

Comparative Study into the Volunteering Opportunities within Wales for People with Lived Experience

Research Lead- Carp Collaborations

Commissioner- ST Giles Trust Cymru



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
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Volunteering Wales

Forward

Funded through a WCVA Wales Strategic Volunteering Grant fund, St Giles Trust sought to gain insight and learning to shape the development of services and accessibility of meaningful volunteering opportunities across Wales. The project encompassed commissioning a PAN Wales research study to identify organisational attitudes and existing recruitment practices and potential barriers in relation to recruiting people with lived experience/ criminal record into meaningful volunteering. This study aimed to capture practices and attitudes across the private, public and third sector organisations.

The contents of this report outline the outcomes of the PAN Wales Research Study undertaken by CARP Collaborations, commissioned by ST Giles Cymru.

About St Giles Trust

St Giles is an award-winning charity helping people facing severe disadvantage to find jobs, homes, and the support they need to build a more positive future. We deliver over 70 projects in communities and prisons across the UK, helping 25,000 people a year to have a better future. Nearly 40% of St Giles staff have been in similar situations to the people we work with and use their past experiences to inspire and support those living through it.

Lived Experience Model: St Giles believe that people with first-hand experience of successfully overcoming issues hold the key to positive change in others. A Lived Experience Model refers to those with lived experience of issues such as addiction, the criminal justice system, poor mental health, abuse, homelessness, and criminal exploitation, using their direct experience to move forward positively, nurture & support others with authenticity, and inform authentic & innovative service design.

About The Researcher

Founded in 2013, Community Action in Research and Policy (C.A.R.P.) Collaborations is a not-for-profit social enterprise that aims to further social inclusion within Wales through undertaking creative, collaborative and effective research and evaluation. Over the last decade CARP Collaborations has undertaken over 50 research and evaluation projects for a variety of commissioners including Welsh Government, charities, health boards, local authorities, and WCVA covering diverse topics of inclusion including homelessness, family support interventions, mental health and social prescribing, community involvement in green infrastructure, and therapeutic interventions to address the impact of domestic abuse and violence upon children.

We undertake creative methods using co productive and participatory research to ensure that communities are meaningfully involved in decision making about the services they use. We have found that research and evaluation becomes more valid, relevant and tangible when communities also design and participate within the processes that lead to decision making because their lived expertise can then inform research design, analysis frameworks and recommendations.

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SECTION 1: RATIONALE, METHODS AND APPROACH

Rationale for the research

Through existing work collaborations, the delivery of support services, and the development of a peer advisor development programme, St Giles Trust, has found that people with Lived Experience of offending, the criminal justice system, homelessness, addiction, and abuse face a number of barriers to accessing volunteering opportunities and meaningful paid employment. After successfully gaining a research grant from W.C.V.A., St Giles Trust commissioned Community Action in Research and Policy (C.A.R.P.) Collaborations to undertake co-productive research to explore the following topics:

- **Find out what volunteering opportunities are available for People with Lived Experience.**
- **Identify organisational attitudes and existing recruitment and personal development practices in relation to people with Lived Experience**
- **Identify potential barriers in relation to recruiting people with Lived Experience into volunteer or unpaid placements.**
- **Ensure representation of private, public and third sector organisations to provide a comparable study of attitudes and volunteer recruitment across the 3 sectors to Lived Experience**
- **Identify any potential support needs organisations across different sectors may require implementing a Lived Experience Volunteering Model**

Methods

In order to meet these research questions, we undertook mixed methods approach to the research encompassing:

- An online survey with both closed and open ended questions. This was distributed across networks and organisations in all regions of Wales and to different sectors. The aim of the survey was to provide a breadth of data to highlight key issues and themes around the topic of volunteering opportunities and Lived Experience across different sectors.
- Focus groups - these were delivered online and lasted for an hour. They aimed to provide group conversation for key organisations to discuss their current practices and what kind of support they might want to develop their current practice in supporting volunteers with Lived Experience.
- One to one interviews - these were delivered online and were targeted to ensure geographical and sector representation. We aimed to undertake interviews with private, public and statutory sector organisation in the regions of Wales - North Wales, Mid Wales, South East, South Central and South West. We also targeted 5 national organisations who were key partners with St Giles Trust regarding volunteer opportunities for people with Lived Experience or who had specific sector knowledge.

The research approach

The research project was designed to be predominantly qualitative. The research was co-productive in its' approach; with St Giles Trust recruiting 3 paid, Lived Experience, researchers to work alongside C.A.R.P. Collaborations staff to complete a research team.

To implement co production we undertook the steps detailed in the table below. Lived Experience researchers had autonomy and choice regarding which step they wanted to be involved within and to

what intensity, and research training and personal support was available upon an individual, bespoke basis.

Step	Methods and tasks	Outcomes
Getting started	One to one video chat between research project manager and each Lived Experience researcher.	Establish experience, areas of interest, personal learning points and availability.
Designing a survey	Group video meeting. Outline structures of a survey. From Lived Experience what needs to be covered in the survey.	Established sections of the survey and individual questions.
Designing an interview	Group meeting. Outline the purpose of the interview. Phrasing open ended questions	An interview script that as a group we rearranged to ensure flow.
Delivering interviews	Buddy up as a team to deliver interviews in pairs where possible.	Each Lived Experience researcher had the opportunity to shadow and take notes or co-deliver up to 6 interviews.
Delivering focus groups	Buddy up so there were teams to facilitate focus groups.	Lived Experience researchers chose to shadow and take notes for the focus groups.
Analysing data - 1	Group video meeting. Overview of the findings and deciding what implications are based upon personal Lived Experience	Structure of report agreed. Key themes clearly identified and agreed.
Analysing data - 2	Individual video meetings. Sense checking recommendations and gaining reflections of the co production process	Recommendations agreed. Learning points about co-productive process identified.

Ethical considerations

To ensure confidentiality the questionnaire was anonymous. After agreeing to participate in interviews, participants were sent information about the research and assured confidentiality through not citing any job roles and not naming any organisations. Researchers took notes while interviews were conducted. Within focus groups we asked organisations to be mindful of confidentiality and sought permission to record sessions prior to recording starting and with the explicit declaration that it was to generate a transcript to ensure accuracy which would be deleted once the research was completed.

In order to ensure ethical co-production the Research Manager worked with each Lived Experience researcher to ensure they had opportunities to participate in every stage but that they could choose the level of their involvement. There was individualised support and training available for Lived Experience researchers who had no prior research experience and personal support and supervision from St Giles Trust. The co-production process was flexible, so if a Lived Experience researcher was unable to be involved in one step it did not preclude them from involvement in other steps of the research process.

As collaborative organisations, C.A.R.P. Collaborations and St Giles Trust staff had weekly catch-up meetings to check on the direction of the research and the learning opportunities available for the Lived Experience team.

SECTION 2: PARTICIPANT ORGANISATIONS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Introduction

The research aimed to involve organisations that were cross-sector and representative of the different regions of Wales, except for the focus groups that were predominantly for key third sector partner organisations. This section discusses who was represented, identifies gaps in representation and concludes with some recommendations.

