

Evaluation Of A Volunteer Bureau

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EVALUATION OF A VOLUNTEER BUREAU

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Contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	4
Chapter 1: Introduction	5
Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review	10
Chapter 3: Methodology	50
Chapter 4: Findings	76
Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion of Findings	118
Chapter 6: Conclusion	145
Appendices	157
References	191

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ABSTRACT

Volunteer Bureaux have been established in the UK since the mid-1960s. Known, too, as Volunteer Centres, or Local Volunteer Development Agencies, they are a resource both for volunteers & for organisations that require their services. Yet, there is little evaluative research about them.

This original, exploratory study examines how one Bureau assisted some persons to begin new voluntary activity. Their motivation is at the heart of the research. Through its response to them, and to organisations that include volunteers, the researcher evaluates the Bureau's contribution to its local community.

The views of several individuals and organisations provide evidence, which is compared with the Bureau's perception. This is presented with verbatim quotations, and other, factual information. A combination of different methods and variety of sources forms the base of this study.

Findings support the view that volunteering is for persons of a wide age range, and from different positions in life. They suggest that both volunteers' motivation and other influences affect their commitment. Findings also suggest that bureaux attract persons from marginalised groups.

Helping such people, especially unemployed ones, may have political implications. However, promoting volunteering through government-initiated work programmes may not increase the number of those who are not already committed to it.

Organisations that provide volunteering opportunities are key partners with bureaux, in enabling enquirers to participate. These organisations benefit from the services of bureaux, too. Yet, communication is sometimes a problem, because of the limited resources that bureaux have for wide responsibilities. This study shows how the Bureau fulfilled its role, despite these constraints.

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I dedicate this study to my late husband, Ken.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There was a climate of informal helping in the farming, village and church communities where I grew up, during the 1939-45 war. At school, university and later on, I took part in voluntary activities through organisations, chiefly local branches of national ones. These included assisting with fund-raising events for Shelter and acting as secretary for a group of Christian Aid supporters. Early in my professional career, I was employed as a caseworker at a small branch of the Family Welfare Association. This widened my perspective on volunteering.

Reasons for this research

The opening of a new volunteer bureau in the town where I was employed drew my attention, as a project that would be worth a study. There were hopes for this venture locally, as well as questions about whether or not they would be fulfilled. The manager ('Y') shared my interest. By invitation, I represented the social services department on its committee, so I had access both to inside knowledge and an outside perspective. During the course of the study the focus changed, to show a more rounded picture.

National context

In the next chapter, I describe the resurgence of volunteering at the end of the twentieth century, after many years of its eclipse by the welfare state. This research encompasses the early years of the New Labour government. It took a different approach from its Labour predecessors and followed earlier Conservative ones, in using the voluntary sector to complement state provisions.

Local context

Midville and Griffon, where this study took place, are neighbouring towns situated in the industrial part of a shire county. Together, they form one county borough that has its base in Midville, which is about twice the size of Griffon. However, each town has a separate identity. In 1991, the combined population was 115,643, and was projected to rise to 119,500, by the year 2000. The main industries of both towns were formerly coal mining and textile manufacturing. Recent closure of the last mines increased unemployment in the area.

The Centres

At the time of this project, the Volunteer Bureau ('the Bureau') was based in Midville, at the Council for Voluntary Service, from which it had started. Two years before this study began, a second bureau was opened in Griffton, at the request of borough councillors, and under the sponsorship of the social services department. It replaced an earlier one that had been closed, because it was deemed not to fulfil the role of a volunteer bureau.

Both centres shared a building with a few small, voluntary organisations, some of which had minor roles in this research. Two of them sometimes hired the Bureau's room, during the study period. Two others, one of which was co-ordinated by the Bureau's manager Y, were affiliated to it.

Griffton's two-roomed, single-storey premises were near to the town's main shopping centre. Before its official opening, the building was adapted for wheelchair users. Though the base in Midville was on the ground floor, the base in Griffton was more suitable for disabled persons.

Structure of dissertation

This text comprises four main chapters. The contents of these are: a review of relevant literature (chapter two), an explanation of the methodology used for the research (chapter three), and a presentation of its findings (chapter four). The fifth chapter is an analysis and discussion of the main findings.

At the beginning of the second chapter, I draw on several authors to define the language about voluntarism that I use. Then, I explain the conceptual framework, derived from various psychological and sociological theories of volunteering, that guides this study. Next, I consider theories of organisations and particular characteristics of voluntary ones.

An outline of the historical background of volunteering in England follows, in two sections. The first summarises the history of the voluntary sector, from 1945, and the second considers some of the writing and research about volunteering, at the

end of the twentieth century. Then, I examine some recent and current government programmes. Finally, I review the studies of volunteer bureaux that influenced mine.

The third chapter is in two parts. The first traces the formulation and development of the research proposal, and the methodology to carry it out. The second describes, and evaluates, its implementation.

In the first section, I explain my theoretical approach to the study. Next, I recount the steps that I took, in forming and developing the research proposal: to evaluate the Bureau from the perspective of volunteers and of agencies that involve them. Then, I describe the instruments that were required, in order to obtain the information to implement the proposal. Before planning the details, I undertook a feasibility study, to ascertain whether or not the research could be done, and what modifications were necessary.

Next comes the research design. This includes such matters as the population unit (which persons, and how many, should be the subjects of the enquiry), and what its structure should be. Then, I detail the procedures for gathering the information, chiefly through interviews. There are two interviews with the volunteers, one of which was soon after their first contact with the Bureau, and the second, about six months later. There is a third interview with the agencies. I state the provisions for requesting the participants' consent, on ethical grounds, to their inclusion in the research. After that, I assess the strengths and weaknesses of the overall plan that were then apparent.

In the second part of chapter three, I describe the implementation of the research proposal. This comprises the preparation of the interview schedules and other research tools. I recount the next stages, leading to the data gathering, before which I undertook 'pilot' studies of each schedule. After this, I describe how I identified the sample population. Lastly, I state which systems I used for processing and coding the data.

Towards the end of chapter three, I review the problems and constraints that I encountered. In the last section, I discuss the concepts of validity and reliability in

social research and acknowledge the potential for bias, in mine. I complete the chapter with an appraisal of the methodology.

In the fourth chapter, I present the findings from the two interviews with the volunteers (schedules I and II) , and the one with the agencies (schedule III)].

In the first schedule, I describe the social and economic characteristics of the volunteers. These show a relatively high proportion of respondents from groups that are generally under-represented in volunteering, particularly unemployed ones. The latter suggests some political influence, which I explore, later in the text.

Then, I attempt to classify the volunteer's motivation, for which, I use two main categories. The largest of these reflects their personal interests, from the need for a job to leisure activities. Altruism is also a motive for some. After that, I state their reasons for coming to the Bureau, and how they perceived its initial response.

The second interviews demonstrate how the Bureau and the agencies that it recommended to them, encouraged them to become involved, and to continue their involvement. A subsidiary question is: Do bureaux attract new recruits who are likely to remain, throughout their lives?

In the second section, I re-visit their motivation, from a different angle, through a questionnaire based on *The National Surveys* (Lynn and Davis Smith, 1991; Davis Smith, 1998). The findings emphasise my subjects' impetus to find employment. Next, I take another look at how they experienced the Bureau's response, and that of the agencies.

In the third section, I present the main findings about the agencies' perception of their relationship with the Bureau, and its fulfilment of its responsibilities to them. The latter shows how the Bureau aimed to encourage them to fulfil their obligations to volunteers. Next, I recount their experience of the volunteers who came to them through the Bureau.

There follows information about the agencies' communication with the Bureau. Their emphasis on recruitment points to a lack of understanding about the Bureau's

developmental role. I conclude with their suggestions for improvements in two-way relationships between them and the Bureau.

The fifth chapter is an exploration of the main themes that emerge from the findings. This is supplemented by material from the interviews with managers Y and Z.

In the first section of the fifth chapter, I re-consider the volunteers' social and psychological motivation. This includes discussion of the relative importance of altruism and personal interest. Their social characteristics suggest that the Bureau provides a service to groups that are under-represented in volunteering, particularly unemployed and disabled persons. However, its involvement with unemployed people inevitably raises political questions.

Following this, I examine how the Bureau fulfilled its role of motivating and supporting volunteers. The last section, with the focus on its responsibilities to the agencies, draws attention to the Bureau's divided loyalties. Finally, I scrutinise the difficulties in two-way communication between the Bureau and the agencies.

From this research, I anticipate a small contribution to the largely unexplored territory of volunteering through bureaux. In the next chapter, I examine the resources that were available for me, at the outset.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework and A Review of Literature on Volunteering and on Bureaux

Focus, purpose and content

Volunteering is an important part of British life, as about half of the population takes part in formal voluntary work every year. Even more participate in informal voluntary activity (Lynn and Davis Smith, 1993 and Davis Smith, 1998a). However, the latter is not the subject of this study. This research concerns the Midville and Griffon Volunteer Bureau, whose main function is to promote formal volunteering. There are over 440 of these organisations in England (Penberthy, 2002).

The purpose of this review was to explore a conceptual framework of motivation, and to place the research in its historical, political and social context. It was also a search for larger studies in which I could embed mine, or any smaller ones to which I might compare it. The latter quest was disappointing, although I came across a few useful publications.

In this review, I cover some of the definitions of volunteering, and theories of motivation and of voluntary organisations. I summarise the recent history of the voluntary sector in its relationship with the state and trace the inception of volunteer bureaux. I then consider publications that provide a context to this study at the end of the twentieth century. I look at literature on volunteers, chiefly on groups that are under-represented in voluntary activity. Next, I examine some current issues, including government measures to promote volunteering. Finally, I review literature that I found on volunteer bureaux themselves.

Definitions

'The literature on definitions' of the voluntary enterprise 'is huge'(Perri 6, 1995, p. 132). Writers agree that there is confusion about meanings, due to lack of a clear terminology (Sheard, 1995). This is because the concept of voluntarism originates in 'pragmatic policy making' rather than in academic discipline (Marshall, 1977, p.5).

Imprecision allows opportunities for the manipulation of concepts, for example by the media or politicians, so it is important to understand the language.

This subject is discussed by several authors in *An Introduction to the Voluntary Sector*, in particular by Kendall and Knapp, who 'suggest that there is no single "correct" definition' (1995, p. 4). Marshall, while acknowledging that there are inconsistencies, provides definitions for the purpose of the Home Office sponsored surveys of local voluntary activity, discussed later in this review (1997, p.5). For the key words in this text, I have drawn on several authors, including Marshall.

I have found no definition of **voluntary** in the literature. That is because, as Knight points out, it is an adjective and should be understood together with the noun it describes (1993, p. 65). Among the meanings of the word in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* ('SOED') are 'free will' and the notion of 'choice'. It can be the opposite of 'statutory' ('appointed by statute, or legal provision by the state'). Knight explains the importance of the two meanings of 'free' (1993, p. 69). He states that: 'The first...relates to the will (and is contrasted with compulsion); the second is related to money (and is contrasted with being paid)' (1993, p. 69). He comments that: 'This distinction...is commonly overlooked, so that there is confusion between a voluntary worker (who fulfils both senses of free) and a worker in a voluntary organisation (who fulfils only the first condition)'. This comment is useful for elucidating some of my findings, since a few of my respondents were under a government scheme.

Marshall defines **volunteering** as 'voluntary activity through the auspices of any organisation', explaining that, in some texts, statutory bodies are excluded (1997, p 5). Sheard (1995) considers the traditional definition inadequate in its emphasis on three elements: 'the gift of time,...free choice and the lack of payment.' He takes as his working definition any activity that is 'unpaid...freely chosen...done through the medium of an organisation and...for the benefit of others or the environment as well as oneself' (1995, pp. 115-116). Blacksell and Phillips (1983, p. 9) disagree that volunteering necessarily excludes payment, a controversial issue that will be considered later in this review. Marshall allows for some financial reward in his

description of **voluntary action or activity** as 'individual action undertaken neither for payment primarily nor for personal gratification alone' (1997, p. 5). He defines **voluntary work** as 'voluntary activity that provides a service on behalf of others.'

Underlying the notion of volunteering are the concepts of philanthropy: 'an action which promotes the well-being of others' (Prochaska, 1988, p. 7) and charity. The two words have the same basic meaning: 'love towards others; 'love of our fellows' (SOED) and are often used interchangeably. However, charity also has a specific meaning in British law. It is classified by its 'purposes': for 'the relief of poverty, the advancement of religion, the advancement of education and other purposes beneficial to the community' (Rochester, 1995, p. 202). But Marshall (1997) points out that, although volunteering and voluntary action are mainly about 'doing good', at least as perceived by the provider, they may also be harmful.

A **volunteer** is generally assumed to be someone who undertakes voluntary work, regardless of the fact that in other contexts "volunteer" may have a pejorative sense (Williams, 1978, p. 32). Darvill and Munday's working definition is: 'a person who voluntarily provides an unpaid, direct service for one or more other persons to whom the volunteer is not related...normally through some...formal scheme' (1984, p. 3). The Aves Committee does not give a precise definition (Brenton, 1985, p. 44). It uses 'volunteer' and '**voluntary worker**' synonymously while recognising that, in other contexts, the meanings might be 'somewhat different' (Aves, 1969, p. 19). I have found that, generally, these terms are used interchangeably.

Earlier in this section, I note that 'voluntary' can mean the opposite of 'statutory'. This fits Marshall's description of **the voluntary sector**: 'that constellation of activities which are determined neither by the generation of profit nor by statutory entitlement' (1997, p.5). It adds a further dimension, which distinguishes the voluntary from the commercial sector.

Marshall describes a **voluntary organisation** as: 'any organisation...operating in the voluntary sector' (1997, p. 5). This tautology is insufficient for my purpose, so I expand on the concept later in this review.

The words **organisation**, 'an organised body, system or society' (SOED), and **agency**, 'an establishment where business is done for another' (SOED), are often used synonymously. 'Agency' is more common in recent literature.

A **Volunteer Bureau** is the British term for an organisation which promotes local volunteering, although individual agencies may have other names. Generically, it is called an 'intermediary body' (Wolfenden, 1978, p. 100). From about 2004, many bureaux have been renamed 'Volunteer Centres,' and, 'Volunteer Development Agencies.'

These definitions, and others which are not included here for the sake of brevity, indicate the diversity of the notion of voluntarism. The important distinctions between volunteering, voluntary work, and voluntary organisations are often confused (Marshall, 1997; Deakin Report, 1996, P. 1). 'Kendall and...Knapp suggest that...the approach to be adopted should depend on the purpose for which the exercise is being undertaken' (1995, p. 4). Here, I have selected those which I consider appropriate for this study.

Conceptual Framework

Understanding why people volunteer to help others may be a clue to the nature of voluntary activity. Theories of motivation divide into several types, depending on the authors' perception of the nature and goal of the action. These comprise altruism, personal interest, exchange theories and social control. The question centres on the concept of altruism: 'regard for others as a principle of action' and its opposite egoism: 'regard to one's own interest' (SOED).

Over the past forty years there has been considerable interest in the study of altruism, or 'helping behaviour', particularly in psychology and related fields (Rushton and Sorrentino, p. 1). It is useful to consider some of these theories, in so far as they are relevant to this study. Hatch comments that, 'The justification for social research is usually expressed in terms of problems' and argues that it is actually 'rightness and virtue that *do* need explanation' (1983, pp. 7-8). Research into altruism has been mostly based on the assumption that there is no altruism without self-interest. Batson and Coke (1981) argue that it is possible to distinguish altruistic motives, which are concerned only with the welfare of another, from egoistic ones where personal gain is paramount. They also comment that: 'Motivation for helping can be a mixture of altruism and egoism; it need not be solely or even primarily altruistic to have an altruistic component' (1981, p. 173). Indeed, a beneficial outcome may also result from a self-interested impulse (Roger Smith, pers. comm.).

