two thirds (66 per cent) felt project support 'important' in helping them to find work

Explaining outcomes: staff

- Staff identified other '**success factors**':

- the **intensive support** offered by mentors
- diverse range of **skills and expertise** within the project
- **relationships** with external support agencies
- using **volunteers** on the project: *'I wouldn't have achieved a quarter as much as achieved in this project without volunteers assisting me'*
- **outreach** work to increase accessibility
- addressing the **full range of barriers** experienced by clients

Engaging the 'hard-to-reach'

Strong evidence that VSC **reaches groups that face additional barriers:**

- 15 per cent had disability
- 23 per cent were from ethnic minority groups
- 15 per cent had no formal qualifications at all whilst 53 per cent had no GCSEs or equivalent
- 70 per cent were unemployed

Supporting VIOs

- VIOs tended to be smaller groups heavily reliant on volunteers to carry out their work.
- Reported an extra 814 volunteers = 4,500 additional volunteering hours
- 67 per cent of VIOs whose numbers had increased 'a lot' said Volunteer Centres were responsible for 'a lot' of that change.

Sustainability

- For Volunteer Centres

Several VCs secured new funding/contracts to deliver employability work

e.g. From Probation, GP practices, Health and Wellbeing funds

- For the work

NCVO influencing future national employability policy

e.g. Smaller local contracts; importance of VC role; unemployed people need people to support them, not just websites or phone helplines

Advice for similar projects

- Consortia (several VCs delivering a project together) - what has worked well and the challenges
- Projects need to be able to be responsive to revising services
- In some disadvantaged areas there is 'competition' for the 'hard to reach' client group
- Targets need to include people getting into paid work, and movement towards paid work
- Projects need at least 2 years to establish new areas of work
- VCs are the ideal agency to deliver this work – linked in locally to wide range of services – e.g. Job Centres, VIOs and statutory bodies

A great model

- NCVO looking for new opportunities to secure funds to deliver work across multiple VCs
- Using evidence for policy recommendations on how unemployed people are best supported and encouraged to develop the skills and confidence they need to move towards paid work

VSC added value

- The well connected role of the VCs as the local volunteering experts enabled the outcomes to be achieved
- Direct benefit to individuals, VIOs, the VCs and local communities
- What participants said made the most difference was the quality and availability of the project staff – supportive relationships
- Social return on investment was high, and good value

For further information

- VSC page

<http://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/volunteering/volunteering-for-stronger-communities>

- VSC final evaluation report

[http://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/practical_support/volunteering/vsc final evaluation report dec 2013.pdf](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/practical_support/volunteering/vsc_final_evaluation_report_dec_2013.pdf)

- VSC video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVDgnSnbNkQk&feature=youtu.be>



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