Cross Sector representation

	Questionnaire	Interviews	Focus groups	Total
Public sector	12	5	1	18
Private sector	5	2	0	7
Third sector	44	8	10	62
Total	61	15	11	87

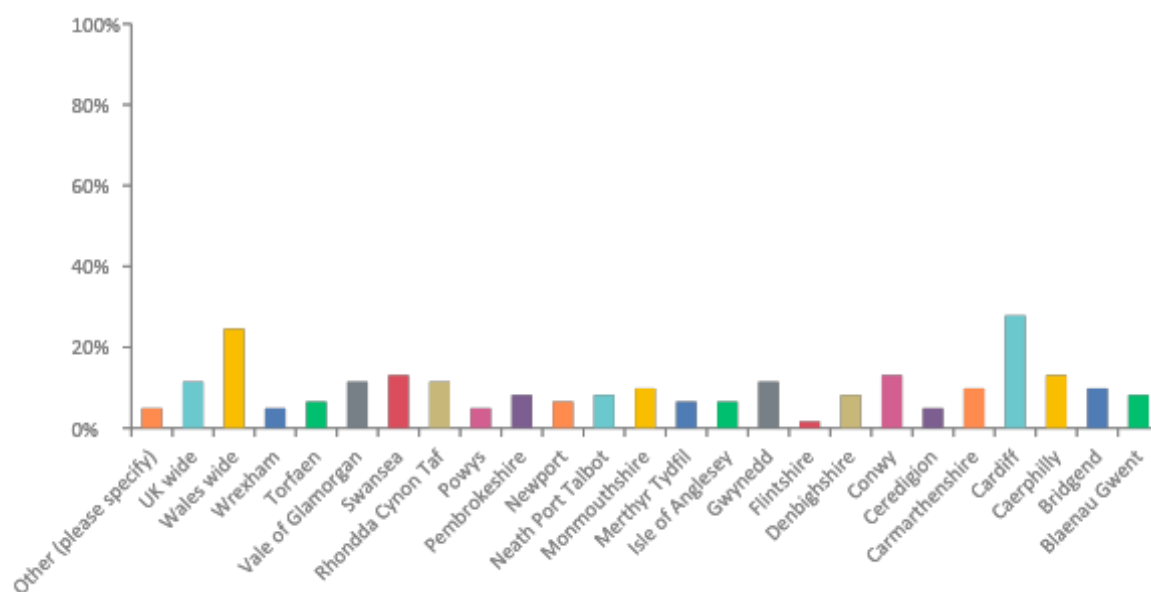
There was over representation of the third sector and under representation of the private sector, mainly due to the limited existing contacts and networks between the commissioning organisation, the research organisation and the private sector.

Regional representation

We worked on a 5 area regional footprint, aiming to gain representation across sectors from North Wales (Ynys Mon, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham), Mid Wales (Ceredigion and Powys), South West Wales (Pembrokeshire, Carmarthen, Swansea and NPT), South Central (Cardiff, Vale, Bridgend, RCT, Merthyr) and South East (Caerphilly, Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire and Newport).

However, there are a plethora of different regional footprints used within Wales by regional and national organisations, so it is difficult to pinpoint exact regional spread. The table below shows engagement with the questionnaire across local authority footprints, where organisations could select more than one local

authority within which they worked. 'other' included a private sector international organisation, a UK wide organisation and an England only organisation.



The interviews and focus groups had the following regional spread:

	South West	South Central	South East	Mid Wales	North Wales	National	Total
Focus groups	2	0	0	0	1	8	11
Interview	3	4	3	0	1	4	15
Total	5	4	3	0	2	11	26

The questionnaire had a balanced regional spread, but the qualitative fieldwork significantly underrepresented mid and North Wales across all sectors. There is no evidence as to why, and the researchers were residents and professionals in both South and North Wales with a range of established personal and professional networks.

The range of organisations reached

Whilst there are regional and sector gaps as outlined, where sectors and organisations did engage the response was positive and diverse. For example, the private sector included local and international businesses, an entrepreneur, a science business park and a business membership organisation.

Statutory sector organisations included a regional partnership board, blue light services, national parks and local authorities; whilst the third sector ranged from local food banks, a heritage railway, regional, national and UK wide large organisations. Predominantly, third sector organisations were focused upon aspects of inclusion and diversity including disability, homelessness and substance misuse, carers, and communities of colour.

There was low engagement from the heritage, arts and culture sector with only 3 organisations from this sector completing the questionnaire and none participating in focus groups or interviews despite numerous attempts to engage them. Similarly, there was relatively low engagement from the environmental sector with 5 organisations completing the questionnaire and 2 involved in interviews.

Organisations size and longevity

One quarter (23 out of a total of 87) of the organisations had more than 250 employees and these were overwhelmingly within the statutory sector. Only 20 of a total of 87 organisations had been in existence for more than 50 years and predominantly these were within the statutory sector.

Roles of Respondents and participants

The majority of respondents and participants came from managerial or specific volunteer roles within their organisations.

Role	Numbers- total 87
General management/Team leader/Director/CEO	37
Volunteer manager/development/coordinator/officer	31
Coordinator	7
HR management/employability/skills/recruitment	5
Support/ engagement Officer	3
Learning/ teaching profession	2
Trustee	2

Conclusions and recommendations

During implementation of this report's recommendations more should be done to further involve local organisations of all sectors within Mid and North Wales, since national organisations working in these regions will not hold the same level of understanding of local contexts as local organisations. This could most easily be achieved through collaborations with local CVC's and umbrella business organisations. The private sector in all regions needs to be better engaged; possibly with a change of language, referring to unpaid on job training or unpaid work placements rather than 'volunteering' and better acknowledgement of the strengths the sector has to offer.

SECTION 3: DEFINITIONS OF 'VOLUNTEERING' AND CURRENT VOLUNTEERING PRACTICE

Introduction

The research found that different organisations and sectors worked to different definitions of 'volunteering'. This section examines these different definitions before discussing general trends in providing volunteering opportunities.

What is volunteering?

This research deliberately set out to have a wide definition of 'volunteering' in order to be applicable to all sectors. However, a minority of third sector organisations commented that the private sector could not, and should not, offer volunteering because 'volunteering' was about added social and intrinsic value, which does not include unpaid work placements.

The private sector predominantly viewed volunteering in terms of unpaid work placement; aiming to offer personal and skill development for the workplace, tailored to the individual. However, private sector organisations felt that small businesses were also a part of their local community citing the example of food parcels during covid and explaining:

'In general, small businesses often struggle to get the skills they want. There's an element where it's in your own interest to make sure that you have a pool of talent but also making sure that they are bringing people in and building them within their companies. There's a reason for that in that they tend to be embedded in their community so they care about the community. If you want to retain your people, investing in them is a good way to do it.' Third Sector Organisation

The statutory sector and parts of the third sector tended to straddle these two positions, offering some volunteering roles directly linked to work experience and skill development whilst other roles were giving to, or focused upon, communities.

There was general consensus across all sectors that volunteering had different purposes and should be cross-sector, but what mattered was being able to offer appropriate levels of support to individuals, being clear about what roles were on offer, ensuring there were benefits to the roles, and avoiding exploitation of free labour. Section 6 discusses cross sector comparisons in further detail.

Recruitment levels and methods of recruitment

Approximately 37% of participant organisations had more than 50 volunteers, and 4% did not currently have volunteers. The remaining 59% had between 1 and 49 volunteers. Volunteers in all sectors were recruited in multiple ways - through social media, organisation's websites, local CVC's, word of mouth and via other organisations. The trend was to use all of these methods, rather than just one, with sign posting and partnership working having the same prominence as online methods. Most organisations wanted to ensure enough support and development for their volunteers and therefore stayed within numbers that they felt manageable:

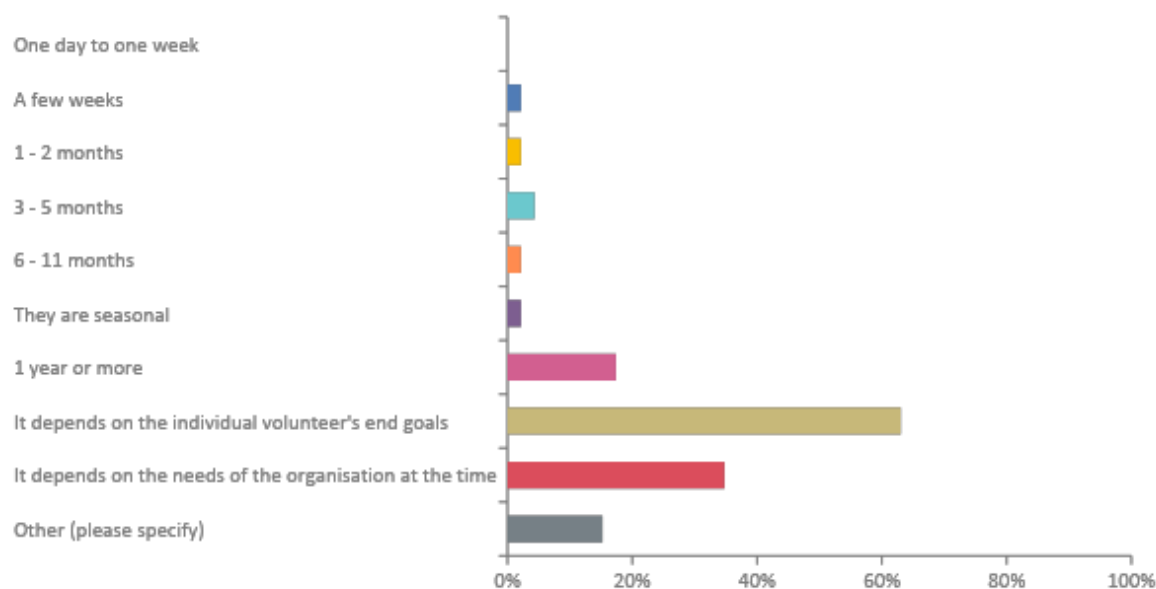
‘It was really important for us to get things right, so we needed to narrow our focus really, to get it right, now we are looking at developing and building from there.’ - Local Authority

Volunteering roles available

There were a range of roles available in all sectors; although the statutory sector offered the biggest ranges within an organisation. The voluntary sector tended to focus upon either peer support, delivery of a particular service, back-office roles or fundraising, the private sector upon the scheme or work roles that were its’ speciality whilst the statutory sectors generally offered the most diverse roles - from service delivery such as education and social care, arts participation such as libraries galleries and museums through to community work and environmental work. The voluntary sector also included political influencing and being a trustee within volunteering roles; and some statutory and third sector organisations spoke about coproduction and engagement as volunteering.