Studies of the response to strangers in need are relevant to my research. Titmuss analyses the reasons, expressed by British donors, for giving blood. Unlike their counterparts in the USA and other countries, they are not paid. Most of the British donors expressed moral reasons: altruism, obligation to society (1970, p. 242) and a social and biological need to help others. Titmuss comments that giving blood anonymously assumes a social distance between the giver and the receiver (1970, p. 216).

The initial situation of those who offer their services through bureaux is somewhat like that of blood donors, in that they do not know those who will receive their help. Leat (1983) discusses social distance, contrasting volunteering with being a 'good neighbour.' She claims that neighbourly helping involves the negotiation of boundaries between sociability on the one hand, and privacy and independence on the other. She argues that these factors create tensions between the helper and the other person. She suggests that the relative formality of an agency removes some of these tensions, which makes it a preferred option for some (1983, p. 60). It also gives more choice in ways of helping (Roger Smith, pers. comm.).

Two qualitative studies, one by Sherrott (1983) and the other by Mostyn (1983), explore motivation from a different angle. Indeed, Sherrott rejects the concept of motivation, which he considers is linked to psycho-analysis and does not consider volunteers as 'whole people' (1983, p. 64). Instead, he uses the word 'explanation' in his presentation of findings from in-depth interviews with fifty persons, selected from five volunteer-using organisations. He explores the biographical and social factors which led to their involvement. However, he does divide their responses into two broad categories, while noting that his respondents 'only rarely offered one explanation (1983 p. 64). These are: 'instrumental' (p. 65) and 'moral and normative', which equate approximately with 'self-interested' and 'altruistic'. Some of his findings have echoes in mine: for instance, instrumental ones like 'the enhancement of employment prospects' (Sherrott, 1983, pp. 75-82) and moral and normative ones, such as 'a duty to society' (pp. 129-137).

The purpose of Mostyn's research (1983) was to enable the Volunteer Centre¹ to formulate a working definition of voluntary work, with particular reference to what the average person means by this term. In two geographical areas, Mostyn investigated the views of forty-six persons, drawn from all social classes. A little over half of them were involved with their local volunteer bureau. Her subjects constructed a 'hierarchy' of voluntary activities, representing their perception of the value of each type to society. She classifies these under the headings of 'Altruistic' (to which they assigned the highest value), 'Helping people in distress,' 'Giving aid to the less fortunate', 'Improving society' and 'Self interest' (which they held in the least esteem). Examples of the first are kidney and blood donors and of the last, party political activities. Those in which the volunteers in my sample were, or wished to be involved, fall into the three middle categories, for instance: 'visiting the elderly', 'befriending' and 'youth leaders' (Mostyn, 1983, pp. 43-45). Using their classification would mean that neither altruism nor self interest would figure in my findings. While I disagree with some of their views, on the grounds that they appear too narrow, this 'consumer' perspective, if it reflects the attitudes of the general public, is salutary. Both of these studies demonstrate the problem of classifying qualitative material, a difficulty that I also encountered, as I demonstrate in the 'findings'.

¹ In 2004, the Volunteer Centre amalgamated with the National Association for Volunteer Bureaux, to form 'Volunteering England'.

Theories about exchanging gifts, or other material commodities, have also been cited to explain why people help each other. These are different from the 'free gift...to unnamed strangers' discussed earlier (Titmuss, 1970, p. 239). Exchange theories assume that human social relationships begin with, and are regulated by exchange, as a system of rewards and punishments. This may take less tangible forms, like approval or disapproval (Handel, 1993). A development of these theories, the concept of reciprocity, assumes that there is some mutuality between those involved in the relationship. Staub suggests that, although a relationship may start without the expectation of any return, it does not usually continue without it (1974) Indeed, there is evidence that reciprocity is preferred to indebtedness (Staub, 1974, pp. 343-350).

Exchange theories may shed some light on the nature of volunteering through bureaux. Sherrott (1983) quotes examples of those who claimed that they experienced satisfaction from actually helping another. These theories may also contribute to our understanding of the relationship between volunteers and their agencies.

Writers are in accord that motives for helping are often mixed. For example, the Aves Committee found that these included 'an element of altruism', 'self-interest' and 'sociability' (1969 pp. 41-2). Indeed, Titmuss found that none of the donors' responses was entirely altruistic (1970, p. 43). The Aves Committee did not consider it a problem that volunteers should find 'some of their own needs fulfilled through the work which they do'. They commented that it was 'dangerous only if the worker's needs...become paramount, and ... submerge those of the people who the work is intended to benefit' (1969, p 43). Indeed, about half of Sherrott's respondents 'explained their volunteering in terms of [its] tangible benefits' (1983, p. 65). And Davis Smith noted that: 'Young people were...far more likely to play down the altruistic motives to volunteer and to highlight the self-interested or instrumental reasons- learning new skills, helping with job search and the like' (1998, p. 158).

Some believe that social control is often behind giving, for example, Stedman Jones (1971, pp. 251- 2). In commenting on the rationale behind nineteenth century

philanthropy, he explored the view that a gift, even when it is sacrificial, also confers prestige on the giver and obligation on the recipient. Thus, he argues, the middle classes were able to perpetuate the control over the lower classes that had previously been held under feudalism by the aristocracy. Ward, looking at the motivation of workers of the 'Waifs and Strays' Society (now, 'The Children's Society') between 1887 and 1894, describes how 'few gifts of time, money or effort are entirely disinterested' (1990, p. ii). She investigated how the Society's personnel, drawn largely from the upper classes, exercised their power over the children of poor people, often for seemingly altruistic motives.

Davis Smith discusses the 'social control thesis' which 'has provoked serious disagreement among historians' (1995, p. 17). Some regard voluntary initiatives as a means of moral and social indoctrination and control of working people by the middle classes (Davis Smith, 1995, p. 18). Prochaska disagrees with this view, pointing out that the notion of social hierarchy was a basic assumption in the nineteenth century (1988, p. 31). He suggests that other motives, such as a sense of community, or religious and moral ideals, often inspired ordinary and poor people to help others. He describes how the working classes, albeit the skilled ones, were often a major source of voluntary workers (1988, pp. 41-58). Opponents of social control theories argue that they are over-simplified, ignoring the part of the working classes in the voluntary movement, both in their participation and in the benefits they gained. Davis Smith concludes that, while there may be some truth in this thesis with regard to the nineteenth century, the 'new philanthropy' of the present day has a different function, as 'agent of democratic participation' (1995, p. 36). However, the controversy is still alive: although individuals may be inspired by altruism, social control may be behind government initiatives to promote volunteering, an issue which I discuss later.

Why do they volunteer?

Sherrott comments that there is 'little systematic knowledge about why people volunteer or the part volunteering plays in their lives' (1983, p. 62). Wardell (1997) found that her subjects' reasons both for volunteering and for ending their commitment were varied and personal. Sherrott discovered that chance often

determined why some of his respondents undertook voluntary activity rather than other pursuits (1983, p. 100). Thomas and Finch support this conclusion: 'The majority of people appear to become volunteers almost by accident: through everyday circumstances and activities' (1990, p. 39). Many have been brought along through personal contact (Aves, 1969, p. 40) and, most often, because they were 'asked' (Mostyn, 1983, p. 30; Thomas and Finch 1990, p. 27). Much of the research on volunteering has concentrated on motivation. But it is likely that many factors, both personal and environmental, contribute to an individual's decision to participate.

Organisations

Earlier, I defined my understanding of organisations for the purpose of this study. Blau and Scott described an organisation as people 'organised into a social unit...for the...purpose of achieving certain goals' (1963, p.1).

This dissertation concerns a 'formal' organisation, and not those that happen naturally, like family or friendship groups (Blau and Scott, 1993, pp. 2-5). These authors analysed research findings on aspects of formal organisations, starting from the social relationships between members. They considered ways in which the groups acquired a metaphorical 'structure' through the status attributed to individuals by their different roles (1963, p.4). They examined how shared beliefs led to common values which were the basis for the organisations' 'goal' (1963, pp. 4-5). They also explored how groups were influenced by their environment and affected it, both internally and externally. Within, they were moulded not only by formal relationships among members of work groups, but also by informal ones among those persons. Outside, they related to their public (Blau and Scott, 1963, p 59). The focus in this thesis is on the relationship between a volunteer bureau and the 'public' with whom it is in direct contact: volunteers and the organisations that the Bureau serves.

Although organisations are very different from each other, there are also similarities. Blau and Scott classified them according to their 'prime beneficiaries': those who gain the most from them (1963, pp. 42-43). Examples of these are groups that help their members ('mutual benefit'), like Alcoholics Anonymous and 'service

organisations', like hospitals, which are expected to be concerned mainly with their clients. This is a simplified version of Blau and Scott's classification. In practice, organisations do not have only one function. Voluntary organisations, in particular, do not fit neatly into these categories. However, as I show further on in this review, Wolfenden (1978) adapted Blau and Scott's classification in order to describe voluntary organisations.

Blau and Scott's views are based on systems theory, which implies an ordered world view. Silverman (1970) argues that their explanation does not entirely fit the realities of everyday life. Instead, he proposes an 'action' theory: that organisations are the 'ever-changing product of the self-interested actions of their members' (1970, pp. 39-40). His perspective modifies the rigidity of systems theory. Nonetheless, as research has shown, people can be motivated by goals that they set themselves (Handy, 1988, p. 31). Indeed, the Midville and Griffon Bureau has formulated its own statement of aims and objectives for its Constitution (*Governing Document*, 1998²). However, although most theories of voluntary organisations draw on systems theory, both types give insights for my study.

Voluntary organisations

Voluntary organisations, a subgroup of formal ones, share the same characteristics. Their chief differences are in their history and in their culture (Handy, 1988, pp. 83-85). In the previous section, I discuss some of the beliefs that motivate individuals. These illustrate the variety of values that underpin voluntary agencies (Paton, 1996). Values alter imperceptibly over time, and this may give rise to conflicts (Paton, 1996, p. 31). However, conflict within an organisation may bring about change, which can be healthy if it produces growth (Blau and Scott, 1963, p. 240).

Outside influences cause changes within organisations, as well. Indeed, this has been the history of the voluntary sector, particularly in its relationships with the state, as I show in the next section. In the past there was a clearer distinction between voluntary, statutory and private organisations, but this has become 'blurred', with increasing interdependence and overlapping (Knight, 1993, p. 4; Osborne, 1998, p. 18). On the other hand, Marshall disputes that there was ever a clear demarcation

² For reasons of confidentiality, I do not include this document in the References.

between sectors (1996 p. 58). He also observes that 'many voluntary organisations do not "employ" volunteers, apart from their trustees' and that 'there are vast numbers of volunteers working on behalf of, or organised by statutory' agencies (1996, p. 48).

It is difficult to generalise about voluntary organisations, because of their wide differences. However, there have been a few attempts to classify them by common features. Wolfenden described four categories, based on those who are intended to benefit from them (1978, p. 39). One of these is: 'those whose services are chiefly to other organisations, rather than individuals'. The Wolfenden Committee called these 'intermediary bodies' (1978, p. 39). Examples are: Volunteering England or, at a local level, Councils for Voluntary Service and Volunteer Bureaux.

This study centres on the latter organisations, specifically those that operate in particular geographical localities throughout Britain, where they 'support and encourage voluntary activity' within their areas (Osborne, 1999a, p. 1).

Functions of intermediaries

The Wolfenden Committee identified five main functions of intermediary bodies (1978, pp. 110-111). These are:

- development
- services to other organisations
- liaison
- representation, often of 'the voluntary to the statutory sector' and
- direct services to individuals.

The first two are 'core functions' of the Midville and Griffon Bureau, as indeed of other bureaux (Kara, 2001). The Bureau practises liaison as part of other activities,

as the Wolfenden Committee advised; it does not offer direct services to individuals. However, the Committee did not consider the provision of direct services an intermediary function (Wolfenden 1978, pp. 110-111).

The Wolfenden Committee discovered that functions varied in accordance with local needs and considered that it was appropriate for these organisations to prioritise their limited resources. This flexibility is relevant to the Bureau's implementation of its objectives, which I examine later in this dissertation.

Osborne comments that the 'potential significance [of intermediary bodies]' as co-ordinators of the local voluntary sector and as a key link to the statutory [one], was only fully recognised...with the publication of the Wolfenden Report' (1999a, p. 1). He describes three types of intermediaries. I note two of these types, because they show the place of bureaux among them (1999, p.1). He calls the first 'generalist,' for example Councils for Voluntary Service, which provide services to voluntary and community organisations. Indeed, the Midville Bureau originated in the local Council for Voluntary Service. He described the second as 'functional', like Volunteer Bureaux, which offer a specific service to other organisations.

Research about these agencies has grown since the Wolfenden report, particularly from the 1980s, although as part of larger works (Osborne 1999a, p. 3). Most authors added their support for volunteer bureaux, but some criticised the agencies' performance, for example Knight (1993, p. xiii). Osborne examined the work of eighteen of these agencies, including eight volunteer bureaux, in four areas of England, between 1997 and 1998. His findings indicated that, in order to be effective, these bodies should be 'sensitive to their context and respond to it' (1999a, p. 19). Some of the areas that he emphasised as needing attention relate to themes that I explore in my own research. These are: the provision of information, and communication with other local voluntary and community organisations.

Acknowledgement of the importance of bureaux has increased in government circles, where it is estimated that about 70 per cent of voluntary and community organisations are local. But the latter are dominated, in funding terms, by a subset of large, national ones (HM Treasury, 2002). Local intermediary bodies may play a

crucial part in the government's reform of and investment in local communities (Home Office, 1989).

In the next section, I look at the historical and political background of the voluntary sector, which led to the situation that I consider here.

The Voluntary Sector, 1945-2000

Central to the understanding of the role of voluntary organisations in Britain is the appreciation of their relationship with the state. The focus in this review is on the relationship of voluntary organisations with the 'personal social services'. These aim to help those who are at a disadvantage in society on account of such matters as age or disability (Wolfenden, 1978, p. 12). It is in this area that much voluntary and statutory activity still overlaps.

There has been a long tradition of philanthropic action in Britain alongside informal, public and commercial provision for those who were unable to maintain themselves (Wolfenden, 1978, pp. 20-21; Brenton, 1985, pp. 15-19). In the second half of the nineteenth century, voluntary societies developed a lead role, supplementing and often overlapping with poor relief. Over the years, there have been several moves to remedy duplication and gaps both within and between the statutory and voluntary sectors (Prochaska, 1988 p 35). I comment on these chiefly from 1945 and in so far as they are relevant to my study.

During the latter part of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, central and local governments gradually took over functions from the poor law, and other *ad hoc* bodies. These changes prepared for the reforms of the 'Welfare State' (Timmins, 1995, p. 6).

With the expectation of comprehensive financial and social welfare provisions by the state, there was uncertainty about the future role of the voluntary sector in this field. Indeed, Beveridge (1948) envisaged a continuing place for it. However, Wolfenden observes that, until the late 1950s, the sector appeared 'in some ways to have been marking time,' while it absorbed the implications of greater public involvement (1978,

p. 20). Yet, later social commentators suggest that, until the mid-1970s, both sectors expanded at approximately the same rate (Hedley and Davis Smith, 1994, p. 8).

By the 1960s, it was evident that there were 'serious gaps in social provision' (Morris, 1969, p. 212). These were caused, at least in part, by a lack of co-ordination between the work of the various bodies engaged in social welfare. This has been a main concern in social policy from the 1960s (Johnson, 1981, pp. 122-125). The government's response was to reorganise the statutory social services into one department, following the Seebohm Report (HMSO, 1968). Partnership between the statutory social services and voluntary organisations was encouraged, but it was seldom equal (Brenton, 1985).

In the late nineteenth century, voluntary organisations, such as precursors of Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) had been initiated, with the aim of co-ordinating voluntary activity, both within the voluntary sector itself and between it and the statutory sector (Prochaska, 1989). As noted earlier, Wolfenden called these 'intermediary bodies' (1978, p. 100).

In the late 1960's, there was renewed interest from the government in the contribution of volunteers. During that decade, individuals came forward in greater numbers (Sheard, 1992). Indeed, the gaps in the welfare services would have been worse without them (Morris, 1969, p. 212). This gave rise to the Seebohm Committee's belief that there was 'a large, untapped supply' of them (HMSO, 1968, para. 498). The Aves Committee stated that 'voluntary work has an essential place in the development of the social services' (1969, p. 169). However, it considered that voluntary activity should be better organised (Aves, 1969, p. 93; Davis Smith, 1996, pp. 189-190). 'Impressed by the value of volunteer bureaux', this committee recommended that there 'should be a comprehensive network of them', for this purpose (1969 p. 196). This led to the inception of more volunteer bureaux, under the auspices of the National Centre for Volunteering (now Volunteering England). The latter was founded with Home Office grants in the early 1970s (Brenton, 1985, pp. 46 and 47). These new, local organisations were often part of Councils for Voluntary Service.

With the growing realisation that the state could not meet the needs of all its citizens from its own resources, the attitudes of governments during the latter part of the twentieth century continued to alter in favour of promoting the voluntary sector (Brenton, 1985). While this brings some advantages, it also has drawbacks. Sheard points out some of them (1992, p. 32). These are: that governments might use volunteers for their own purposes, as in the 1970s and earlier, when some acted as strike-breakers (Davis Smith, 1992). Another disadvantage is the insufficient funding of organisations, as in the 1980s, when some became involved in government-initiated programmes aimed at combating unemployment. Moreover, as illustrated in the earlier quotation from the Seebom report, policy-makers and politicians may over-estimate the ability and willingness of volunteers to carry out their policies.

By the 1990s, the government's attitude towards the voluntary sector changed. This was shown by increased spending, in order to prepare it to deliver services under the *NHS and Community Care Act, 1990* (Home Office, 1990; Leat, 1996). This legislation brought a new relationship between the statutory and voluntary sectors. Local authorities were required to consult voluntary organisations, together with other relevant bodies, in planning for community care services within their area. The aim was that, for the first time throughout Britain, there would be a co-ordinated overview of the needs of each area. Some voluntary service organisations became competitors with commercial, private and 'non-profit' providers of welfare services in the independent sector, for contracts for work from local authorities. Duplication even became an asset, when it offered choice to service users. This also represented a diminution of the special relationship that had been fostered between statutory and voluntary bodies since the 1970s (Brenton, 1985).

The changing relationship between the two sectors is set to grow in importance. This is manifest in the *Report of the Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector in England* (Deakin Report, 1996). This independent report, which received substantial evidence from both organisations and individuals, aimed to set an agenda to develop the sector for and beyond the following decade. It concludes that: 'voluntary and community organisations make up a major resource'. Its recommendations were

intended to maintain the sector's independence and diversity, to strengthen its support from central and local government and from corporate bodies, and to preserve public confidence. Although largely welcomed initially, the report evoked a mixed response from voluntary organisations (Whiteley and Valios, 1996; Francis, 1996). However, that may have been because of the expectations it raised, which meant that some were inevitably disappointed (National Council of Voluntary Organisations, pers. comm.).

Since 1997, the recommendations of the Deakin Report (1996) have informed the government and they remain under extensive review (Home Office, 2002). Indeed, the current government is actively promoting the voluntary sector, aiming to strengthen it so that it can support the government's policies (HM Treasury, 2002). These policies have two main purposes, both of which were set in motion under the Conservatives (Deakin, 1995, p. 63; Sheard, 1995, p.124; Rochester, 2001, p.67), but which have been given a new form. One is to encourage more inclusive citizenship (Davis Smith 2001, p.185). The other purpose is part of its measures to combat unemployment and social exclusion.

Deakin (1995) argues that 'it is gross over-simplification' to describe the development of the voluntary sector since 1945 as 'merely one consequence of...advance and subsequent retreat of the state' (1995, pp. 63-64). He suggests that the changes in the sector during the past 50 years also reflect the changing values, practices and economic climate in Britain and elsewhere in the world (1995, pp. 63-54). Nevertheless, the state has affected the work done by voluntary organisations, particularly in the field of social welfare. For example, the thinking of the New Right and the Conservative governments of 1979-1997 played a large part in bringing about the contractual relationship between statutory and voluntary bodies. Since then, Labour has gone further in actively promoting the sector (Blair, 1999; Brown, 2000; Blunkett, 2001; HM Treasury, 2002). I develop this theme in the next section.

Volunteering at the End of the Twentieth Century

Some major publications set the scene for the investigation of volunteering in the United Kingdom at the turn of the last century. These are: the *National Surveys of Volunteering* and the *Local Voluntary Activities Surveys (LOVAS)*.

National Surveys

From the 1980's, Volunteering England initiated three major national surveys. These were the only ones concerned entirely with volunteering (Field and Hedges, 1984; Lynn and Davis Smith, 1993 and Davis Smith, 1998a). Davis Smith claims that the 1997 survey was 'the most comprehensive picture of volunteering in the United Kingdom' at the time (1998a, p. 13). The reports are about England, Scotland and Wales; there is a separate one for Northern Ireland (Lynn and Davis Smith, 1993).

Each survey, based on interviews with a random sample of some 1,480 adults, was designed to be comparable with the others. This was intended to overcome earlier problems caused by varying definitions and methodologies (Davis Smith 1998a). The surveys include informal activity, but the figures are listed separately.

An original aim was 'to investigate the...apparent crisis in volunteering and the capacity of the volunteer sector to take on new roles' (Lynn and Davis Smith, 1993, p.15). However, these authors suggest that: '[The] 'talk of a crisis' might have been 'exaggerated' (1993, p.129). Again in 1997, although numbers had decreased slightly, they were still higher than in 1981 (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 157).

In my experience, the increased demand, after 1993, for volunteers to assist with community care, discussed earlier in this review, did cause strain on organisations concerned with welfare provision. But the only criticisms I have read, by representatives of national youth organisations, are that the 1997 survey presented a pessimistic view of youth volunteering, which did not match their experience (Youth Action, 1998). However, those are comments on an aspect of the findings and their interpretation, rather than on the surveys as a whole. These have been a source for subsequent studies and are cited in other texts, such as Hedley *et al.*, (1992); Billis and Harris (1996) and Niyazi (1996). They have also been among my most useful resources.

Davis Smith comments that: 'Volunteering is high on the social policy agenda' and forecast that it would 'grow in importance' by the end of the century (1998a, p. 13). His prediction is supported by reports, such as that by the *Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector*. It is strengthened by the work undertaken by government departments that aim to prepare the voluntary sector for wider use in its policies

(Home Office, 1990; Deakin Report, 1996; HM Treasury, 2002). I discuss the implications of this intervention later in this review.

Local Surveys

The 1997 National Survey shows that: 'Volunteering is [predominantly] a local activity' (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 157). An ongoing programme of research has been initiated by the Home Office in order to inform the government, funding and other bodies, like intermediary agencies, on local voluntary activity. Its intention is to encourage policies that are 'sensitive to the needs of local communities' (Marshall, 1997, p.1). The Research Manual, written for the programme, was designed to assist greater uniformity among these and other surveys of this nature (Marshall, 1997, p. 1). I use the manual as a resource in this review.

While these are not national surveys, the intention is to build up a picture over several years of the types and amount of local voluntary activity in England. If possible, the knowledge will be extended to cover the whole of Britain (Marshall, 1997, pp. 4 and 53).

The measurement used in these surveys to estimate such activity is the number of hours undertaken per year by volunteers, added to those worked by the staff of voluntary organisations (Marshall *et al.*, pp. 5-6).

The analysis of the first fourteen surveys found big variations between the incomes of voluntary organisations in the different areas, as well as in the amounts and types of activities that the volunteers engaged in (Marshall *et al.*, 1997, pp. 5-18). However, the estimates of the total amount of volunteering were considerably lower than those in the *1991 National Survey* (Marshall *et al.*, 1997, pp. 3-4). This may be explained by the fact that the local surveys exclude informal volunteering and organisations such as political parties and national bodies. But they include others, for instance housing associations, which were omitted from the National Surveys. Nonetheless, its authors consider that their findings are sufficiently close to those of the *1991 National Survey* for it to validate them (Marshall *et al.*, 1997 pp. 1-3).

The LOVAS areas, based on the 1991 Census (OPCS, 1993), were chosen to represent all socio-economic variations with comparable densities of population (Marshall and Marshall, 1997). Midville and Griffon are situated in an area classified

as 'average towns' (Marshall and Marshall, 1993 p. 19). However they also have some of the features of 'poor industrial towns', for example, the decline of the mining industry. The findings suggest that such towns do not always have active voluntary sectors, as is generally believed (Marshall, *et al.*, 1997; Home Office, 1999a). But in two poor towns, voluntary activity was 'fairly high' or 'above average' (Home Office, 1999a; Jermyn, *et al.*, 1997; Marshall, *et al.*, 1997). While these surveys, which are still at the 'mapping' stage, do not provide a model for my study, they form a background for it.

Social context

'The literature on volunteering is small and variable in quality' (Leat, 1983, p. 51). Earlier in this review, I refer to Leat's distinction between 'informal neighbouring' and the formal relationship that is the subject of this thesis. Leat comments that 'studies [on motivation] usually treat volunteering as though it were chosen in a social vacuum' (1983, p. 51). The *National Surveys*, however, do set it in its social context. Wardell also (1997) links her research to trends in Europe. From these and other studies, it is possible to sketch a profile of present-day volunteers, while keeping in mind the variety of their individual differences.

'Who volunteers?'

Several authors quote variants of the stereotypical 'middle-class, middle-aged, well educated, white woman'. This picture has altered, partly owing to the social and economic changes I mentioned earlier (Wardell, 1997, p. 2; Gomersall, 1994). For example, men and women participate in about equal numbers (Davis Smith, 1992 and 1998a). Yet the belief lingers and deters some from becoming involved (Niyazi, 1996a). However, there is still some truth in it, some groups continuing to be under-represented in formal volunteering organisations, as I will show.

Social class

The *National Surveys* found 'a strong correlation between volunteering and socio-economic groups, with those from professional and managerial groups considerably

more likely to volunteer than semi-skilled or unskilled workers' (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 29). This suggests that class is still an important factor.

There are several meanings of 'social class' (Crompton, 1993, pp. 9-10). For this research, I adopted the one that was behind the Registrar-General's 'social classifications,' which were used for the 1991 census (OPCS, 1991). My choice was influenced by the possibility of comparisons with studies like the *National Surveys* (see 'Methodology'). However, these categories have drawbacks, for example, they do not distinguish effectively between households and individuals.

I also considered using the classifications developed by Rose and Pevalin (1997) for the 2001 census. These authors state that the earlier ones were unsatisfactory, because they were not founded on tested theories, the classifications were different for each census and because they omitted persons excluded from employment. Rose and Pevalin (1997) claim that they have overcome these problems. However, as the 2001 census was outside my research period, I decided to draw on the earlier one, although I had both of these classifications in mind, when designing the project.

Crompton comments that the Registrar-General's classifications, which describe positions in society by occupations, also indicate material advantage or disadvantage (1993, p. 10). In the next section, I look at volunteering by socially disadvantaged groups, which is one of the themes of my study. However, Crompton observes that 'No...theory...[can] encompass [all] 'the complexities of...social inequality' (1993, p. 207). She notes that: 'For many practical purposes...research...using different schemes will be broadly comparable and the use of a "good enough" occupational classification will suffice' (Crompton 1993 p. 123). In line with her view, I decided that, despite their shortcomings, the 1991 classifications were sufficient for my purpose.

Groups under-represented in volunteering

Features other than social class, yet related to position in society, influence participation too. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation comments that: 'Survey evidence suggests that young people, older people, unemployed people, disabled people and people from black and other minority ethnic communities are under-

represented as volunteers in mainstream organisations'. (1996, p. 1). These persons share some characteristics of social disadvantage. These are: relative poverty and the experience of prejudice on the part of other members of society. In my sample, there was at least one respondent from each of these groups. Next, I consider some of the relevant literature.

Young Volunteers

Research shows that young people may develop a lifetime commitment to volunteering (Knapp *et al.*, 1995). Yet the 1997 *National Survey* found that the numbers of 18-24 year olds volunteering through organisations, numbers which had increased by twelve per cent between 1981 and 1991, had again fallen by the same proportion. It also reports that, on average, young volunteers were giving less time than previously (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 25). Youth organisations consider, however, that Davis Smith's interpretation of his findings, suggesting a 'collapse' in participation (1998a, p. 158) does not reflect their experience (Youth Action, 1998). They found that 'many are reluctant to take on the identity of "volunteer"...[so] their volunteering...is invisible' (NYA, 1998). Other studies, such as those by Lewing, (1996) and Gaskin *et al.*, (1996) support their optimism.

Writers offer several reasons for the declining interest of this age group. One is the image of volunteering, considered earlier in this section. For instance, Davis Smith found that these persons were more likely than older ones to perceive it negatively (1998a, p. 158). Niyazi discovered that many were deterred by other stereotypes, such as the dullness of the work (1996e, p.3). Yet the findings of Gaskin *et al.* suggest that, generally, young people do regard it positively (1996). I noted, earlier, Davis Smith's comment on the difference between their motivation and that of older persons, in that they were more likely to emphasise the instrumental reasons (1998a, p. 158). But this is a complex area. For example, the National Youth Agency found that 'motives associated with altruism [also] featured strongly' (NYA, 1998). However, Lewing comments that it 'seems to be changing from "something to do in my spare time and help people" to something that will help me get a job and help [others]' (1996, p. 2).

Negative stereotypes are not the only barriers. For instance, 'patronising and dismissive attitudes on the part of other persons may also deter young people (Lewing, 1996, p. 3). However, it is not all one-sided. For example, Lewing found that 30 per cent of the volunteer co-ordinators in his study mentioned the transience of this age group as a problem (1996, p. 2). Nonetheless, all of them were positive about the contribution of the young persons.

There are financial hurdles, too, particularly for those on low incomes, like students or unemployed persons (Niyazi, 1996, p. 2; Lewing, 1996, p. 3). I discuss that matter again in this section, with specific reference to the attitude of some benefits agencies (Niyazi, 1996, p. 30).

Many investigators ask what might attract and keep young recruits. Several researchers have tried to answer this question. For example, Niyazi (1996e) produced guidance for good practice by agencies, for this and the other groups discussed here (1996). Her booklets are based on '25 case studies of ways in which organisations involved volunteers from under-represented groups'. She suggests several means of making volunteering more attractive to young people, for example by improving its image, better recruitment methods, paying adequate expenses, and strategies to maintain their interest (1996e).

The National Youth Agency's recommendations for recruitment and retention are based on a survey of 5,500 young people and 3,000 organisations. Its advice includes forming partnerships, for example between schools and organisations that involve young persons, in creating publicity material (NYA, 1998. 11),

From the perspective of a volunteer bureau, Lewing consulted 90 local organisations. Like Niyazi, he makes practical suggestions for other bureaux, for example, helping organisations to identify their own barriers (1996).

If a strong voluntary sector is to continue in this century, obstacles like those I have considered above should be removed. Foster and Fernandez (1996), commenting that most of the research on volunteers aged 16-25 was American, stress the need for more British studies on incentives for volunteering and different ways of involving young persons. They note that: 'studies suggest there may be a mismatch between what society wants them to do and what young persons themselves are interested in (1996, p. 6). Their observations and others considered here are relevant to

programmes, which I shall discuss later in this review, that represent the government's encouragement of youth participation.