Duration of volunteering offers

Organisations varied according to how long volunteering lasted with them, as shown in the graph from the questionnaire below. This varied pattern was similar across interviews and focus groups; with most organisations stressing that it either depended upon the individual’s needs or it was made clear to individuals regarding how much time was required from them.



Development pathways within voluntary roles and progression to paid employment

Approximately 50% of the participant organisations stated that volunteers had a career and skills development pathway within their organisation. However, the nature of this development depended upon the role chosen and the organisation. For example, one private sector organisation supported volunteers to become self employed, some social care volunteering in statutory and third sectors led to gaining work experience that was relevant for paid positions and some organisations had specific Lived Experience peer or research and evaluation work. All sectors tended to support their volunteers into paid employment, sometimes within their organisation and sometimes beyond their organisation:

'So we've lost a lot of people [Lived Experience volunteers] that gain confidence, gain experience and then move on into jobs, which is what you want...' National 3rd sector organisation

'We had an older volunteer who had Lived Experience of knife crime. He became a volunteer in that area of our work, then he was a sessional, now he is a paid member of staff.' Local Charity

'I just listen to what the volunteer is interested in, and hopefully put something in place for them that fits their needs. It has always been led by those looking to volunteer. We haven't ever gone actively looking for people, they find us. ...The important thing is that they get something out of it, that it leads to something in the long term for them. We have had a volunteer here for the past year. It is just about to be turned into a paid position. That was always the aim, once we had the funding.' - Private sector micro business entrepreneur.

The only discernible patterns to skills development and potentially paid employment were within the processes used. Predominately patterns focused on individualised development so volunteers could choose their own development paths, training opportunities across organisations, peer mentoring and signposting to opportunities within other organisations, or another part of the same organisation, where possible and relevant:

'We have a three-stage training programme... The training programme is a big one. We talk them through it so they come in with specific interests or experiences. It is a programme with set activities, but can individualise it.' Regional 3rd sector organisation

'We have the baseline training, which covers communication skills and time management and things like that. But there is no formalised pathway to move onto at the moment. So we are linking in with education and employment now to offer those who want it a pathway or a springboard onto something else.' - Local authority

All organisations tried to offer supervision and one to one support to their volunteers. Some did this through existing staffing structures, with managers having both paid staff and volunteers within their team whilst other organisations had volunteer managers or coordinators who had sole responsibility for all the volunteers within the organisation.

There were reported advantages and disadvantages to both systems. Volunteer managers felt that too much fell onto them, that they were expected to know too much for one job role and that volunteers may not be well integrated into the organisation.

However, organisations that had integrated management of volunteers felt that volunteers maybe getting 'lost' as paid staff were over-busy and therefore volunteers may not be getting the supervision they needed.

The benefits of volunteering

The benefits of volunteering fell into 3 categories, regardless of sector or organisation:

1. Benefits to the organisation

Organisations benefit from having an increased diversity of knowledge, experience and understanding within the workplace and enthusiasm that volunteers often bring to their role. Some organisations said they were dependent upon volunteers to deliver the service.

‘Having a varied and inclusive workforce. Volunteers offer so much to our organisation, without them a lot of our projects would not work.’ 3rd sector organisation

‘Our volunteers play an essential role in supporting our community and ensuring that we provide the best possible services to our citizens. They bring a wealth of knowledge, skills, and experiences that enrich our services and help us meet the diverse needs of our community.’ 3rd sector organisation

2. Benefits to communities

Where volunteers are mentoring others due to a shared Lived Experience, it was often to the benefit of the community at hand. Organisations found they were able to offer more to communities because of the work of volunteers.

‘Our volunteers teach staff regarding their insights. [in one programme] They go out in communities and teach them how to use an inhaler for heroin overdose. They know where to go in the communities. They know areas and people to target. People are happy to approach them but not necessarily our workers. So volunteers are really good for linking that hidden community.’ [researcher note: this organisation also had many safety mechanisms in place to keep staff and volunteers emotionally and physically safe in these circumstances]. 3rd sector organisation

“Volunteering is a powerful tool that has the potential to transform not just individuals, but entire communities.”- Charity

‘Also there is the community engagement side of things. It is really wonderful to share the enjoyment of the park with the community. People have a sense of ownership over the park. There are benefits locally to that’ Statutory sector

3. Benefits to the volunteer

Organisations spoke about how many volunteers wanted to ‘give back’ or be involved in service improvements due to their own Lived Experiences. Volunteers gained skills, a sense of belonging, and new life perspectives through their volunteering work.

‘A lot of the volunteers that we have got have had negative experiences of health and social care services in the region and kind of want to sit on these boards and want to have their voices heard and give back for errors that have happened to them.’ Regional partnership board

Conclusions

Whilst the definitions of volunteering may differ between sectors, the processes and ethical considerations are shared. There are some ethical considerations in defining volunteering and deciding what roles are suitable for volunteering. Specifically:

1. Co production and influencing work. The National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales specify that people should be remunerated for their time but currently many organisations view it as a valid volunteering role.
2. DWP regulations. These stipulate that a volunteer role should not be a role that others are getting paid to do. However, this mitigates against the ability to offer work experience or gain “on job” skills.
3. Avoiding exploitation. Without the right checks, procedures and development, it would be possible for some volunteers to be exploited by organisations and used for ‘free labour’.

These issues are discussed in Section 8 in relation to recommendations.

SECTION 4: CURRENT PRACTICE IN PROVIDING VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCES

Introduction

Some organisations specifically aimed to support people with Lived Experience within their volunteering opportunities whilst others operated on an “open to everyone” basis. Additionally, different organisations used the term ‘Lived Experience’ to refer to different life experiences.

This section explores the use of the term ‘Lived Experience’ and the mechanisms some organisations employ in order to support people with Lived Experiences in volunteering roles. It then discusses concerns that organisations had in providing opportunities for people with certain Lived Experiences.

Definitions of Lived Experience

There were no shared definitions of ‘Lived Experience’ within or across sectors and generally the term was not used within the private sector, although the private sector did support volunteers with Lived Experience:

‘They do however have ex-offenders and people suffering from mental health and are quite vulnerable and there is our care [ie HR and pastoral support] that provides support to members. We are doing it but not using the term I guess.’ - Business umbrella organisation

‘No it’s not a term I have used before, so I don’t really understand what it means.’ - Micro businesses entrepreneur

There were different levels of understanding of the term ‘Lived Experience’ within the statutory sector:

‘Our interpretation of that would be personal experience of what they are trying to support. So it is people who have been affected by it, rather than just people who know about it. So they have been in similar situations, and they have used similar services. Their pathway is very close to the individual they are supporting.’ - Local Authority

‘We are not very good in that area and we haven’t really thought about it in those terms before.’ - Statutory agency

Not all voluntary sector organisations used the term ‘Lived Experience’:

‘I am not sure whether we use it as a term. We always chat about sharing stories. But it is probably not a term we use. The thing that is important though, although we don’t use the term. It is very evident within our community.’ Local charity

Specialist voluntary sector organisations used the term ‘Lived Experience’ to refer to people who had the same experiences as the organisation’s area of expertise. Therefore, two organisations working with newly arrived communities talked about ‘Lived Experience’ to refer to asylum seeker and refugees, whilst social care organisations referred to a variety of communities; including carers, family support services, living with loneliness, people living in poverty, experience of the mental health system, living with a disability, veterans and experience of domestic abuse.