Third Age Volunteers

The 'Third Age' is 'the period in...life...which follows...the end of [that] devoted to paid work or family responsibilities and which precedes old age and dependency' (Davis Smith, 1992b, p. xi). The exact age limits are not fixed. But, for the purpose of his study, which is part of a wider Carnegie Inquiry regarding this group, it refers to those aged between 50 and 74. This represents a quarter of the population of the United Kingdom, yet that is insufficiently shown in their involvement in voluntary activity (1992a, p. vii). However, *The 1997 National Survey* did find an increase among those aged between 65 and 74 which, as Davis Smith suggests, may reflect greater participation directly after retirement (1998a, p. 26).

In a survey of 300 organisations, Davis Smith (1992b) found both similarities and differences between this group and those of other ages. For example, all saw the main benefits of volunteering as 'the satisfaction of seeing the results' and 'the enjoyment of the activity' (1992b, p. viii), a finding reflected in my study. However, as noted earlier, *The 1997 National Survey*, found that older persons were more likely to offer altruistic reasons for participation and that they were less affected by negative stereotypes than younger ones (1998a, p.158).

There are two main instrumental reasons for volunteering after retirement. One is a means of adjusting to the new status, and the other is an alternative to leisure (Sherrott, 1983, p. 68: Davis Smith, 1992b). Voluntary work can also help prevent the apathy often associated with ageing in our society (Niyazi, 1996e, p. 3), a hope expressed by one of my respondents.

Davis Smith's research suggests that third age volunteers make a different, though as valuable a contribution as that of those in the younger age groups. For instance, older persons gave more time and were also likely to remain with their organisations for longer periods (1992b, pp. vii and viii). In addition, they brought their skills and experience, (1992b, p. viii). Niyazi (1996e) upholds this positive view.

Both authors mention specific obstacles related to age. For instance, Niyazi reports that some agencies' views on what activities were suitable for these people were too

narrow (1996e, p.4). However, she comments that, given enough support, older persons could take on work that was both physically and mentally taxing (1996e, p. 4). Davis Smith found that 20 per cent of the organisations in his study had a retirement age (1992b, p. viii). Ten per cent reported problems in insuring older persons, mostly concerning motor cover (Davis Smith, 1992b; Niyazi, 1996e). Both restrictions affected recruitment and retention (Davis Smith, 1992b).

The studies I have considered here suggest that, as with the other groups of under-represented persons, there is unused potential among older people. To capitalise on their contributions would, however, require adaptation of policy and practices by some agencies. Since about the year 2000, the Midville and Griffon Bureau has promoted volunteering for older persons, in line with the government's strategy.

'Unemployed' Volunteers

'People in paid employment were more likely to be involved in volunteering than those outside the labour market' (Davis Smith, 1998a, p.34). Yet there is growing recognition that it enhances employability (Watson, 2000).

Social and political changes during the 1980s and 1990s are reflected in how those not in paid work perceive volunteering. For example, Gay found that, in 1983, 'voluntary work occupied a very small part in the lives of...nine per cent of the sample of unemployed people (1998, p. 56). The idea that it might improve employability hardly surfaced' (1998, p. 56). Whereas, in 1998, her respondents' views were quite different (Gay, p. 58). However, already in 1983, Sherrott learned that some of his respondents saw its value in increasing their employment prospects (pp. 75-82). Both perceptions are aired in a small study on the experience of unemployed people, who seek and undertake voluntary work through a Bureau (Gomersall, 1984). Although two saw it as a route into paid work, the majority considered it was occupation of their time (1994, p. 28). Similarly, the respondents of Thomas and Finch appreciated the opportunities, both to fill their time constructively and to learn skills that might help them in securing a job (1990, pp. 30 and 47). Gay identified two main categories of those who wished to improve their employability. These were: 'career builders' who consciously aimed to develop their knowledge and experience and 'job hopefuls', who saw that their participation might help them to get paid work (1998, p. 58).

These studies show the importance of volunteering to unemployed persons. Indeed, Gomersall recommends that it should be an option for them (1982, p. 41). However, she feels that their recruitment through Job Centres would be inappropriate (1982, p. 42). She also considers that an increase in state benefits would 'degrade the nature' of volunteering 'and reduce it to...grossly underpaid work' (1982, p. 42). Her views are in line with those of Niyazi, who affirms that: 'Government schemes to give work experience to unemployed people...are *not* volunteering' (Niyazi, 1996d, p. 2). Indeed, this is the stance of Volunteering England.

However, there is a dilemma, in that the state benefits system deters unemployed people from volunteering and causes some to end their commitment. In a survey of 200 voluntary organisations by Volunteering England, 44 per cent replied that volunteers had left because they feared they might lose benefits (George, 1995). Niyazi, some of whose respondents expressed similar concerns, comments on the relative poverty of this group (1996d, p. 3).

Although emphasising that: 'Volunteering can bridge the gap between unemployment and employment', Niyazi, like Gomersall, points out that: 'It [would] never be a *substitute*' (Niyazi, 1996d, p. 2; Gomersall, pp. 41 and 42). Indeed, despite Davis Smith's finding about the greater involvement by those actually in work, getting a job may end the commitment of some (Qureshi *et al.*, p.161). These issues are pertinent to *New Deal*, which I consider later in this review.

Volunteering by people with disabilities

There is a poor level of involvement in voluntary activity by disabled people, partly because of the low expectations that the general public has of them (Niyazi, 1996b, p. 1). However, Goss comments on the increasing popularity of volunteering among disabled persons as a route to employment (2000, p. 5).

There are several barriers. These are primarily due to the belief that these are problems for individuals, rather than the responsibility of society as a whole (Niyazi, 1996b, p. 3). For example, there is no universal provision for meeting the cost of additional needs for support, which might mean that some small organisations could not afford to take on severely disabled persons (Goss, 2000). Indeed generally,

accessibility is a problem for many (Niyazi, 1996b, pp. 3 and 24). Obstacles have arisen, despite the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), which, however, does not apply to volunteers (Gooding, 1996). Perhaps one of the greatest deterrents is financial, since many disabled people are unemployed and claim state benefits. Although national guidance is positive towards volunteering, not all of the local offices take that approach (Niyazi, 1996b, p. 3). For instance, several disabled persons left voluntary organisations because they feared losing their benefits, or had actually forfeited them (Niyazi, 1996b, p. 20).

Niyazi's recommendations to organisations, for good practice, include the cultivation of working relationships with the local benefits agency and guidance to volunteers on their rights (1996b, p.19). She also advises organisations on the reimbursement of 'out-of-pocket' expenses. Some of her other suggestions concern a policy for equal opportunities, training and support (1996b, pp. 17-19).

Relative poverty besets the majority of those I have considered in this section, and most experience some form of disadvantage, sometimes several. Volunteering for all who wish to participate is yet a goal to be reached (Niyazi, 1996b; RADAR, 2000).

Black and Minority Ethnic Volunteers

Pink and Kara describe the word 'black,' in this context, as: 'people who suffer from racism' on account of their colour (2000, p. 6). Whereas not every one would agree with this negative definition, it reflects the experience of many of these persons in Britain. Pink and Kara (2000) continue: ' "Minority ethnic" refers to [those]...who are not part of the dominant white culture in Britain'. Much of the literature uses 'black' for both (for example, NCBV, 2000).

Obaze states that: 'Black people are massively under-represented within the voluntary sector' (1992, p 143). His view is supported by a study of 95 organisations in five London Boroughs. It found that 41 per cent had no black volunteers and that, among those who were involved, only two per cent were black (NCBV, 2000). However, Niyazi comments that their under-representation is true only of 'mainstream'...organisations and that there are 'strong traditions [particularly informal] of volunteering within black communities' (1997a, p. 1). Indeed, Obaze

notes that Black volunteering, mainly concerned with self- help, is 'thriving' (1992, p. 134).

In a survey of 162 black volunteers and non-volunteers in five London Boroughs, ADVANCE found that, in most respects, their motivation and social profile was like that of white ones. However, the aim of gaining skills was rare (1988, pp. 3 and 5). The chief dissimilarity was that their activities largely concerned self-help (1988, p. 3). Niyazi comments on their 'radically different concept of volunteering', stemming from their culture that, 'in Britain, remains...communal and informal' (1996a, p.2). This is the obverse of the 'managed, "unpaid job"...developed in the UK' (Pink and Kara, 2000, p.14).

Writers offer three main reasons for the low take-up of formal volunteering by black people. These concern finance, cultural differences and institutional racism. I have already discussed the first, which is an obstacle for all the groups considered in this section, particularly for those who claim welfare benefits. Secondly, because of their cultural traditions of informality noted above, bureaucracy may be a deterrent. The last is the greatest barrier, and the hardest to overcome, because it is often concealed.

ADVANCE found that, although none of their respondents reported overt racism, nearly 12 per cent had experienced it indirectly (1988, p.5). In a survey of 210 voluntary agencies, Obaze and Metz (2001), discovered that 88 per cent had a policy of equal opportunities, an increase of 17 per cent on earlier research. However, Obaze (1992) questions the effectiveness of these policies. An example is recruitment through personal contact, mentioned earlier in this review. Claimed to be the most frequently used method (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 61), it is also 'potentially discriminatory' (Pink and Kara, 2000, p. 12), because of its selective nature (ADVANCE 1988).

In their recommendations for good practice, Pink and Kara advise volunteer bureaux to ensure 'access to volunteering opportunities' both within black communities and within the mainstream. They offer practical suggestions about how this could be achieved, for example, by maintaining an up-to-date register of such opportunities (2000, p. 17).

Pink and Kara also state that 'the concept of equal opportunities is becoming outdated' (2000, p. 5). Instead, they introduce the term 'inclusive working', which they explain as taking into account 'what each...can offer and what each...needs' (2000, p. 7). I agree that the language is important, and that sensitive concepts needs constant revision. However, in this study, I use the current phrase 'equal opportunities,' alternating it with 'fair treatment' in contexts where this expression seems more appropriate. My findings demonstrate how the Midville and Griffton Bureau implemented its policy of equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

Government Programmes

Make a Difference

Since the 1990s, successive governments have shown considerable interest in promoting volunteering. When the Griffton Bureau first opened its doors on May 6, 1997, the *Make a Difference* programme was still in operation. (Home Office, 1995). It would soon end, after the return of Labour, but its influence continued, especially for some bureaux and youth agencies.

This was 'probably the most concerted government campaign since the second world war to promote...volunteering [for all] throughout the UK' (Davis Smith, 1998a p. 157). It included measures to encourage participation by individuals from all under-represented groups, in particular by young persons (Oldfield, 1998). There was also media coverage and a telephone helpline.

One of its objectives was to: 'improve the organisation and infrastructure of volunteering' (Home Office, 1995 R. 52). For this purpose, grants were made for the inception of about sixty new bureaux, in areas where there were none (Home Office, 1996; Davis Smith, 1998b, p. 10). Davis Smith comments that the fact that the programme focused on these bodies was 'both a strength and a weakness' (1998b, p. 18).

He observes that the achievements of *Make a Difference* were longer-term, such as 'expansion and growth and the development of more professional...practices' (1998b, p. 18). Some organisations, too, consider that it enhanced the perception of volunteering. Bureaux and youth agencies were the chief beneficiaries (Oldfield,

1998; Burbidge, 1998a). Projects involving unemployed persons also succeeded, but participation among other disadvantaged groups, was no greater (Davis Smith, 1998b, p. 14).

However, Davis Smith comments that, overall, the programme failed. The numbers of volunteers did not increase, as the architects of 'care within the community' had expected (Griffiths, 1998; DoH, 1990; Home Office, 1995, pp. 5 and 8; Davis Smith, 1998b). For instance, Wardell found that most of her respondents had previously undertaken voluntary activity (1997, p.15), a finding which challenges Seebom's assumption of the availability of new recruits.

The main faults of *Make a Difference* were inadequate finance (Wardell *et al.*, 1997; Davis Smith, 1998b) and the absence of a local strategy. The first problem was short-term funding. For example, the new agencies were expected to find other sources of revenue after two years, which was not enough time for some (Home Office 1995; Davis Smith, 1998b; Andy Forster, pers. comm.). The absence of a local strategy (for instance, little attempt to involve local government), meant that the programme did not make an impact in every area (Davis Smith, 1998b).

However, despite its flaws, *Make a Difference* prepared the ground for the Labour Government's programmes, for example, *Millennium Volunteers* that superseded it (Davis Smith, 1998b, p. 19).

Millennium Volunteers

Proposals for a national, voluntary citizen's service for young people have been considered since the 1970s (Sheard, 1992, pp. 26-30). Volunteer bureaux, among many other agencies, responded to the government's consultation document (DfEE, 1997a; DfEE, 1998a). The *Millennium Volunteers* programme, for those aged between 18 and 24 years, started from summer 1999. It has much in common with earlier programmes, like *Make a Difference*, *Task Force* (Hadley *et al.*, 1975) and the Prince's Trust, which was founded in 1976 (Prince's Trust, 2000). Earlier suggestions of remuneration were replaced by non-financial rewards and incentives, for example certificates which could be included in individual portfolios, and recognition by prospective employers (Sheard, 1992).

The programme was received well, in the main (DfEE, 1998; Hanna, 1998). Volunteer bureaux were named, among other local agencies, as those which might form partnerships for its local delivery. Indeed, the Midville and Griffon Bureau teamed with its local college. Volunteering England, for its part, stated that such partnerships would be possible, if the necessary resources were made available (Andy Forster, pers. comm.).

There were many expectations and several qualms; for example, the initiators hoped that many projects would be run by young people themselves. However, on the one hand, critics pointed out that the main difficulty would be to attract the large numbers of youth that would be needed to make the programme attractive as a selling point to prospective employers (Green, 1997). On the other hand, some feared that it might be confused with *New Deal*, part of the 'Welfare to Work' programme discussed below, which started at about the same time (Burbidge, 1998b). Concerns were also raised lest it might suffer from insufficient government funding which would be given as priority to *New Deal* (Vickers, 1997).

Many of the initial anxieties were unfounded, largely because *Millennium Volunteers* was generously funded (Caroline Oldfield, pers. comm; Howlett, pers. comm.). The programme is continuing, so although the initial numbers of young persons were less than anticipated, it is likely that the target will yet be reached (Howlett, pers. comm.). Indeed, 60 per cent of those involved had never volunteered before (NCVO, 2002). Moreover, participants did not confuse it with *New Deal*, even if some organisations did so and, although few projects were entirely youth-led, many young people were happy with them (Howlett, pers. comm.). In addition, by December 2002 over 50 leading employers were participating (NCVO, 2002).

New Deal for Unemployed People

As part of its scheme for tackling unemployment, the government introduced this programme in April 1998. Initially, it was targeted at young persons between the ages of 18 and 24 years, who had been unemployed for six months. Three months later, it was extended to those over 25 who had been out of work for two years

(Jackie Crisp, pers. comm., DfEE, 1997; Ellis, 1998, DWP 2002). Some of my respondents were placed at the Bureau through *New Deal*.

Like *Millennium Volunteers*, it drew much of its inspiration from the Prince's Trust (Prince's Trust, 2000, p. 2). It aims to increase the employability of its participants by giving them good quality work experience, which they may choose from one of four types of placement. These are: 'a subsidised job with an employer, full-time education or training, work on the Environmental Task Force or with the voluntary sector (DfEE, 1997a, p. 2). Extra help is available for persons from specific groups, including those who are disabled or from minority ethnic communities. Their welfare benefits continue through Job Seekers' Allowance ('JSA') (DfEE, 1997, Ellis, pers. comm.).

As planned, the details were worked out locally through 'partnerships' to include Employment Services, local authorities, voluntary organisations, training bodies and representatives of employers (DfEE, 1997b, p 6). The Midville and Griffton Bureau was represented on its Area committee.

Volunteering England pointed out that local bureaux were well placed to recruit 'volunteer mentors', who would act as personal advisors to everyone in the scheme (NAV B News, November 1997, p. 3). It was envisaged that some might themselves arrange placements. However, in the area in which Midville and Griffton is situated, the programme's delivery was organised differently.

An advantage of *New Deal* is that it gives opportunities for unemployed persons who wish to gain experience within the voluntary sector to take that route, without being financially penalised. Moreover, a study by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations found that young persons' experience of the programme was 'generally positive'. Nonetheless, it was unlikely that they were 'forming any lasting attachments to the sector' (Dewson and Eccles. 2000, p. 27).

Earlier, several concerns were raised about the programme. Among these, 'an alliance of seven charities backed by business warned that it would fail, unless some of the bureaucracy was removed, and if firms were unclear about what was expected of them' (NYA, 1997). Although it was welcomed by the Midville and Griffton Bureau, a high proportion of other volunteer bureaux did not wish to be involved in it. Volunteering England explained that their reasons were both ideological and

practical. First, they believed that volunteering was not the same as just working within the voluntary sector. Secondly, many bureaux were deterred by their previous unsatisfactory experience of involvement with the Department of Employment, through the Community Action Programme in the mid 1990s (Andy Forster, pers. comm.). Indeed, the low take-up at the outset suggested that few young job-seekers were enthusiastic about either the voluntary or the Environmental Task Force options (The Big Issue, 1998).

These concerns did affect participation. For example, only 22 per cent of the young people in the *New Deal* programme in the whole of Great Britain chose the voluntary sector during January 2002. Yet that was slightly more than for the other options except full time education and training (Dewson and Eccles 2000, p. 2; Bradley, pers. comm.). Bureaucracy became a problem for organisations, particularly the requirement to demonstrate that the placement had been of benefit to the community (Cooke 2000, pp. 27-28).

Brenton warned against the identification of the voluntary sector with the government, through participation in the many projects it initiated and financed in the 1980s (1985, pp. 102-106). *New Deal* also raises the controversy about the payment of volunteers. Indeed, the majority believe they should not be paid (Sheard, 1992). However, financial remuneration to volunteers before the National Minimum Wages Act (1998) was more widespread than was generally believed. Blacksell and Phillips (1994) found that 30 per cent of the organisations in their sample paid at least some of their volunteers, even though the total number was small. And Davis Smith (1998) found that, in 1997, three per cent were paid compared with two per cent in 1991.

Another criticism of *New Deal* is the element of coercion, in that claimants do not receive Job Seeker's Allowance unless they accept the position offered to them. As I noted earlier, many argue that compulsion is against the voluntary ethos, and that it confuses the distinction between volunteering and paid work (Brenton, 1985, p. 104; Kendall and Knapp 1995, p. 89; Sheard, 1995, p. 115). But, on the other hand, the absence of payment excludes those who could not otherwise afford to become involved and risks perpetuating volunteering as an activity for the middle classes.

Here, I have considered how governments have sought increasingly to use volunteering to implement their policies. For example, the Conservatives expected it to supplement and even deliver community care. So they aimed to improve its infrastructure and also to increase the numbers of individuals, through *Make a Difference*. Another approach was to encourage democratic participation, in the interests of better citizenship. The Labour government has taken the latter principle into its own policies, with *Millennium Volunteers* and other programmes, to encourage participation by those from under-represented groups. The third move by Labour has been to include volunteering as an option in *New Deal*, in its drive to reduce unemployment.

Indeed, the present government has been preparing the voluntary sector for an even greater contribution in the twenty-first century (HM Treasury, 2002; Howlett, 2002). However, there may be a gap between expectation and reality (Sheard, 1995), and these aims may conflict. For example, although the greatest involvement may be from those in work, the lower paid may not be able to spare the time to continue. There is concern that, by taking over volunteering the government is attempting to change its nature, in particular by exercising compulsion on unemployed persons. In the next section, I consider the part of bureaux in the governments' schemes. In its use of volunteering, it has tried to capitalise on the proverbial 'two sides' of the motivation coin.

Volunteering through Bureaux

Despite the fact that one of the 'powers' of bureaux is to promote research (*Governing Document*, 1998), 'the amount of solid evidence about [their] work...remains scanty' (Mocroft, 1983, p.14). Volunteering England confirmed that there was little research on them (Andy Forster, pers. comm.).

What are Volunteer Bureaux?

Thomas and Finch comment that many of the volunteers they interviewed, 'unaware of the existence of...bureaux',...expressed the need for a local volunteer service' (1990 p. 63). Earlier, I discussed the role of bureaux as 'intermediary bodies'. Here I consider literature on their 'public', their functions and their evaluation.

Who do they serve?

Some of the interested parties are mentioned in the Midville and Griffton Bureau's Constitution, which is based on a model produced in 1998 by the (then) National Association for Volunteer Bureaux). This document was re-written in 2002 (Andy Forster, pers. comm), but the basic principles are the same.

Those having an interest in bureaux are: the local community, particularly volunteers and organisations. They are also responsible to their own staff, trustees, members and management committee. In addition, other bureaux and Volunteering England have an interest in them. Moreover, bureaux, like other voluntary agencies, are accountable to funding bodies, which may include local authorities, local and national charities and central government (Elate, 1996, p. 68; Deakin Report, 1996). Grant-making organisations and the government have the most power, while the individuals have the least. It is clear from this overview that bureaux are under scrutiny from many, who may each have different interests and expectations. Osborne comments that 'Promoting and supporting volunteering...was the most difficult and fraught area that [such organisations] were involved in' (1999a, p. 26). He contrasts the commitment to volunteering from several stakeholders with the realities of the problems that they face.

Earlier, I considered literature regarding the central governments' attitude to bureaux and observed how this has changed, along with political and social preoccupations. In this section, I focus on the literature which concerns the relationship of bureaux with volunteers and other organisations. I also consider research that aims to evaluate bureaux.

What do Volunteer Bureaux do?

My understanding of their functions, for the purpose of this study, is based on Midville and Griffton Bureau's Constitution, in particular its 'objects' (clause 4, *Governing Document*, 1998). A later publication lists the six 'core' functions explicitly (Kara, 2001, p. 4). The Constitution states the Bureau's dual responsibility towards individuals and agencies. My findings illustrate some of the difficulties that the Bureau encountered, in balancing its work for both parties.

Recruitment or development?

Over the years, the role of bureaux changed, so that now the emphasis on their functions is different. Initially, their main concern was with brokerage (Kara, 2001, p. 2). According to the Aves Committee, their main function was 'To collect information about the needs and opportunities for voluntary service in their areas, to provide a centre to which volunteers may come for advice and information, and to refer them to appropriate organisations' (1969 pp. 103-4). The Wolfenden Committee observes that they concentrated on 'placing volunteers,' but advises that they should not provide services directly for individuals (1978, p. 178). Indeed, in the hey-day of the post-Seebohm era, the Lewisham bureau was 'the main source of volunteer help' for its local social services department (Postlethwaite and Parnham, 1984, p. 52). To that era belongs the study of bureaux as recruitment and placement agencies, which I discuss below (Mocroft, 1983).

However, Jackson (1985) found that 'volunteer-using groups' placed bureaux last in their preferred methods of recruitment. She recommends that they might change their function from 'recruitment agencies' to 'recruitment resource centres'. Moreover, the *1997 National Survey* found that bureaux were not even the first choice of the great majority of prospective volunteers (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 66). Nonetheless, a consumer survey by the Kensington and Chelsea Bureau (1998) discovered that: 'Recruitment and referral [was] still the main service' that its local organisations required. Indeed, Osborne (1999b, p. 73) found that there was confusion over whether they should 'simply *recruit* volunteers...or...promote...the ideal of volunteerism...[locally] and "best practice" in volunteer management inside local groups'. He comments that: 'resource constraints could...limit them' to recruitment only (1999a, p. 27). He recommends that bureaux should decide on the priorities for their work, whether it should be recruitment alone or the promotion of volunteering, pointing out that their greatest impact was through the latter (1999a, p. 28).

By the late 1990s, there was a change of emphasis, as expressed by a minister for the Home Office: 'They carry out valuable work in promoting and developing volunteering' (Home Office, 1996).

The aim of the Midville and Griffon Bureau is 'To promote volunteering and community activity' (*Governing Document*, 1998). 'To promote' and 'to develop' have similar meanings: to 'cause growth' and are sometimes used interchangeably. Both in current English usage, and in Volunteering England's more recent statement of 'core' functions, the first term is often linked with advertising. Kara (2001) describes 'developing volunteering' as 'central', with 'brokerage' and 'promotion' alongside. However, the confusion about whether bureaux are chiefly recruitment agencies lingers in the minds of their public.

Evaluation of volunteer bureaux

In this section, I consider evaluative studies from the viewpoint of different parties.

Patterns of recruitment

Two small studies examined the effectiveness of placements made through eight bureaux in England (Mocroft, 1983) and by one volunteer placing agency in the USA (Bull and Schmitz, 1976). The first aimed to show how bureaux could monitor their work and compare themselves with other similar agencies. Both looked at social characteristics of volunteers (age and gender), in relation to their recruitment through bureaux. The second, a pilot study, considered the social profile of recruits with regard to their matching with other agencies.

Both researchers found that the social profiles of volunteers, recruited through agencies, were untypical of those of other volunteers in their respective countries. Bull and Schmitz discovered that a higher proportion of young, single, well educated females than they expected were placed by the agency. Mocroft, too, found that more young women than he would have predicted came to the bureaux and also a greater number of 'white-collar workers' (1983, p. 22).

Bull and Schmitz found no literature on the effectiveness of volunteer placing agencies in the USA. So they took as their criterion the one used by American employment agencies: that is, the number of volunteers who actually helped the agencies to which they were referred. Mocroft's criterion was similar to theirs. In addition, he investigated how many remained with their agencies, after three months

and again after six. The criteria used by each were inadequate for the purpose of the present study, because neither looked at the agencies' views.

Bull and Schmitz found a slightly higher success rate than they expected. Mcroft, however, was unable to generalise about the take-up rate, because of problems related to the various practices and recording methods of different bureaux. Nonetheless, in respect of retention rates, he found that 'at least two thirds' continued with their agencies for more than three months, and at least half for more than six months (Mcroft, 1983, p. 16). These findings are both similar to and different from those of the *1991 National Survey* (Lynn and Davis Smith, 1991). The greater participation of well-educated women in voluntary activity is substantiated by these three studies.

The investigations of Bull and Schmitz and of Mcroft show three major problems in planning research on bureaux. The first is the difficulty of comparing like with like, because of wide variations between bureaux in the ways in which they operate (Mcroft, 1983; Andy Forster, pers. comm.). The second is the difference in their research methods (Andy Forster, pers. comm.). The third is that there are no standard criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of this type of agency (Bull and Schmitz, 1976 and Mcroft, 1983).

Outreach

In a more recent study, Osborne (1994) evaluated a bureau's new outreach project, based in libraries, between 1991 and 1993. One of his findings was the different pattern of volunteering that it engendered. He found that, overall, recruitment increased and that involvement by males and young persons was also greater. In addition, there was more participation by persons with disabilities and by people from minority ethnic groups (Osborne 1994, Table 1). His study is interesting, because the Midville and Griffon Bureau undertook similar outreach work. However, I found his research too late to model mine on it. Furthermore, since my original purpose was to focus on the newly opened centre in Griffon, I would probably have used it only as background information, as I do in this dissertation.

Service Users

Agencies

The majority of users of the services of bureaux are other agencies, according to the National Association (Andy Forster, pers. comm.). A survey of agencies, undertaken as a self-monitoring project, found that there was a lack of communication between them and the bureaux (Kent, 1986). This particularly concerned requests for volunteers, and the information about the outcome of their referral. However, the response from local organisations to a consumer survey by the Kensington and Chelsea Bureau (Thomas, 1998) was generally very positive.

Cost effectiveness

Grant-making organisations are particularly interested in 'value for money'. For example, the Berkhamstead Herald (1988) reported that its Town Council asked for more information on the local bureau's success, before renewing its grant. Indeed, voluntary agencies are increasingly attempting to demonstrate their worth in financial terms. For instance, a project undertaken by 18 bureaux in Kent (Williams, 1985) estimated their cost effectiveness by totalling the number of hours worked by volunteers, and calculating that their contributions were worth over £2,000,000 a year. Williams maintained that this model did not rely on subjective judgements.

Volunteers

I obtained one small study on volunteers' perceptions of a bureau, from which I have already quoted (Gomersall 1984). However, as in the case of Osborne's research, my discovery was not in time for it to be used in my project. Gomersall's investigation of the experience of forty-three volunteers compares the views of the unemployed persons with those in work. Two of the questions that the author asked are similar to some of mine (Gomersall, 1984, pp. 22-23). One concerned their visit to the bureau and the other was about their ideas for improving its service.

Although Gomersall's study was subject to bias, on account of her position as organiser of the Bureau, her role also gave her advantages. Among these were: an understanding of what questions to ask her respondents, and access to sources of

information other than the interviews. If she had obtained other viewpoints in addition to those of the volunteers, she would have increased the validity of her research and thus counter her inherent bias. Nonetheless, her contribution is a useful addition to the literature on the evaluation of bureaux.

On to the project

The studies considered in this section indicate some of the problems I faced in planning the research. In reviewing the literature, I sought a larger study, with which to compare it, and so lend validation to my findings. But, before undertaking this project, I found none that seemed directly relevant to mine: that is, the motivation and perceptions of individuals who seek volunteering opportunities through a bureau. Nor did I discover any that included the views of organisations as well. Furthermore, I did not find a set of criteria that would enable me to assess the Bureau's work. The only framework that offered possibilities for comparison was that of the *National Surveys* (Davis Smith 1998a; Lynn & Davis Smith 1993), although their purpose was different. So I did not expect that it would be possible to make direct comparisons with similar studies: mine would be exploratory.

One avenue I could take was evaluation through service-users, primarily individuals and secondarily, organisations. In this way, I could look at themes that emerged in this chapter: volunteers' experience of the Bureau's services, and how the Bureau met its objectives, both with regard to them and to organisations that involved them. Pathways that lead from this route are themes in this chapter: the social characteristics of volunteers and, related to these, the under-representation of persons from disadvantaged groups. Looking at their social characteristics would place the study of motivation in its context. I anticipated that it would also permit comparisons with the *National Surveys* and, to a lesser extent, the studies of Bull and Schmitz, and of Mocroft.

However, I noted my reservations about the criteria for evaluation used by these last authors: whether those who approached the Bureau actually helped another agency. But, since I had few models, I decided to develop these, by including volunteers' and

agencies' satisfaction with the brokerage, the aspect of the Bureau's service that most affected both parties.

Another possible approach was self-evaluation by bureaux themselves. Three of the consumer surveys reported in this review (Gomersall, 1984; Kent, 1986; Thomas, 1998), and a project intended to provide evidence for a funding body (Williams, 1985³), were undertaken by bureaux for this purpose. I decided not to go along the road of financial assessment, but concluded that information on cost-effectiveness, which would be relatively easy to obtain, could be useful supporting material. I also concluded that the Bureau's self-evaluation should be an integral part of the study. Behind these themes, in the wider picture, was that of the government's intervention. Thus, the literature review became the basis of the subsequent research, whose formation I explain in the next chapter.

³ See also Marshall *et al.*, 1997, pp. 5-6 : p. 29 in this chapter

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research question

In this chapter, I explain why I chose the subject of this enquiry, and how I developed the methodology to investigate it. The topic was suggested by the opening of the new Bureau in Griffon. My original goal was to discover whether or not this venture was an asset to the local community. After consultation, I rephrased it as: 'To what extent is the Bureau an asset to the local community and to what extent is it not one'. During the course of the project, the focus broadened. It became an exploration of the value of bureaux to their local communities.

Plan of chapter

Much of the work on the study, particularly at the beginning, was concurrent. But, although the process is untidy, as commentators on research have shown, coherent presentation is important when explaining it (Robson, 1993; Osborne, 1998). In the main, the order of the chapters follows guidelines suggested by Whitaker and Archer (1989).