Third sector organisations that did not have a specific focus, or whose work spanned various communities e.g. those tackling homelessness, spoke in more general terms about ‘Lived Experience’ being any adverse experience that had brought people into contact with services. A few individuals felt that Lived Experience was any experience that gave insight and knowledge and one or two individuals stressed that it didn’t have to be negative, and could be any hobby or experience that contributed to knowledge through experience.

What ‘Lived Experiences’ do participant organisations specifically support?

Roughly two thirds of survey respondents targeted volunteering opportunities to specific Lived Experiences, as shown in the table below. Targeted opportunities were predominantly within the third sector, but not all third sector organisations worked with Lived Experience volunteers.

Question from questionnaire: do you target volunteering opportunities towards specific Lived Experiences?

Type of Lived Experience	Number
Yes, older people	8
Yes, younger people	10
Yes, people with disabilities	5
Yes, people with mental health problems	11
Yes, people who are long term unemployed	7
Yes, people who have substance misuse issues	6
Yes, people with a criminal record	6
Yes, all of the above	6
No, our volunteering opportunities are not tailored to a specific group	23
Other	14

Organisations varied greatly in their approach to recruiting people with Lived Experiences. For some there was a carefully constructed individualised approach involving informal talks, support and tiered entry to volunteering. Other organisations had formal processes and relied upon volunteers 'self-declaring' any Lived Experiences.

The approach to recruiting Lived Experience volunteers tended to depend upon whether the organisation worked with the communities from which it was recruiting Lived Experience volunteers or whether it was a 'one size fits all' recruitment process. Some organisations tried to combine both approaches, with different roles requiring different levels of formality.

What challenges do organisations face in supporting volunteers with Lived Experiences?

There were no discernible patterns regarding particular Lived Experiences being more challenging for organisations to support than other Lived Experiences. However, there were 7 clear 'positions' that organisations took with regards to providing volunteering opportunities to people with Lived Experiences evidenced within interviews, focus groups and the questionnaire:

1. We don't have enough expertise or resources

Whilst many organisations wanted to support people with Lived Experiences, some felt that they did not have the knowledge to support people with certain experience or the resources:

'We need more funding so we have the capacity to work with volunteers who have extra needs.'
Third sector

'We are unable to provide one on one support for people who may have additional support needs and are unable to work on tasks independently due to lack of staff.' Third sector

Additionally, some organisations felt that they 'would not know how to support or engage some groups' (third sector quote).

'It opens a different set of circumstances and potential issues for us as an organisation. I am not qualified as someone who knows how to deal with that really. It would need to have extra things in place to make sure it is meaningful for them.' Private sector

2. All our opportunities are open to everyone

Organisations with this response tended to feel that anyone could become a volunteer within their organisation and if they passed the recruitment process they could be a volunteer. This approach did not appear to distinguish the support needs between volunteers who may have had adverse experiences and those that had not. Instead, because programmes were felt to be individualised, volunteers were believed to be allocated enough support should they need it.

3. We may not have suitable opportunities

Various organisations felt that they may not have the right opportunities for some people. For example, some organisations are unable to work with people under 18 years old, a few environmental organisations felt that opportunities may be inaccessible to people with certain disabilities and others felt that they

would need to balance Lived Experience volunteers with safeguarding vulnerable people; particularly in relation to recovery from substance misuse.

"We would happily offer volunteer opportunities to people with Lived Experience; however, we would need to ensure that they are given a suitable volunteer role." Third sector

4. We have to have clear DBS and background checks

Some organisations were unable to support volunteers who did not pass expected background checks, regardless of the individuals' credentials or how long ago experiences may have been in their histories. This was particularly the case for the blue light services volunteering programmes.

'Vetting constrains who we are able to take as a volunteer.' Third sector

5. We take our volunteers on a case by case basis

These organisations had the resources, expertise and volunteer positions to be able to work with potential volunteers to identify what support they may need, work to an asset based approach by highlighting particular strengths they had and not gloss over any vulnerabilities within their recovery or survival, and enable a tiered process so volunteers could start at an intensity that was right for them. Being asset focused also enable positive risk management rather than being risk averse:

'Volunteering opportunities for people need to be risk balanced. So they can get things wrong and that's ok. It doesn't matter, because we are taking a risk positive approach. We are allowing things to not go right. Making sure that it's not detrimental.' - Local authority

'We have to look at each case individually before a decision is made and assess appropriately' Third sector

6. Some of our work could re-trigger trauma or decrease an individual's recovery path

A few specialist organisations highlighted that their work was working with traumatised people, and volunteers who had the same experiences were not necessarily the best volunteers to have. These organisations had procedures in place to enable Lived Experience volunteers to change roles if it was re-triggering, or signposted their volunteers to other organisations so they could benefit from volunteering without having the re-triggers around them.

'In some circumstances due to the nature of the volunteering it may trigger some people who have a history of trauma.' - National 3rd sector supporting asylum seekers and refugees

'It may not be beneficial to them to engage with people with similar histories.' Regional 3rd sector organisation supporting survivors of domestic abuse

'You need to think about the impact of the exposure, particularly if the volunteer is in the early stages of their recovery. It's about the intensity of that exposure as well. So they might not have thought about it for ages and feel like they have moved on ... so the volunteer may unintentionally be exposed, which could trigger previous traumas.' Local Authority.

7. Having a Lived Experience is a definite asset for us

These organisations actively recruited volunteers with Lived Experiences to undertake peer work and inform organisation direction. Usually the organisation had expertise supporting communities with the same Lived Experience and wanted to enable volunteering within and between the community they worked with.

‘Generally we would consider Lived Experience to be a positive attribute that would give people a unique insight and expertise.’ 3rd sector

‘Everyone has some skill, experience or talent to offer within a volunteering role, those with Lived Experience are best placed to support others who may be experiencing similar.’ 3rd sector

What attitudes do organisations have towards the Lived Experiences that St Giles Trust works with? (Homelessness, substance misuse, abuse, and contact with the criminal justice system)

Beyond concerns regarding vulnerable communities and safeguarding; organisations felt they would need to take individuals with these Lived Experiences on a case by case basis, the same as any other Lived Experience.

‘Dependent on the type of criminal record, we may not be able to provide volunteering opportunities as our project ‘beneficiaries’ could be vulnerable. We will try and provide opportunities and will look at criminal records on a case by case basis. This is similar in situations where someone has substance misuse issues. In instances where an individual discloses a disability and/or mental health problem, we will discuss with them whether they require any reasonable adjustments or support and then on a case by case basis will assess whether the project they have applied for is appropriate for them. In all instances we will try and support as much as possible and match the volunteer to a project that might be appropriate.’ Local Authority

However, organisations that did not have expertise in working with these experiences, did not appear to have the knowledge or expertise to know how to support appropriately. The data was nuanced and anecdotal, but it is suggestive that whilst there may have been organisational will or policy to welcome these specific Lived Experiences, actually managing and supporting those experiences was not within current capabilities.

‘One of our volunteers has just gone into prison. Now I’m an ex-prison teacher, so I’m very comfortable in that environment but what he could do would be limited by the fact that he was in prison, but I had no risk issue. But, HR kind of went, “No, no, no, we don’t do prisons.” National 3rd Sector organisation

‘You are working with more complexity when supporting people with substance misuse or mental health needs. It is more about confidence and aspirations then. You need a more robust level of support, more like a mentoring programme.’ Statutory sector

‘There have been potential opportunities to work with young offenders, and people with mental health issues. I would definitely consider it, but it would need the right people in place to support it really, and we are a very small organisation. There is a level of expertise which is needed for this

type of thing. Unless I was working with an organisation who had all of that in place, it is a sensitive area, which needs extra consideration. That's not to say we wouldn't do it.' Private sector

Additionally, the findings suggest that generally, any Lived Experience that is outside of an organisation's experience or expertise was a challenge to include within volunteer opportunities.

How do organisations avoid discrimination within employment or recruitment processes?

Most organisations tried to work inclusively and referred to equality and diversity training, Equal Opportunities policies and other mechanisms to maintain non-discriminatory practice. However, the issue of DBS checks received a number of mentions with many organisations suggesting that it would deter an individual from being able to work with them.

Other organisations did not ask prospective candidates for any identity disclosures so that they were not singled out. Generally, organisations had their own HR procedures that were very varied in practice, but all tried to ensure fair and inclusive recruitment practice. Many appeared to be bound by HR procedures that followed traditional processes without being able to employ more creative, accessible practice. It is possible that there is a discrepancy between policy and recruitment practice but there is not enough evidence within the research to be able to further comment upon this issue.

Conclusions

The 7 positions that organisations had in relation to volunteering opportunities for people with Lived Experiences highlight that the following balances need to be considered:

- Working inclusively and being person centred. There are tensions between not discriminating and being open to everyone by offering an accessible recruitment process with providing individualised support or development and flexibility.
- Knowing the limits of your organisation in terms of resources, expertise and volunteering roles and wanting to be inclusive and develop capacity.
- Enabling risk and letting individuals learn from mistakes without impacting upon their own confidence or the wellbeing of people using services. Risk needs to be assessed but positively managed rather than completely avoided.

There does appear to be a need for organisations to have more information about implementing creative, accessible and inclusive recruitment practice, and clear information generally about the law regarding criminal records and employment.

Organisations across all sectors could benefit from collaboration across Lived Experiences rather than trying to gain expertise in a number of Lived Experiences for themselves. This would be of particular benefit to micro organisations and those who offer general volunteering opportunities.

There needs to be clarity regarding the definition of 'Lived Experience'. It was discussed as a research team and the researchers with Lived Experiences felt that, whilst it should not be perceived as negative, the term was lost if it applied to just any life experience. As a team, considering the evidence, it was decided that 'Lived Experience' meant that an individual had expertise of their own experience of

overcoming, or surviving, an adversity. This offers the individual unique understanding and insights into complex and adverse social experience. However, this definition is not currently shared across or within any sectors.

SECTION 5: EMERGING PRACTICE AND EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIONS

Introduction

This research is not equipped with standards or comparisons to define ‘good practice’ but interviews and focus groups did reveal how organisations are trying to ensure ethical practice in providing volunteer opportunities for people with Lived Experiences. This section looks at patterns of emerging practice rather than taking a particular organisation’s model and using it as a case study. The topics have been chosen for how regularly they were discussed and their relationship to ethical practice.

Implementing person centredness

Organisations providing volunteer opportunities for people with Lived Experience all spoke about the need to be person centred. Whilst this needed to be balanced with the needs of people using services in some circumstances, the focus was about the motivations of the volunteer and what they wanted to gain from the volunteering alongside with identifying what personal or career development they would aspire to achieve. This was particularly important to organisations supporting people with Lived Experiences because it enabled them to be asset focused- building upon an individual’s strengths and supporting where an individual felt they needed it. The nature of implementing person centredness varied, but was generally about listening to the person and working with them:

- Some organisations across all sectors developed bespoke roles for particular volunteers. This meant every opportunity was tailor made for an individual with learning, development, tasks and intensity all being discussed and agreed with the individual volunteer. Micro organisations and larger organisations with adequate resources for Lived Experience support tended to be able to work in this way.
‘Sometimes there are specific roles and we recruit into them and sometimes they are bespoke and we develop them for individuals. Sometimes we will create a role for a person based on interests and strengths and things they can do.’ Statutory sector
- Some organisations were able to be flexible regarding times, remote or face to face working, regularity etc. but not all roles or organisations are able to offer this type of flexibility.
- Optional tasks. Many organisations enabled a level of choice within the tasks of a role.
- All organisations working with people with Lived Experience tried to provide training, meet the individual’s aspirations for what they wanted out of volunteering and identify development opportunities with the individual.

Managing DBS alerts

Organisations that were accustomed to working with people who had experience of the criminal justice system used a case by case basis to navigate how to work with DBS alerts. One regional third sector substance misuse service explained that they considered 3 issues on a case by case basis:

- Whether the offence committed would put people who use services at risk and if so, was there another role that the individual could take as opposed to being turned down.

- How long ago was the offence committed and was there evidence that it was completely in the person's past.
- What processes could be implemented to monitor their volunteering progress and work with the individual to protect against relapse or further criminal activity.

Many organisations stated that they needed a clear DBS check and it was a HR decision if a potential volunteer was prevented from joining the organisation due to a criminal record. The only clarity regarding DBS checks came from organisations who had worked with people with criminal convictions:

'With DBS, if something comes up, all volunteers are subject to Rehabilitation of Offenders Act- it only matters if there are serious crimes on there. So most convictions don't have to be talked about.'-Local Authority

One stop shop for volunteers

The County Voluntary Councils (C.V.Cs) provide a place for people to browse local volunteering opportunities. However, various organisations are trying to provide their volunteers with a 'one stop shop' to make it easier for vulnerable people to navigate and build their skills within an environment that they know will support their Lived Experiences. The two local Authorities staff that were interviewed were each a part of their local authorities volunteering programme. One appeared to be further developed than the other, in that it combined all the volunteering opportunities available into a one stop shop database. The other was purely focused upon prevention and social care.

'All people go through a training manual which is comprehensive and jazzy looking- We can share volunteers across departments for example, someone can be transferred easily from schools to social care . We have guides on working with volunteers with different protected characteristics and in different areas. The guide and training in one booklet takes down all the barriers.' Statutory sector

Services across Gwent are pulled into one umbrella under the Gwent wellbeing College that enables people with Lived Experiences to access a range of services, cross sector, that enhance wellbeing. Within this model support services, development opportunities, social and community activities, learning and volunteering are pulled into one accessible resource. Whilst the Gwent Learning College is in final stages of development it is an example of how geographical places can provide a one stop shop or 360 support for individuals in a holistic framework.

Trauma informed

In analysis, the Lived Experience researchers felt this was an important aspect of the research findings. Organisations who are working with people who have experienced high levels of trauma were aware of the impact this could have for recruiting people with Lived Experiences to work with their peers. Different organisations adopted different approaches, but they were all using trauma informed practice within their volunteering programmes. Examples include:

- Two organisations supporting asylum seekers and refugees closely monitored the effect peer work may have upon the wellbeing of their volunteers. There were concerns that it would be traumatic for translators listening to people's experiences, and front desk reception could be very challenging. They identified other possible volunteering opportunities so that volunteers could

choose from a variety of roles, offered very close one to one supervision for volunteers who took emotionally demanding roles and ensured they were not triggered to relive trauma. One organisation was trying to secure funding to provide work related therapy to its translators.

- One organisation working regionally to supporting survivors of domestic abuse and violence against women had found that there were two problems when taking peer volunteers onto their programme:
 - a) Sometimes volunteers became retriggered with their own traumatic experiences
 - b) Volunteers would over share their own experiences and not be able to distance their Lived Experience with that of other women which was detrimental to service users and the volunteer.

This organisation instead decided to look for other ways in which peers could volunteer for example, making and wrapping Christmas presents for families living in refuge, office roles and signposting to volunteering opportunities within other organisations. They took non-Lived Experience volunteers to undertake specific support work.

An organised programme with a tiered approach and management

Across all sectors it was recognised that volunteers needed to know exactly what role they would be taking, what the time commitment was and what their supervision or management would be.

Larger organisations and those with volunteer coordinators often had different programmes and streams for volunteers whereas micro-organisations were unable to offer this. However, micro-organisations tended to define the role in partnership with an individual and offer one to one management as a part of the organisation's work delivery. Generally, whilst it appears to be best practice to have a specific lead for volunteers this excludes the ability of micro and small organisations from offering what can be valuable unpaid work placements.

Therefore, emerging practice would suggest that the exact management structure will depend upon the size of the organisation, but every volunteer should have direct and clear supervision mechanisms, a co-designed or clearly defined role and be offered training (both formal and on-job) to develop personal and career skills. However, there should also be flexibility and recognition that sometimes-Lived Experience volunteers may need choices, fluctuating intensity of work and additional support, particularly if working in a potentially trauma inducing arena. One regional organisation working with people recovering from substance misuse had a 3 tier volunteering programme that supported peer volunteers in alignment with their own recovery journey; with the last tier offering skills that enabled them to apply for jobs within the organisation; whilst the entry tier offered 'have a go' experience sessions and high levels of flexibility with no imperative for regular attendance.