First, I tell how I formulated the research proposal, and decided on the approach to the study. Then, I describe the development of the methodology. Next, I discuss some approaches that I considered, and what I decided to follow. After that comes the design: the population unit and the procedures for gathering the data. This preliminary work prepared for the writing of the proposal, following which I recount what I did to obtain ethical consent from interested parties. Then, I consider the design's initial strengths and weaknesses, before summarising the implementation of the proposal.

In the second part, I outline the writing and refining of the research instruments. I summarise the data-collection: the identification of the sample population, followed by the administration of the interview schedules and questionnaire. Next follows an account of the data-processing. After that, I recall some of the problems that I encountered in the study, how I handled them, or might have done so. I then consider the concepts of validity and reliability in social research, with particular reference to some of the pitfalls I tried to avoid. Finally, I evaluate the methodology I used for this project.

Approach to study

Evaluation

The research question indicated an evaluative approach (Everitt and Hardiker 1996). Like other key words in this text, 'evaluation' has different usages that may give rise to misunderstanding, if they are not defined. 'To evaluate' has two basic meanings. The first is mathematical: 'to work out the value of' (something). The second is more general, for example: 'to express in terms of the known' (SOED). The word derives from 'value' meaning 'worth', which is used in several senses. One is material or monetary; another is abstract, as in ethics, for example: 'that which is worthy of esteem for its own sake' (SOED).

'Evaluation' is currently used in these two ways, in order to answer questions about organisations, individuals and projects. For example, in a practical context, the enquiry might be: 'Does a scheme work? If so, is it effective?' The second, in evaluative research, looks at the bigger objectives, such as whether the subject of a study contributes to the achievement of social goals (Roger Smith, pers. comm.).

Evaluative research has two main purposes. One is to find evidence of what goes on in practice (Everitt and Hardiker, 1996, pp. 19-20). This is often the subject of applied research (Robson, 1993, p. 180). The second is to make a judgement about merit (Everitt and Hardiker 1996). These authors argue that this type of evaluation is subjective and hence not research (1996, p. 24). However, much research on organisations is an evaluation of their effectiveness⁴ (Silverman, 1970, p.19; Robson, 1993, p. 180).

In this dissertation, I interpret 'evaluation' in its two senses: both specific, and general or abstract. The research question implied making a judgement about the Bureau's worth to its local community. However, as the study developed, the emphasis turned more on what it actually did, and its role within the wider, social context came more to the forefront.

⁴ 'An **effect**' is 'something caused' (by something else). '**Effective**' may be used in that neutral sense, or may denote 'fit for work or service' (SOED)..

Development of research methodology

Feasibility study

Robson draws attention to the need for sensitivity in evaluation (1993). He recommends a feasibility study beforehand. This includes anticipating what problems might arise and how some might be avoided (Robson, 1993; Hardiker, 1997). Indeed, before beginning any research, it is advisable to determine whether or not the project can be undertaken and carried through to completion.

My study began on the route familiar to researchers, with defining the research area, consulting key persons and reviewing the literature (Osborne, 1988). The study was based in the local community and centred on the Griffon Bureau. Among others, I consulted its manager Y, who agreed to the project taking place from its premises.

A small amount of written material was available there. It comprised: the 'Constitution' (*Governing Document*, 1998) annual reports from 1997, committee minutes, and the registration forms of prospective volunteers. This material was a valuable resource for my study.

The literature review provided fresh insights, but none that corresponded to the project that I envisaged. The most relevant were the *National Surveys* (Lynn and Davis Smith, 1993; Davis Smith, 1998), from which I was able to develop my framework. I provide examples of my use of these studies later in this chapter.

Early questions were: What evidence was required for the evaluation and who should I approach for that purpose? Various interested parties are listed in my previous chapter. Among those most likely to offer informed opinions were those who were in direct contact with the Bureau: volunteers and representatives of organisations that involved them. I decided that the Bureau's self-evaluation should be included, in order to present a fuller picture.

Formulation and development of research proposal

Identifying the sample

A starting point in developing the proposal was the Bureau's statement of its aims and objectives (*Governing Document*, 1998) According to this Constitution, the Bureau's chief aim was to promote volunteering, by enabling individuals to undertake

voluntary activity, for the benefit of the community and themselves. For this reason, I decided to focus on what motivated these people to undertake voluntary activity through the Bureau. However, an organisation's stated goals do not necessarily reflect what actually takes place (Blau and Scott 1963). In the last chapter, I considered the ambiguity surrounding the main function of bureaux: whether it was recruitment or development. So, I planned to complement the volunteers' responses by gathering information from the organisations they helped.

Methodological approach

My planning was guided by the conceptual framework: individuals' motivation to volunteer. Yet, this framework required a methodological approach that would enable me to form the enquiry more explicitly and to know how to process the resultant information.

Quantitative and qualitative

I considered two of the types of approach frequently used for collecting and handling data; these are often known as quantitative and qualitative⁵. There are two main differences between them. One is the way they represent of knowing the world (Bryman, 1988; Robson, 1993; and Hardiker, 1996). The other is in the methods that are generally used for each. However, I was able to take advantage of the strengths of both, as I explain below.

One of the benefits of quantitative research is that it allows comparisons both within the study and with other, similar ones. Another is that, if the research can be repeated ('replicated') and tested, it may be more reliable than a qualitative approach. Another reason for my initial choice of this method was so that this study could be compared with the larger ones of the *National Surveys*, which were designed to obtain a representative sample. I hoped to validate some of my findings by this comparison. Disadvantages are that quantitative research may impose the investigator's assumptions on data, and thus reduce the chances of discovering evidence to the contrary (Layder, 1993). It is also better suited to a larger sample than mine.

⁵ 'Quantitative', here, means 'estimated or estimable by quantity'. 'Qualitative', its opposite, relates to quality - 'the character (or) nature (of persons or things)' (SOED).

Qualitative research is useful for the discovery of what is actually going on in a situation as, for example, in the Bureau, and in understanding such abstract notions as motivation. It also offers greater flexibility in responding to changing circumstances (Robson, 1993). For instance, it allowed me to change the emphasis of my study, when my sample was too small for meaningful quantitative analysis. One of its drawbacks is the greater possibility of human error in the analysis of data, which may lead to inconsistency. Making generalisations may also be more difficult than in quantitative research (Robson, 1993).

Initially, I decided to take a quantitative approach, which then appeared to suit my purpose best, but also to gather some qualitative material, to enhance my findings. But, finally, I drew on both approaches, for reasons that I explain below.

Triangulation

Despite the differences between these two types of research, in practice similar theories may influence both. There are merits in drawing on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Bryman, 1988; Robson, 1993). Indeed, theory is not always closely followed in quantitative research itself (Bryman, 1988). A multi-method approach is often called 'triangulation', a word borrowed from surveying. In social research, it may describe the use of two or more methods or theories. Generally, it comprises the employment of more than one method of investigation and more than one type or source of data (Bryman, 1988; Robson, 1993). It may also include the use of more than one investigator. The two former approaches were available to me, but I was the sole researcher. I describe, later in this chapter, how I used this method in my project.

Triangulation has several advantages. In qualitative research, it is the chief means of checking the reliability of information, for example, when two persons give a similar answer (Bryman, 1988; Robson, 1993). However, it is just as useful when responses are different from each other, because this highlights the need for more investigation to explain the discrepancy. Further enquiry may improve the quality of the information, hence its reliability, a concept that I explain towards the end of this chapter. The main disadvantage, particularly for a part-time student, is that triangulation is more time-consuming than a single approach (Robson, 1993).

Research Design

Population unit and structure

I planned to take the sample population from those who registered as volunteers at the Bureau, and to interview the same persons twice, at two different points in time. This would provide two different perspectives of their experience, and would also strengthen the reliability of the data. Originally, information from the organisations was intended to supplement the volunteers' perspective, but these bodies also became part of the study in their own right.

Scaling down

My target was a purposive sample of everyone who registered after the agreed starting date, until numbers were sufficient (Patton, 1980, p.105). Initially, my population was envisaged as 60, but enquiries at the Bureau showed that this figure was unrealistic. So it was reduced to 30, with a goal of 35, to cover attrition (the loss of subjects through lack of response). I considered selecting 15 from each centre (Griffon and Midville), in order to compare the two. However, I decided initially to focus on Griffon, both because it was the source of the original idea and on grounds of feasibility. For instance, the Griffon office was more accessible from my workplace than Midville, so I could manage my time better. A safeguard was that Midville could be included later, if necessary. The local interest in the new centre, and the potential for its development during the study period, encouraged my choice.

Procedures for collecting data

As stated in the literature review, evaluation is a purpose, not a method. In evaluative research several methods are possible (Robson, 1993). The purpose of my study indicated that a survey would be appropriate. By this means, I could obtain material, through which I could describe the subjects' motivation and their perceptions of the Bureau's response. I might also have chosen a case study, which would have suited the exploratory nature of this project. However, I concluded that a survey would be more useful, because it would enable me to compare some of my findings with those of the *National Surveys* (Lynn & Davis Smith 1993; Davis Smith 1998a).

Format

I chose to gather the data mainly through structured interviews, as in the *National Surveys*. Another reason for my choice was that I was an experienced interviewer. I aimed to strengthen reliability by interviewing the same volunteers at two different points in time, and by the system of triangulation.

Summaries of the interview schedules are further on in this chapter. In the first two, I included some semi-structured questions (open questions and probes), in order to obtain a qualitative understanding of the volunteers' motivation. Initially, this was meant to be an enhancement of the descriptive, quantitative material. But, as I explain later on, the qualitative data increased in importance during the course of my project, and predominates in my findings.

I intended that the final interviews with the Bureau's staff would be unstructured, but I prepared a semi-structured format, to ensure that I covered key themes (*Appendix 5*). A self-administered questionnaire was used for the Bureau's staff, for mutual convenience.

The advantages of questionnaires are that they are easy to administer and score, and data analysis is relatively straightforward. However, they are generally prescriptive, and may miss important information. There is also a greater risk of their not being returned (Whitaker and Archer, 1989; Robson, 1993). Interviews may provide fuller information than questionnaires, and may represent the respondent's experience more accurately. There is also likely to be a higher response rate to interviews (Whitaker and Archer, 1989, pp. 51-67), but they are more time-consuming, both to conduct and to analyse. However, structured interviews together with semi-structured ones, combine the advantages of both interviews and questionnaires.

Ethical consents

It is important to obtain informed agreement to the study from all relevant parties, early in the procedure (Robson, 1993; Hardiker, 1997). Moreover, it is essential to maintain ethical standards, such as confidentiality and respect for all participants, throughout the study and in its use afterwards (Robson, 1993).

Manager Y gave early, verbal consent. When the research proposal was complete, I submitted it to the Bureau's executive committee. This body gave its formal agreement to the project⁶, provided that I made one amendment to the last sentence of the proposal. That was, to substitute a qualifying word in the following clause: '(Interested parties) *may* be offered access (to the completed research)', in place of '*will* be offered access.' The reason was that some of my findings might be adverse to the Bureau. I made the alteration, both for ethical reasons, and for the practical one of my proposal's acceptance. The Bureau's response emphasises the need for early consultation with key persons, on ethical grounds.

Later in this chapter I explain my arrangements for obtaining ethical consent from the participants in the study. I also discuss the ethical conflicts inherent in my role and how I aimed to resolve them. In addition, there was an unforeseen ethical difficulty regarding the questionnaires. I had intended that they would be completed only in respect of those respondents who agreed to participate in the research. However, sometimes an enquirer took away forms, including the research ones, before deciding whether or not to register. So, in practice, the interviewer at the Bureau did not always know whether or not consent to take part in my study would be received. As a result, I received four questionnaires regarding persons who did not agree to be involved in the project. However, I did not use them.

Initial strengths and weaknesses of overall plan

Not all of the difficulties I record here were apparent at the outset: some arose during the course of the study. On examination, they also had a positive side.

Concept, or Constitution?

There is tension between the basic concept of this study: the motivation of volunteers and the Bureau's aims and objectives, which are broader. Motivating individuals is not the Bureau's only goal, although its responsibility to organisations is stated in terms of its obligation to volunteers. However, tension is not necessarily a weakness. Grappling with the Constitution enabled me to relate the Bureau to its wider context, and increased the scope of the project.

⁶The Bureau's committee formally adopted its Constitution shortly after it agreed to my proposal.

The Bureau's attitude

The main strengths of the project were the Bureau's interest, support and co-operation, as well as its openness to scrutiny. The latter assured the trustworthiness of information obtained from this source. Its positive and realistic attitude, which continued throughout the project, was illustrated by the committee's reply to the research proposal. A bonus of my position on the committee was the insight that it provided into the workings of the Bureau. Another was that I received some feedback on the study.

Subject bias

Despite the Bureau's willingness to accept constructive criticism, there was an inherent risk of prejudice in the research, in accepting its evidence alone. A predisposition to favour the Bureau was also likely, on the part of respondents for some of the organisations that were close to it. In addition, bias is one of the disadvantages of purposive sampling (Hartmann, 1987), which was my method of selecting the volunteers. Below, I examine my own prejudices, after commenting on some of the strategies I used to lessen this problem.

Validity

There were two means of confirming the validity of the findings. Firstly, there was the possibility of comparison with other research, in particular the *National Surveys*. The second was the triangulation of different viewpoints and of methods. Both of these strategies are safeguards against bias, which I discuss below. I expand on the concept of validity, later in this chapter.

Attrition

The feasibility study indicated that there was little margin for attrition. But, as noted earlier, I had made provision for this possibility, and the resultant inclusion of Midville was beneficial to the study. However, this change emphasised the difficulty of working in two places, with sparse resources.

Researcher's several roles

I expected that my personal administration of the interview schedules would lead to a higher response rate (Whitaker and Archer 1989; Harriet Ward, pers. comm.). I

anticipated that consistency of approach would be another benefit. But the fact that there was only one interviewer, who was also the researcher, increased the risk of bias. I discuss this factor next.

There was potential for bias resulting from my three roles in relation to the Bureau. These were: my employment as a social worker and possible user of its services, my membership on the Bureau's committee as social services representative, and the fact that I was the sole interviewer for this study. The advantage of my position over that of outside researchers was that, like Gomersall (1984), I already had access to the Bureau. Similarly, I had some prior knowledge of this organisation that guided me in planning the study. Unlike her, I did not work for the Bureau, although my presence on the committee meant that I had official commitment to it.

My employment raised the possibility of conflict of interest, and the issue of confidentiality. I took measures to counter these. For example, before commencing the study, I requested my team managers' consent and, through her, that of the manager for the area. Permission was granted, on condition that I undertook the research in my own time. This stipulation minimised the conflict of interest, by ensuring that the project was independent of my employers. However, I kept my team manager informed of the study's progress.

Confidentiality was of prime importance, in safeguarding the identity of individual respondents. This could have been a problem, if one of my social services' clients had been a likely participant in the study. In that event, I should have clarified my role to the person, and allowed him or her to decide whether or not to proceed. Confidentiality might also have been at stake, when I reported on my project to the Bureau's committee. But it would have been unethical for me to disclose details about individual respondents, and it was unnecessary.

Indeed, I was bound, under the ethical code of research, to maintain strict personal standards. This enabled me to assure the respondents that their anonymity would be protected. Written assurance was included in the introductory material that they received before the research interview, and I repeated it, in the preface to the interview itself. In addition, I identified each respondent by a number, and endeavoured to conceal their identities in this dissertation. Manager Y, and

subsequently Manager Z, took responsibility for confidentiality within the Bureau. One of their contributions was to make a separate room available for research interviews.

Implementation of proposal⁷

Schedule I: Volunteers' initial interview

The first interview concerned social and psychological reasons for volunteering. It also looked at the respondents' perceptions of the Bureau's fulfilment of its goals, in relation to their starting new voluntary activity. It covered the following topics:

- personal information, from the angle of social background
- motivation to volunteer, and reasons for approaching the Bureau
- perceptions of the Bureau's response in the initial interview.

Schedule II: Volunteers, six months after first interview

The second interview examined respondents' experience of voluntary activity that the Bureau enabled them to initiate. This included their perception of the Bureau's role as broker, and how the organisations fulfilled their obligations to volunteers. It investigated reasons why some persons did not continue their activity, and others did not begin at all. In this connection, it examined communication between them and the Bureau. The topics explored in this interview were:

- personal changes since schedule I that affected respondents' capacity to volunteer
- perception of the Bureau's response
- experience of volunteering, including motivation to continue, or reasons for not being involved.

⁷ For interview schedules, questionnaire and other research instruments see Appendices.

Schedule III: Volunteer-using organisations

This explored the Bureau's fulfilment of its duties to the agencies, with particular reference to how it enabled them to fulfil their obligations to volunteers. It also addressed the organisations' perceptions of the Bureau's brokerage, and communication. The interview requested:

- background information about the organisation and the respondent
- its policy towards volunteers
- its experience of volunteers received through the Bureau
- its use of the Bureau's services and satisfaction with them
- communication between the organisation and the Bureau.

Schedule IV: The Bureau's staff

This schedule was an outline, with prompts, intended for a final, in-depth interview with the Bureau's office personnel. It was used for managers Y and Z, and one volunteer acting as staff member, who responded at the 'pilot' stage. It centred on the respondents' evaluation of the Bureau's fulfilment of its aims and objectives and how these were affected by wider issues, in particular its participation in government-sponsored programmes. It covered the following topics:

- background, personal information, including respondent's experience of employment at the Bureau
- respondent's perception of how the Bureau fulfils its objectives
- the effect of government programmes on its work
- the Bureau's strengths and weaknesses.

Staff questionnaire

The questionnaire served two functions. These were firstly practical: to assist me in the ongoing assessment of the project's feasibility, and to inform me as to which organisations to include in the study. Its second function was to enable me to compare the volunteers' perceptions of the initial interviews with those of the Bureau.

It covered the following ground:

- the organisations recommended to the volunteer and reasons for this

- the respondent's opinion about whether or not the volunteer was likely to be actively involved six months on, and hence available for the second research interview
- the assistance that the Bureau offered to the enquirer, and what he or she accepted.

The brevity of this questionnaire respected constraints on staff time. However, as stated in the research proposal, I expected that, at the end of the study, I would undertake an in-depth interview with those who had completed the questionnaire, earlier. But only manager Y responded to both the questionnaire and the interview.

ii) Other research tools

I prepared these for communication with other interested parties, in particular with prospective respondents. Some of the research instruments served an ethical purpose, too. They comprised:

- the research proposal
- letters, and summaries of the research proposal, with minimal adaptations for different groups of respondents
- 'consent' forms, to enable each person to state whether or not he or she was willing to participate in the study.

In addition, I used copies of the volunteers' registration forms, with their agreement and that of the Bureau, in order to prepare the interviews for schedule I.

Writing and revision of research instruments

Interview schedules

Sources

In preparing the interviews, I used several sources. As noted earlier, they were based on the conceptual framework and the literature review. I also linked them with the Bureau's Constitution. The studies I drew on the most were the *National Surveys*, in particular, Lynn and Davis Smith (1991, pp. 149-50), on which I modelled much of the first schedule and part of the second one. I also culled from research instruments, that were designed by other bureaux for self-evaluation. For example, some questions about the volunteers' initial interview at the Bureau (schedule I and staff questionnaire), came from the Kensington and Chelsea Bureau's 'consumer

feedback' form (Thomas, 1998). There were three sources for questions about good practice in the organisation of volunteers (schedules II-IV). These were: the *National Surveys* (Lynn and Davis Smith, 1991, pp. 149-150), Sheard (1995, p. 122) and a consumer feedback form written by the Salford Bureau.

Other ideas for the interviews came from personal contacts, in particular the one who was my supervisor when I wrote them, Dr. Harriet Ward. I consulted both manager Y of the Midville and Griffon Bureau and Andy Forster, who was then the information officer of the National Association, on the appropriateness of the questions.

Adaptation of sources

In the first two interview schedules, I borrowed themes from the *National Surveys* on the following topics: personal information and social background, voluntary activities and types of agency that volunteers helped ('fields of interest'), the organisation of voluntary workers, their reasons for becoming involved and the benefits they experienced.

An example of an adaptation to the format of the *National Surveys*, (in my schedule I.22 and 23) is the substitution of an open-ended question for a list of twelve closed ones. My purpose was to obtain qualitative responses about motivation for volunteering.

Revisions

After writing the schedules, I revised them several times, in particular the first one. My aim was to prepare tools through which I could gain the respondents' co-operation and obtain as much relevant information as possible. For example, I copied information from the registration forms⁸ on to the research schedules. This served several purposes. It both assisted me in making rapport with my subjects and enabled me to check its accuracy with them (Fiona Wardell, pers. comm.). It also allowed me to use information on their social background that was already available, and thus save time during interviews. To this, I added probes, so that it could be

⁸The registration form that was used for the last volunteer in the sample had been revised by the Bureau. That one alone included a question on motivation: 'Why do you want to be a volunteer?' I comment on this point in the 'findings' chapter.

explored further, for the purpose of making comparisons with the *National Surveys*, or other studies.

I designed the other schedules and questionnaire, both so that the information requested would be appropriate for each set of respondents, and so that some questions would be parallel, in order to compare different viewpoints (Whitaker and Archer, 1989). For instance, I included in each the same questions about good practice in the organisation of volunteers.

I adjusted a few questions in the light of actual practices at the Bureau. For example, on manager Y's advice, I added another prompt to those that asked about the help enquirers received at the initial interview. The addition was: 'telephone calls to an organisation' (schedule I.11.3). I included this prompt in the staff questionnaire, too.

Piloting and further alterations

As recommended by writers on methodology, I undertook a 'pilot' study (a 'dummy run') on each of the interview schedules and on the questionnaire, before using them for the research itself (Whitaker and Archer, 1989, p. 70; Robson, 1993, p. 301).

After this exercise, I again made several changes. These had two main purposes to make the data-collection more precise and to enable the participants to feel at ease. An instance of the former was the subdivision of questions into their component parts, such as Schedule I.1. Examples of the latter were, firstly, the development of an introduction and the addition of a conclusion to the interviews, and general introductions to supplementary questions (Schedule I.29 and I.36, Appendix 2), as recommended by Whitaker and Archer (1989, pp. 53-54). Another example was the option not to answer questions on sensitive issues (Schedule I.30-34, and Whitaker and Archer (1989, p. 54). This change also served an ethical purpose.

Other research instruments

Changes to the research tools were mainly in the interests of clarity, practicality, and to make them more acceptable to participants. For instance, one small amendment was suggested by a respondent early in the data-gathering. This was the addition of the words 'of paper' after 'sheet' (*schedule I*, introduction). Alterations to the

introductory information and letters to respondents were necessary, when Midville joined the project.

c) Data gathering

i) Identifying the samples

Volunteers: Schedule I

Data collection started on 1 February 1999 at the Griffon office. All nine of those who registered during the first two months agreed to take part, but one of them withdrew, for personal reasons.

However, five weeks later, the administrative support worker left and was not replaced for five months. During that period, opening times and days were reduced, because of a staffing shortage. The number of persons who registered there dropped immediately. In May, it was decided to extend this project to include the Midville office. This did not substantially affect my study, since it operated under the same manager and drew on some of the same personnel.

Letters were sent to all of those who had registered in Midville during the same period. The proportionately high response rate in Griffon was not matched in that office, despite its greater number of registrations during the same period. Eventually, the numbers in the sample from each centre were equal. Nonetheless, it was too small for a comparative study. The data collection of newly registered volunteers ceased on 5 June, 2000, just after manager Y left.

Volunteers: schedule II

The sample for the second interview, six months later, consisted of seventeen persons. Initially, all of the respondents had consented verbally to taking part again. However, I was unable to contact two respondents, one of them having moved away. Five others later withdrew. At this stage, I offered the alternative of a telephone interview, which a few accepted.

Table - Number of Respondents to Schedule II

<u>Approached</u>	<u>Agreed</u>	<u>Took part</u>
22	22	17

Representatives of Organisations: Schedule III

Thirteen user-organisations took part in the study. Initially, I wrote to twelve of those which had been recommended to volunteers in the sample. They were identified by the following:

- the manager
- the registration forms and staff questionnaires
- respondents to schedule I.

Representatives of nine organisations consented. Subsequently, I contacted another ten. The other four who agreed to participate said they had received a volunteer through the Bureau, during the research period.

Managers: Schedule IV

The only person strictly eligible for this interview was manager Y. The first administrative support worker had left. I had already interviewed the new administrator twice as a volunteer, as well as the other volunteers who were helping at the Bureau, so I did not consider it appropriate to involve them again. However, I included the new manager ('Z'), in order to obtain another perspective. In addition, I used material from the 'pilot' response of another volunteer as background material.

Originally, I did not intend to use these interviews as part of the study, but rather to enhance it, along with other qualitative data. It also appeared right to give the Bureau the opportunity to express its own views. However, the information from managers Y and Z was so rich, both in detail and in their knowledge of the overall picture, that it became essential to include it. Moreover, as the focus of the research changed, their contribution became more central.

Nonetheless, in keeping with the initial plan, I do not present their responses in the findings. Instead I include them in the analysis, where they enable the triangulation of evidence, and add an extra dimension to the discussion.

Questionnaire

The staff questionnaire was designed for the persons who interviewed volunteers at the point of registration. In effect, these were: manager Y and a few experienced

volunteers. In addition, each of the two consecutive administrators returned a few forms, which I accepted. Thirteen were completed, nine of which were relevant to the sample.

ii) Interviewing

I interviewed the volunteers between 5 March 1999 and 14 December 2000. There were ten months' overlap between the administration of the two schedules. Manager Y's interview took place over two sessions, shortly before she left in May 2000. In addition, she responded to schedule III, in her role as co-ordinator of another organisation that was affiliated to the Bureau. There was a similar overlap of roles for manager Z, whom I interviewed in her new position on 12 October 2001. Previously, she had responded as co-ordinator of a second organisation that was then under the Bureau's 'umbrella'. The remaining interviews for schedule III were completed by 10 January 2001.

As planned, I administered all the interview schedules personally. All but one of the initial interviews took place in face-to-face meetings. Five of schedule II and eleven of schedule III were administered by telephone.

Because of problems with my writing speed, I aimed to record key words on the forms editing my notes as soon as possible afterwards. Editing is denoted by the use of square brackets, in quotations taken from interviews. As appropriate, I encouraged those who wished to complete some answers themselves to do so (Schedule I.19-20 and 25-34, also Schedule II. 19). In addition, I tape-recorded both of manager Y's interviews (schedules III and IV), and another one of schedule III, by the person who later became manager Z. But she declined electronic recording for her response to schedule IV.

Data processing

Coding

I coded the data from the first three schedules in two parts. Coding the quantitative material took place first, facilitated by the structured format, which lessened the need for its reduction. I classified the qualitative data according to a method pioneered by Glaser and Strauss (1967). That is, grouping key themes arising from the replies of the respondents themselves (Bryman, 1988; Robson, 1993).

I recorded both sets on the computer programme: 'SPSS for Windows' ('Statistics Package for Social Scientists': Kinnear and Gray, 1997), by which small numbers can be processed. However, since I had not previously used the programme, I was unable to anticipate the data-analysis clearly. This led to some difficulties. For instance, I found that SPSS was best suited to quantitative data, and did not easily lend itself to qualitative ones. Nonetheless, I was able to record the qualitative information, by assigning numerical values to each category.

The programme was useful in the retrieval of the data. Yet, due to the size of my sample, I was unable to take full advantage of it. For example, had numbers been sufficient, I had hoped to discover whether there was a correlation, in schedule II, between the 'fields of interest' of the organisations that volunteers helped and the activities which these people undertook. Then, I could have compared my results with the *National Surveys* (Davis Smith, 1998a). However, my expectation was not fulfilled. The most useful computer process, for me, was the statistical frequency distribution. This made a firm basis for the recording and analysis of the findings, and was the foundation of most of the Tables.

Problems and constraints

Change of focus

In any project, as in life generally, researchers should be prepared for unforeseen events that may have 'knock-on' effects (Robson, 1993; Osborne, 1998). The one that caused the greatest difficulty, at the time, was the departure of the administrative support worker from the Bureau, two months after the commencement of the data-collection. This affected the research immediately, through a reduction in opening hours at Griffon, which may have contributed to the decrease in registrations there. It then became necessary to include the Midville centre, in order to try to reach the numerical target for the sample. This move proved advantageous to the research, both because I was able to focus on the Bureau as a whole, and because of the insights it gave into the working of the Midville office. But the project became harder for me to manage from my base in Griffon.

Sample size

Since the sample population did not reach 30, it was too small for meaningful quantitative data analysis, or for making generalisations from the findings. It might have approached the target, if I had included the option of telephone interviews from the start. I infer this from a few replies that I received from some who were willing to participate, but were unable to meet me. In addition, without my prior knowledge, about six persons who registered in Midville were excluded from the study. The reasons for this action were therapeutic, and had ethical justification (Robson, 1993). However, even if all six had participated, the initial numbers were unlikely to have compensated for the attrition that took place between the first and second interviews. I comment elsewhere in this chapter on how I adjusted my approach, because of the different emphasis that was required by fewer numbers than I expected.

Points of view

In total, not enough different viewpoints were expressed in the study; more would have increased its validity. For instance, as I have already noted, only managers Y and Z represented the Bureau itself. Moreover, they were also respondents for two of the organisations that were affiliated to the Bureau, and that participated in the study. Manager Y doubled as co-ordinator of one of them. Manager Z, before she took on her new position, co-ordinated the second, and responded to the interview for that agency.

Who else?

In order to add other perspectives, I could have involved more local persons. But the time constraints of part-time practitioner research limited my choice. If this had not been so, I would have approached members of the executive committee. Several, key local parties were represented on this body: both various organisations, and individual volunteers. These persons would have contributed observations from the wider, local community. Yet, I did interview another committee member, as representative of an organisation that was not affiliated to the Bureau. Moreover, as I have noted earlier, the committee was involved in the study, though as observer, rather than participant.

It would have been advantageous to interview representatives of local statutory agencies. Indeed, I interviewed an employee of the borough council, as

representative of one of its departments. No-one from the county council participated because, despite my enquiries, I did not identify an appropriate person to include in the study.

Too long?

The questions in schedule I that requested personal information for the purpose of social classification, and those about caring responsibilities, were based on the *National Surveys* (Lynn and Davis Smith 1993). However, fewer would have been sufficient for a small study. Indeed, some of these questions detracted from the main purpose of the interview.

What's in a word?

Different assumptions about the use of the word 'interview' led to some misunderstanding, in part due to the informality of the procedure. In the Bureau, 'the interview' described the meeting that usually took place after registration, between the volunteer and either the manager or an experienced volunteer. I designed Schedule I to be administered after this one. However, 'interview' could also designate the first, and maybe the only meeting between an enquirer and any one of the personnel in the office. When I composed the initial letter to the volunteer (*Appendix 7*), I was unaware of the word's special meaning in the Bureau. My letter may have confused one respondent, who believed that the research interview was the semi-official one. But I learned of her assumption only at the end of mine. Fortunately, on that occasion manager Y was able to meet her directly afterwards. This misunderstanding should not have occurred if, according to my expectation, I had always received the completed questionnaires at the same time as the 'consent' forms, before I made my appointments. Moreover, its meaning should have been clear from the letter's heading. In retrospect, I think that always describing my meeting with the respondents as 'the research interview' would have avoided this confusion; I included this phrase in the letter for schedule II.

Which agencies?

One purpose of the staff questionnaire was to alert me as to which organisations to include in the study. That information should also have been on the registration forms, but it was not always recorded. However, because I did not receive completed questionnaires for all the volunteers in the sample, I did not always know

which were the appropriate agencies to approach. Nor did manager Y always know which ones, if any, the respondents had contacted. I was able to cover most of that gap through informal conversations, both with manager Y and with some volunteers in my sample. In addition, aided by manager Y, I made a list of relevant organisations, from which I supplemented the numbers.