Learning Skills

Enabling people to learn skills was the primary motivator for private sector organisations; but was also important to most participating organisations. From the voices of organisations within this research who support people with Lived Experiences, the importance of developing work applicable skills for people with Lived Experiences should not be underestimated.

'It increases employability because volunteering is actually unpaid work, but it allows them to learn about the systems to learn about how things work and to actually get a good reference from people that are there, project managers.' Local C.I.C. supporting Lived Experience volunteers

‘People with disabilities run a fantastic canteen- all people with disabilities are gaining opportunities into the labour market and cookery, we are working with a care leaver at the moment, who was in social care who went on to be a prison officer and does intense work with families.’ Statutory sector

Partnership and collaborative working

For organisations that were small or did not have expertise with a particular Lived Experience there are instances of collaborative working that were found to be effective. For example, a National Park had worked with a drug and alcohol support service to enable both remote and hands on volunteering, and worked with a refugee and asylum seeker organisation to provide access to outdoor activities. The volunteer coordinator was aware that these experiences were exclusive and the next step was to enable inclusion between volunteers as well as provide specialist and exclusive opportunities:

‘We just don’t have the capacity or the expertise. The partnership really worked. The thing is, I don’t want them to be separated. I would want them to be integrated with our core volunteers... what has worked well for us is collaborating with other organisations.’

Some voluntary organisations network and collaborate with a range of local organisations to be able to signpost both their service users and volunteers to new opportunities:

‘We basically sit down with them [young people with poor mental health] and see what are their goals and what they want to reach with a job, what they feel, skills they need, and then we’ll go to find different organisations. So at the minute we got someone going to an animal sanctuary. We’ve got someone going to like an IT company. So basically whatever they want to do, we can help them.’
Local charity

In analysis, Lived Experience researchers spoke about the importance for Lived Experience volunteers to be within ‘networked’ organisations because this enabled easy transfers with new experiences and skills with the possibility of different learning paths for individuals.

Conclusions

There are no one size fits all models that can be developed to exemplify ‘how to’ provide volunteer opportunities for people with Lived Experience because there is such variety across sectors, within sectors and roles for volunteers. However, a generalised approach to defining and supporting organisations become more inclusive was welcomed with practical support tips on different types of lived experience. There are key elements that organisations who support people with Lived Experiences in volunteer roles spoke about and examples of how non specialist organisations can work with others to ensure diverse volunteering opportunities that can cater for a wider group of volunteers.

This section outlined the key elements that need to be in place to enable successful volunteering placements for people with Lived Experiences; predominantly safeguarding balanced with opportunity, an individualised approach, structure, supervision and variety of roles, flexibility and skill development.

SECTION 6: CROSS SECTOR COMPARISON

Introduction

As cited in Section 2, there was unequal representation across the sectors. Excluding the focus groups, which specifically aimed to engage 3rd sector partners of the St Giles Trust, there were a total of 87 participating organisations. 9% from the private sector, 22% from the statutory sector and 68% from the third sector.

Additionally, the diverse organisations engaged from within the private and statutory sectors makes it hard to draw any substantive conclusions regarding defined or clear practice of offering volunteering opportunities within either of these sectors. However, there are some general, evidence-based observations that can be made along with recommendations for future collaboration and work.

What opportunities are available and who are opportunities available for?

The third sector had many different types of volunteering opportunities and catered to all communities as well as offering a variety of volunteering opportunities targeted to communities with specific Lived Experiences. Half of the statutory sector targeted their volunteering opportunities and half did not, whilst most of the private sector did not target volunteering opportunities, the exception being a specific scheme for people with substance misuse histories who were currently on probation.

All sectors recruited volunteers via social media, word of mouth and other charities and all sectors stated that the length of placements depended upon the individual's end goals. Similarly, all sectors offered a variety of roles to volunteers, with no discernible differences between sectors regarding the roles available.

Tick box question- What roles do you offer? (total respondents 40)

	Admin/ office	Client facing	Peer work	Development	Other
Public	4	6	3	1	5
Private	1	2	1	1	1
Third	13	22	16	8	12

Support available to volunteers

Resources were reported to be scarce across all sectors which limited organisations' capacity to increase existing volunteering opportunities but also to branch out to offering opportunities to those with Lived Experience.

However, the private sector stood out as needing additional resources, knowledge and understanding to be able to confidently offer volunteering opportunities to people with Lived Experience. It should be noted that many voluntary organisations also reported these barriers when discussing opportunities for people with Lived Experiences beyond the expertise of their organisation. It could be concluded that outside of existing areas of expertise regarding Lived Experience, all sectors require capacity building, resources and staff training; although, the third sector as a whole contains considerable expertise in this area due to the purpose of the sector.

Unsurprisingly, the private sector specifically stated it would welcome guidance and support on how to offer opportunities for people with Lived Experiences and as a sector it did not generally use, or understand the term 'Lived Experience'. Generally, this support was discussed as collaboration with organisations that were skilled and held expertise in particular Lived Experiences. All sectors shared motivations for offering volunteering opportunities including diversifying the workforce, offering quality work experience and building skills. However, the third sector had higher awareness of social value, cohesion and giving back as additional motivators for ensuring quality volunteering placements.

Relationships between sectors

Whilst a minority of third sector organisations felt that volunteering was not applicable to the private sector, many more organisations expressed some scepticism regarding private sector involvement in volunteering. Whilst the data from the private sector is limited, this scepticism was misplaced given the evidence within this research. An umbrella business organisation spoke about the meetings they facilitate between local businesses and communities to discuss high streets and joint needs, food parcels and the importance of local businesses to communities during Covid and the symbiotic relationship between independent local businesses and the communities within which they are placed. They directly spoke, unprompted, about values:

'When there's somebody acting in a [detrimental] way that's reputational risk to the business.'
Private sector local business

'We have signed up to a best practice guide on work experience and volunteering ... Work experience is good, obviously free labour and exploitation is not good.' Private sector

Conclusions

Despite uneven representation across the sectors, certain key themes were evidenced within the data. The third sector holds a wealth of ethical practice and expertise that needs to be shared across the sector to enable voluntary organisations to reach volunteers beyond their existing specialism of Lived Experience; where it is appropriate to extend those opportunities. However, the sector could also expand expertise within the other two sectors through collaborative working and innovative projects to fill gaps in statutory sector expertise, build capacity in the private sector and access valuable work experience and on job skills for their service users and volunteers.

There is a need for clear definitions across sectors regarding what ‘volunteering’ can consist of and which roles should be paid, what should be voluntary and what is an unpaid work placement; all in line with the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales and DWP definitions, as mentioned in Section 3 and discussed in Section 8.

SECTION 7: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PARTICIPANT ORGANISATIONS

Introduction

All participants were asked what kind of support they may need or want in order to start, or further, their volunteering opportunities for people with Lived Experiences. Many organisations expressed concerns about working with volunteers with Lived Experiences that were beyond their organisations’ areas of expertise which is discussed in Section 4. The questionnaire included specific prompts around guidance and toolkits whilst interviews and focus groups included open discussion regarding what would be of most value. This section presents the areas of work that participants said they wanted help and support within and then details how they would like that support delivered.

Areas of work that participants identified they needed support within

There were clear themes within the findings regarding areas of work that organisations required support with. The table below details questionnaire responses which are then discussed in relation to additional data from interviews and focus groups.

Multiple tick box question: what support might you like in order to work with volunteers with Lived Experience?

Specific area of possible support	Total
Ongoing input for personal development for volunteers	31
Recruitment - safer recruitment	21
Ongoing input for career development for volunteers	19
Recruitment in general	19
Other	13
Recruitment - interviews	9
Recruitment - applications	6

Within interviews and focus groups participants requested similar help to those who completed the questionnaire.

1. Requests for funding capacity

The biggest request for help was for organisations to be able to have the capacity to appropriately support volunteers with Lived Experiences. The nature of the support requested varied, but it was generally felt that volunteers with Lived Experiences may need more support than other volunteers and capacity needed to be expanded in terms of funding for volunteer coordinators, funding for mentors and regular supervision check-in's, and funding to enable monitoring of development and progression.

2. How to match and provide appropriate roles

Many organisations wanted guidance with how to match a Lived Experience volunteer with a role that is suitable for them, particularly so it enables personal growth and skills development but does not trigger trauma. This included building confidence in the time prior to becoming a volunteer.

3. How to enable personal and career development

There was a lack of knowledge regarding how to set personal goals and monitor progress.

4. How to manage DBS alerts and criminal records

There was significant discussion regarding DBS checks and alerts, probation and providing opportunities whilst keeping people who use services safe.

5. How to accredit skills and personal development

Some participants wanted to be able to offer qualifications or certification for skills and development but found it a very difficult arena to navigate; particularly vocational qualifications.

6. Positive Action and moving into paid employment

The links between volunteering, Lived Experience and paid employment fell into 2 related issues. Firstly, organisations want advice surrounding how to take positive action and enable volunteers with Lived Experience to take paid employment because they have lived expertise. Secondly, how to identify which roles can and should be voluntary and which should be paid; particularly in the context of the National Principles for Public Engagement stating people with lived expertise should be remunerated for their time and the DWP defining volunteering as not being a role that others are paid for. One national organisation had funding for a Lived Experience consultation and evaluation Lived Experience team whilst a regional partnership board was recruiting board members voluntarily to participate within decision making and a regional charity was advertising for Lived Experience volunteers to undertake consultations and involvement in strategic development.

'One of my bug bears with Lived Experience - I often see roles advertised as expert witnesses but they are not paid!! When should a volunteer be paid? We talk of valuing Lived Experience but don't pay. We have rules for example, if someone is paid to do a job we don't let them be volunteers for

a job that is very similar. There are no guidelines regarding paying for co production and professionals versus volunteer roles.' Local authority

7. How to collaborate with organisations that do not hold Lived Experience specialism

Some organisations collaborate with generic community organisations and wanted advice about how to offer assurance regarding the value of Lived Experience volunteers and how to challenge assumptions and concerns regarding Lived Experiences. The type of concerns were discussed in section 4.

8. Examples of emerging practice that has worked and top tips

Many organisations wanted examples that exemplified top tips and good practice. (It is possible this could be drawn upon from some of the data within this report, particularly sections 5 and 6)

9. Specific information to aid organisation's knowledge

There were 3 clear areas that participants required information upon:

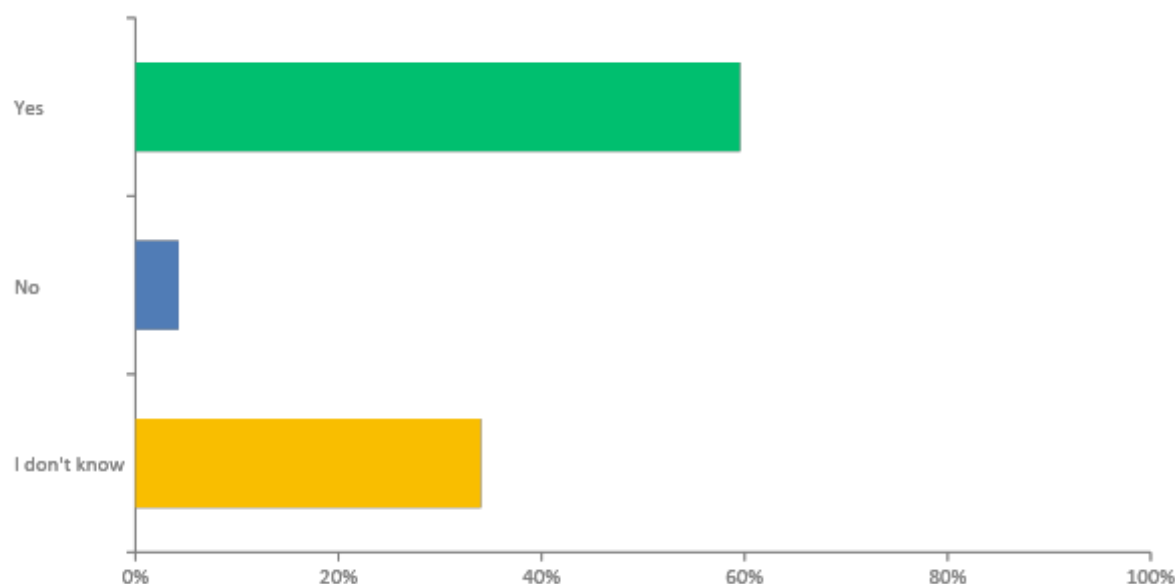
- a) Unconscious bias and its influence upon social interactions.
- b) Understanding the impact of Lived Experience. From dialogue, researchers interpret this as having some understanding of how to be trauma informed within the workplace, a level of understanding about triggers and trauma and how to avoid triggers without withdrawing opportunities.
- c) How to manage, rather than avoid, risk. Respondents cited safeguarding vigilance, creating individualised support plans for volunteers and risk assessments.

How do organisations want to receive the support they identified?

1. A Toolkit

The research specifically asked participants about whether they would use a toolkit and if it would be useful. Participants generally felt that a toolkit would be useful but that it needed to be able to convey a person-centred approach rather than be guidance that was presented as one approach fits all as volunteers may require different considerations depending on their type of Lived Experiences. A significant minority of organisations felt that their existing Lived Experience volunteers needed specialist support and a toolkit could not cover the diverse support needs they had.

The graph below details the 61 responses from the questionnaire, in response to the question, would you use a toolkit that has guidance and information to help you develop your own volunteer placements for people with Lived Experiences?



Many organisations had concerns about how a toolkit would balance generic and specific guidance, be applicable to a range of Lived Experiences, be applicable across sectors, be practical and usable and fit within their existing HR and volunteer processes. It was felt that it may be useful if it managed these balances, included the information detailed above and gave examples regarding emerging practice and top tips.

2. A national network for organisations specifically working with volunteers with Lived Experiences

This was called for directly by participants as opposed to being suggested to them and was mentioned in interviews and both focus groups. It was acknowledged that CVC's have networks for volunteering, but it was felt these are not focused upon the issues of Lived Experience and needed to stay generic. Additionally, many organisations worked across local authority areas and to different regional footprints and therefore could not attend multiple CVC networks and tended not to attend any.

Participants specifically said they wished to learn from each other and have information exchange about organisations supporting Lived Experience volunteers that were within the organisations field of expertise.

'I think having someone there to ask makes a big difference. Everyone is so busy. Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses. I can't say my strength is reading documents! I would much prefer to sit and chat with someone about it and ask them open questions'. Private sector

It was felt that this would enable them to learn from each other about Lived Experiences beyond their organisation's focus. In both focus groups participants said they had found the exchange invaluable and within interviews, participants said they wanted to know what other interviewees had said, to learn from them. There was also a strong feeling that a Lived Experienced volunteering network should be cross sector and open to both the statutory and private sectors.

'I would need to be made aware of what support is needed to support me to take on volunteers with Lived Experiences. It's tricky for small businesses to access support sometimes who don't have that HR capacity.' Private sector

'For smaller organisations like ours, it is wiser to collaborate with others.' Local charity

Conclusions

The findings are clear that organisations are eager for more information regarding Lived Experience volunteering and detail specific areas in which they would like that information. There was some general support for a toolkit; but with many provisos and recognition that a toolkit would need careful writing and consideration if it was to be practical and used. There was a high level of support for a network and information exchange to enable organisations in various sectors to learn from each other and share expertise.

It is possible that a network would be a pragmatic precursor to a toolkit.

SECTION 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This research set out to explore 5 research topics, as outlined in Section 1. This final section offers summary conclusions, with reference to each report section, to those 5 topics before outlining some recommendations.

Summary conclusion regarding the 5 research topics

- Find out what the available volunteering opportunities for People with Lived Experience are

As discussed in Section 4, there is no common definition of 'Lived Experience' within or across sectors. Additionally, any organisation, regardless of sector, had doubts about their ability to support people with Lived Experiences in volunteering if the Lived Experience was outside of the organisation's sphere of expertise. However, organisations also stated that many opportunities were open to everyone and assumed that included Lived Experiences. It is therefore difficult to assess exactly what opportunities are available in practice, and to whom. Section 3 explained that organisations in all sectors were grappling with the fundamental ethical considerations regarding what could be considered a volunteering opportunity; particularly in the context of DWP guidelines and The National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales clearly discussing remuneration for influencing and co productive work. Unpaid work placements are available in all sectors but there is a need for specific cross sector guidelines, or widening access to existing guidelines, regarding best practice in unpaid work placements, avoiding exploitation and ensuring skills development. Some organisations wanted to be able to accredit on job learning but found vocational qualifications difficult to navigate.

- Identify organisational attitudes and existing recruitment and personal development practices in relation to people with Lived Experience

There was diverse practice with regards to existing recruitment and personal development practice; because, in part, practice related to the volunteering role at hand. Recruitment tended to be either through established volunteering routes or bespoke. There was general consensus that volunteers must gain from their volunteering work; but what those gains were varied and included altruism, belonging and identity, soft skill development and work skill development. Section 5 outlined examples of emerging practice that helps shed clarity upon existing mechanisms and volunteering opportunities for people with Lived Experiences and outlines common processes that have worked for different organisations rather than a one size fits all model.

- Identify potential barriers in relation to recruiting people with Lived Experience into volunteer or unpaid placements.

The main barriers to recruiting people with Lived Experience were standardised HR processes, an apparent lack of knowledge regarding DBS checks and rehabilitation of offenders, and limited knowledge of how to support people with Lived Experiences who may need additional and specialist support.

As discussed in section 4, organisations were concerned about not meeting what volunteers may need due to scarcity of resources and knowledge and having to balance safeguarding people using services with offering volunteering opportunities. Section 5 offers some examples of how some organisations have overcome these barriers through diversifying roles available to include back office and non-delivery roles; and collaborating with organisations that have expertise.

As outlined in Section 7, participants felt a toolkit for information and guidance may be useful but would prefer to be networked across sectors so they can collaborate and learn from each other within a process rather than a static document. A network would also enable relationships between the sectors, joint definitions and practice to develop and take account of intersectionality whereby individuals may have multiple Lived Experiences.

- Ensure representation of private, public and third sector organisations to provide a comparable study of attitudes and volunteer recruitment across the 3 sectors to Lived Experience

There was a wealth of diverse expertise within the third sector, but the statutory sector organisations had good examples of how to enable volunteers to move easily between departments, opportunities and training. The private sector had a will to be involved in providing volunteering opportunities but more engagement is needed with the sector to ascertain more detail about the sector's strengths and training needs.

There needs to be development and networking to build lasting relationships and collaborations between the sectors, particularly in relation to the private sector. The lack of trust towards the private sector from some third sector organisations needs to be addressed. Additionally, there needs to be a clarity of language with different types of volunteering clearly defined and acknowledgement that all sectors contribute to volunteering opportunities to meet the aspirations of volunteers with Lived Experience. Based upon this research, there were three basic categories of volunteering none of which were commonly used or understood across all sectors. Firstly, we could identify 'unpaid work placements' to refer to opportunities that focus primarily upon work based skill development. Secondly, 'peer support volunteering' to refer to Lived Experience participation with peers within a service. Lastly, 'community focused volunteering' that involved supporting disparate or geographical communities.

Across all sectors attitudes to 'Lived Experience' were pragmatic, focusing upon having the resources and expertise to support individuals properly and trying to balance inclusive working with providing bespoke support. Across sectors, there were suggestions that collaboration with specialist organisations would be more effective than learning about each individual Lived Experience.

- **Identify any potential support needs organisations across different sectors may require to implement a Lived Experience Volunteering Model**

Based upon the evidence, it is not possible to suggest a one size fits all Lived Experience volunteering model, but rather guidance around: training and support with internal processes, overcoming barriers and training to support volunteers with Lived Experience that organisations should consider and resolve in relation to the volunteering opportunities they can provide. In summary, these are:

1. Have clear, tiered volunteering roles with expectations of both the volunteer and organisation defined and discussed. Ensure the roles are properly managed and supervised.
2. Be person centred so there is flexibility and bespoke opportunity.
3. Enable development- work, personal and social networks development can sit alongside altruist motivations for undertaking volunteering.
4. If an organisation does not hold specific expertise of a particular Lived Experience collaborate with an organisation that does have that expertise.
5. Implement rehabilitation of offenders and ensure DBS alerts are handled on a case by case basis. Where possible, offer back roles that are not public facing if a DBS alert creates concern.
6. Be trauma informed to ensure volunteers with Lived Experience are in a position to be able to volunteer to the intensity on offer and are not going to be re-triggered.

Recommendations

Based upon these findings, there are some clear recommendations that can be made to the commissioners of this research.

1. Reach out and build relationships with organisations in regions and sectors that were not well represented within this research. Specifically, this includes the private sector in all areas, local organisations in Mid and North Wales, heritage culture and arts organisations and environmental organisations.
2. Consider a national, cross network for organisations supporting volunteers with Lived Experiences. This will enable learning through shared practice, greater understanding of intersectionality and how to support multiple Lived Experiences in practice. This could form an advisory forum for the development of a toolkit.
3. Whilst organisations were cautiously positive about a toolkit, there are some key definitions and processes that need to be shared regarding emerging practice and Lived Experience volunteering. Specifically, this should cover rehabilitation of offenders act and DBS alerts, creative HR processes that are accessible and inclusive, a definition of Lived Experience that is applicable regardless of an organisation's specialism and different types of volunteering that are applicable cross sector. Participants also requested case studies or examples of practice, although the findings of this research suggest this should focus upon process and ethical considerations rather than a task based model.
4. Lived Experience researchers felt there was room for a training package to accompany either a network or a toolkit. This should offer basic information to organisations and be applicable cross-sector. Suggested modules included an introduction to trauma informed practice, mental health first aid, how to practically offer flexible volunteering, asset-based management and real examples from existing practice.
5. Micro organisations in all sectors cannot resource a volunteer coordinator or manager. To enable them to provide opportunities for people with Lived Experiences it could be possible for CVC's or other third sector organisations to provide Lived Experience volunteer management consultants. This would enable organisations to 'buy in' capacity to provide expert pastoral support for their volunteers. The role could work similarly to the co productive approach taken within this research (even though this project was within a paid capacity) whereby St Giles Trust worked collaboratively with C.A.R.P. Collaborations to ensure that Lived Experience researchers had both personal support and employment development.

6. There could be collaborative work with Agored Cymru to enable vocational qualifications to be easier to implement and access.

APPENDIX: REFLECTIONS UPON THE CO PRODUCTION PROCESS

Academic researchers' reflections

1. Collaboration to ensure Lived Experience researchers wellbeing is imperative and requires positive and regular communication between the organisations involved. Having clearly defined responsibilities was helpful to ensure Lived Experience researchers had seamless support within their employment.
2. Lived Experience researchers need to be involved at every stage. For example, the design and analysis was more valid and effective because of their individual insights.
3. It is possible to design research stages that do not require continual participation of all team members. This ensures that Lived Experience researchers had flexibility in terms of how much work they undertook and in what areas. All training needs to be bespoke and asset based. Flexibility included being available weekends or evenings due to other commitments the team may have.
4. If time is limited or pressured, work with the whole team to decide what is most important. We did not have time for in depth whole team analysis. Therefore Lived Experience researchers 'sense checked' the emerging themes and were involved in deciding recommendations.
5. Where needed, stress within reports or write up the points that were most important to Lived Experience researchers. Whilst our team had consensus, this approach enables different interpretations, or emphasis, to be presented within a qualitative report.

Reflections from Lived Experience researchers

1. Limited engagement within some regions and other schedule commitments meant that Lived Experience researchers did not participate in fieldwork as much as they would have liked to. However, they enjoyed collaborating and asking questions to create the narrative.
2. Having options to shadow, co deliver or observe and write notes during interviews and focus groups enabled Lived Experience researchers with different levels of confidence and experience to choose their own level of participation and intensity.
3. Having different stages broke the research process down to manage parts. One Lived Experience researcher particularly welcomed the option to not participate in every stage but to be able to pick and choose.
4. Sense checking the analysis worked because there were still in depth conversations and they could pull out what was important according to their own Lived Experiences.
5. Research and evaluation are really hard spheres to get into if you have not had the opportunity to go university. Offering Lived Experience research opportunities with bespoke training is valuable.
6. Co production takes time, but delays in process can feel demoralising. Once the research was underway the C.A.R.P. research team was responsive to questions and reassuring about the skills needed.