Validity and reliability

Earlier in this chapter, I referred to the concepts of validity and reliability. Two important, inter-related questions about research are, firstly: Is it sound, or 'valid'; are the findings what they appear to be, or is there a mistake which negates them? The second is: Is it reliable; does the study produce trustworthy evidence? (Robson, 1993). He points out that, while reliability alone is insufficient for validity, without it a proposition cannot be valid.

Validity

The notion of validity in research stems from mathematical probability theory. From this, scientific researchers estimate 'internal validity': the extent to which a study shows that a particular factor caused the effect that the enquirer found. They also use probability theory to show 'external validity': how far the findings from a specific sample can be 'generalised' to a larger, similar population (Robson, 1993).

The concepts of internal and external validity have been transferred to other, non-scientific research, and include qualitative studies. For this project, I take the broader view generally used for such work. That is, by 'internal validity', I mean: Do the findings provide answers to the research question? By 'external validity' or 'generalisability', I mean: Would another person who used my methods in respect of a different bureau make similar findings? While definite answers to the last question would only be possible if that new research actually took place, there should be enough information in this chapter for that person to undertake such a study.

Validating social research

Blumer (1940) points out the dilemma for social researchers in applying abstract concepts to human behaviour, when it cannot be observed. This is a problem for my study, in its focus on motivation, with examples that express subjective points of view. However, Blumer (1940) advises that validation, in this field, is different from

the scientific one. He suggests evaluating 'propositions and generalisations' that are formed from such a study, by their 'reasonableness, plausibility and illumination'. Stiles (1993) relates Blumer's suggestion to qualitative research, arguing that it should be judged differently from quantitative studies. He recommends asking if the qualitative research changes the understanding of the persons involved: 'readers, investigators and participants' (1992, p. 593).

Reliability

Unreliability is a main source of error, or invalidity, in research. It may stem from mistakes on the part of the interviewer, or of the respondents. It may also arise from prejudice, or 'bias' from any of them. Although nothing will entirely prevent human fallibility, carefulness in the preparation of interview schedules, in their subsequent use and in data processing can reduce mistakes. Supervision from an experienced researcher may also assist in greater reliability.

Bias is different from error, in that it is caused by personal values, interests or experience (Robson, 1993). Stiles argues that all research is biased, because it relies more on preconceptions than on observation (1993, p. 613). He maintains that, while we cannot eliminate values, we can work to make them open to change (Stiles 1993).

Stiles (1993) recommends that, in a qualitative investigation, the researcher's personal involvement should be declared. This, he claims, allows those involved 'to adjust their understanding to compensate for the investigator's biases' and departs from the accepted view that 'the possibility of bias invalidates a research finding' (1993, p. 614). In addition, the effects of bias may be reduced through the system of 'triangulation' (Stiles 1993; Robson, 1993).

Appraisal of methodology

Multi-method approach

The research question, implying an evaluation, was not bound by any particular method. The combined approach, drawing from both the quantitative and qualitative traditions, meant that this project could be developed along lines appropriate to the research question and to the conceptual theme. For instance, the qualitative material was a source for the study of volunteers' motivation, while the quantitative

data provided a wider background for the evaluation of the Bureau. Moreover, the dual approach enabled me to forestall the problem that a small sample would have caused, in a quantitative enquiry only. However, the amount of quantitative data lengthened the time needed for its processing, which was also *increased* through the different method required for recording qualitative information.

Design

Population unit

As I comment earlier, the size of the sample was adequate, but would have been better, if it had included persons who saw the Bureau from different aspects.

Interviews and questionnaire

Interviewing, my primary method of data-collection, was suitable for my approach to this study (Robson, 1993, pp. 229-230). As a practitioner, and also through market research, I was familiar with this procedure. It was also used in the *National Surveys*, on which I modelled some of it. The semi-structured interview was suitable for my purpose.

However, these strengths also had flaws. For instance, drawing on one design, in retrospect, led me along paths that were not directly related to the research question. An example of this was the attempt to compare respondents' choice of voluntary activities with the fields in which they operated. Interviewing also increased the possibility of my personal bias and that of the subjects.

The questionnaire was less useful than the interviews, because of its low response rate, although it provided some background information. Its poor return suggests that meeting respondents face-to-face may have increased the number of participants. Yet, the response by the volunteers to the initial interviews was the same as that of Gomersall's postal questionnaire (1984). However, the staff were a different group, with other priorities. So the fate of my questionnaire may have resulted from the over-stretching of the staff.

Format

On the whole, the shape of the interview schedules made them easy to administer, and appeared to make logical sense to the respondents. Dividing the questions on

personal matters into different parts of the schedules, and interspersing them with questions on motivation, lessened the pressure on interviewees to provide this information and may have assisted in obtaining it. However, not all of the personal information was necessary, and the format made the data take longer to process than a less detailed one.

The parallel questions in the interview schedules and questionnaire were useful for making comparisons between different groups. However, the wording was not always exactly the same in each set, and it is possible that some of the questions might have been answered differently, if they had matched each other more precisely.

Validity and reliability

Although my sample is too small for validation through statistical tests, other factors contribute to its reliability. For example, comparison with the *National Surveys* contributes to the validation of the findings. Foremost is the method of triangulation (Stiles, 1993, pp. 608-9). For example, the findings demonstrate that there was internal consistency among the responses of the majority (Stiles, 1993. p. 609). However, more, different voices would have strengthened the evidence.

How good is the plan?

Large-scale research on volunteer bureaux is scarce. However, small projects abound, and I obtained a few of them, at the planning stage. Yet, I did not discover any that were exactly what I envisaged, so I designed my own, drawing on what material I could. The study evolved during its progress. For instance, although it started as a descriptive investigation, it became exploratory in nature.

Summary and on to the evidence

In this chapter, I trace the genesis of the project, from its inception, theoretical approach, and formation. I consider the values surrounding it, the importance of ethical handling throughout, the effect of the personal values of those involved with it, and how I aimed to minimise bias in the study. Then, I explain how I translated this theory into practice, through the preparation and revision of research instruments, data-collection and processing. I describe some of the difficulties I met, and how I dealt with them. Through this experience, I learned the value of flexibility in practical

research. The findings, which I present next, enable the reader of this study to judge the appropriateness of the methodology.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter, I consider the main findings from the two interviews with the volunteers and the one with the agencies. The first section introduces the respondents: their social characteristics, motivation, and their perceptions of the initial response from the Bureau. The second looks at their experience of volunteering after six months, and why some dropped out. This includes, for both groups, their views on the rewards of volunteering. There is more about their perception of the response from the Bureau and from the organisations which they helped. In the third section, I consider the viewpoint of the agencies: their experience of the volunteers who came through the Bureau, their good practice towards them, and their impressions of the Bureau's support. In accordance with my original intention, I do not present the Bureau's response here, but include it in the next chapter.

Interview schedule I

The research sample

During the research period, 83 volunteers registered with the Bureau. Twenty-four (28%) of them took part in the first interviews; this response rate was near to Gomersall's (1984: 29%). I interviewed 17 (61%) of the initial respondents a second time, six months after their registration.

Social characteristics

In the literature review, I discussed the changing social profile of volunteers. On the whole, my sample is like this pattern.

Gender

Thirteen (54%), slightly more than half of the respondents were women and 11 (46%) were men. This differed from the sex distribution of the total number who registered with the Bureau during the same period, when the number of females was about double that of the males. However, it was similar to the *1997 National Survey* (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 25), in which equal numbers volunteered (48% of each). There were no males under the age of 24 in my sample.

Age

The age range was between 18 and 65 years, and the numbers in each group spread fairly evenly. The biggest group, a quarter of the respondents, was between 25 and 34. The two next largest were between 18 and 24 years, and between 45 and 54. Only one person was aged 65 and no-one was older. As noted in the literature review, (Davis Smith 1992b, p. xi; Niyazi, 1996c), people over retirement age are under-represented. I have no other explanation for the absence of persons in the oldest group, although it is contrary to the more recent trend for an increase after retirement (Davis Smith 1998a, p. 25). The Bureau has no upper age limit, apart from the constraints set by insurance companies for driving. Along with other bureaux, this one is aiming to involve more, older persons (manager Z, pers. comm.).

⁹**Table 1 Age bands**

Ages	Nos.	%
18-24	5	21
25-34	6	25
35-44	4	17
45-54	5	21
55-64	3	13
65	1	4
	--	
Total	24	

In respect of age, my findings are both similar to, and different from the 1997 *National Survey* (Davis Smith, 1998a, pp. 25-26). In that study, the majority were between 45 and 64 (57%; 34% in mine) and over 75 years. The least were the younger persons (43%) and those between 55 and 64 (40%). The higher number of older persons up to retirement age, nationally, may be partly explained by the success of the governments' policy to persuade older women to return to work (Rogers, 1990).

In my study, the younger persons of 24 and under form proportionately the largest group by age of those who are under-represented in volunteering. In this respect, there are likenesses between my findings and those in studies discussed in the literature review (Bull and Schmitz 1976; Mocroft 1983). These suggest that more well educated, young women volunteer through bureaux than would be expected

⁹ Percentages in these findings are rounded up or down, so may not always total 100.

from the wider population. My young respondents were all female, and most of them were more highly qualified than the rest of the sample. Four of them were neither married, nor living with a partner. Thus, my findings support the view that bureaux attract some well educated young women, who are also single.

Marital status

Eleven respondents (46%) were either married or living with a partner. Five (21%) were single, separated or divorced. These numbers are less than Davis Smith's (1998a, pp 32-33), from which he concludes that more of those who volunteer are married or living with a partner (52%) than single (42%, 1998a).

Carers

Eight respondents (33%) looked after elderly or disabled relatives, or were parents of young children. Six of them lived in the same homes as those for whom they had responsibilities. Davis Smith (1998a, p. 25) found that there were higher than average rates of volunteering among carers (55%), and among parents whose children under 15 years were at home (54%). There were fewer carers in my sample than in his, which may relate to the ages of my subjects. Yet, they are still a substantial proportion of my respondents.

Ethnicity

All but one of my sample were white, British people; the other person was Indian. This reflected the ethnic composition of the area with regard to the Asian community (4.2%), in which the Indian population was the largest of the minority ethnic groups (OPCS, 1991). In Midville and Griffon, Black persons were 1% of the population, a proportion that is too small to draw inferences about their under-representation, noted in the literature review.

In this respect, Davis Smith (1998a, p. 25) found that white persons were slightly more likely to volunteer (49%) than those from Black or Asian groups (41%) or from other ethnic ones (31%). For its part, the Bureau made, and continues to make several, different moves towards including more persons from minority ethnic groups.

Disability, impairment, and health problems

Thirteen respondents had some form of disability. As noted in the literature review, I use the word 'disabled,' in the text, to cover three of the main groups, both for simplicity and confidentiality. Eight of my respondents had a physical disability. Six of them had a health problem and four a visual or auditory impairment. Three of these persons had both a physical disability and an impairment, one had a physical disability and another of them had a physical disability and a health problem.

There were wide variations among these persons, both in the type of disability and also in its severity. For example, one of them had a brain injury, another had mental health problems and a third, a slight hearing loss.

Nonetheless this group, which was relatively poor financially, experienced barriers that I discussed in the literature review. For example, some of them feared losing their state benefits through volunteering. This concern was expressed also by a 'pilot' interviewee. All but one of these disabled persons were unemployed, and so were also subject to some of the disadvantages on which I comment below. Eight of them were actively seeking work.

Employment and unemployment

The respondents' drive to find work is reflected in the changing pattern between their registration with the Bureau, the first research interview and their situation after six months. Initially, 16 (67%) were economically active: three in paid employment, and the rest seeking work. By the time of their first interview, five others were also working.

Two of those who were not actively seeking work had temporary, part-time jobs. One of them was a full-time student and the other in a 'gap' year before going to university.

Table 2 Economic status at registration

	No	%
Unemployed, actively seeking work	13	54
Unemployed, not actively seeking work	7	29
Employed	3	13
Retired	1	4
Total	24	100

Six respondents (25%) were at the Bureau for experience that might subsequently lead to employment. Four of these persons were placed under *New Deal's* 'voluntary option'; this sub-group forms a disproportionate part of the sample, since most of them took part in this research. However, I do not treat them as a separate category, because their responses were similar to those of the other respondents, as I explain at the end of this chapter.

Further on, I will show that the majority of the unemployed persons received job seeker's allowance ('J.S.A'); this raises issues about the payment of volunteers discussed in the literature review.

Occupations

As noted in the last chapter, I intended to compare findings related to socio-economic classification by occupation with the *National Surveys*. My purpose was to discover whether there was a difference between Midville and Griffton, and the larger picture. However, this was not meaningful for a small population; instead, I use the information as background for the study.

Table 3 Current /most recent occupations

Socio-economic group	No.	%
Managers/ assistant managers	3	13
Teaching/ health professionals	2	9
Sales	4	17
Personal service workers	2	9
Skilled manual workers	3	13
Semi-skilled manual workers	3	13
Unskilled manual workers	3	13
Never employed, or temporary, part-time work	4	17
Total	24	

Note. Classifications in this Table are based on those in the 1991 census (OPCS 1991).

Davis Smith (1998a, p. 29) found that persons in the professional and managerial groups were more likely to volunteer than semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers. By contrast, in my study there was a broad spread of employment backgrounds. This reflects the character of the towns, where the middle class is less clearly developed than in the southern parts of the county.

Sixteen of those who were unemployed at registration had previously worked, at some time in their lives. Here, I list a few examples of their last employment, to illustrate the categories shown in Table 3. One person was formerly a teacher, another had owned a shop, and one of the personal service workers was a hairdresser. Among the skilled manual workers was an engineer. A semi-skilled manual worker was a welder, and one of the unskilled persons was a warehouse packer.

Source of income

There was a wide diversity of income; the majority were at the lower end of the scale. The highest income was about £25,000 a year and the lowest under £4,000. The main source of household income for twelve of the respondents was from social security benefits which, for ten of them, was Job Seekers' Allowance, as noted earlier in this section. Two others received a pension. Nine were financed through employment, either their own or another family members', sometimes both. Four of those who supported volunteers financially were in semi-skilled occupations and two were in professional positions.

Table 4
Source of main household income

	No.	%
Social security benefits	12	50
Work	9	38
Pension	2	9
Not stated	1	4
	--	
Total	24	

Davis Smith (1998a, p. 28) found that those who earned the most were nearly three times more likely to volunteer than those who received the least. In this respect, my findings differed from his, possibly because of the demographic composition of the area.

Education

One person did not attend school at all. Twelve other respondents left school by the age of 16, and four others ended their full-time education by the time they were 18. Another four continued until the age of 19-21, and one other beyond 21 years. Two of them remained in full-time education until 21 years, and three persons over that age. Two of the latter were still studying. There is some evidence, in other research, to suggest that suggest: that those whose education continues over the age of 21 were more likely to volunteer than those who leave below the age of 16, for instance, Davis Smith (1998a, p. 25).

Table 5 Age when ended full-time education

	Nos.	%
15 years	4	17
16 years	8	33
17-18 years	4	17
19-20 years	2	9
20-21 years	2	9
Over 21 years	1	4
Still studying/ study in prospect	2	8
No formal education	1	4
Total	24	

The two who I describe as 'still studying' or 'study in prospect' expected to complete university education over the age of 21. One of them, aged 20, was a full-time student and the other, at 18 years of age, was in a 'gap' year between school and university. In addition, eleven other persons were studying part-time, but I do not included these in the Table.

Twenty respondents had passed some examination. The highest educational qualification obtained by four persons was a school-leaving certificate.

Table 6 Highest educational qualification

	Nos.	%
School-leaving exam	4	17
Further education	13	54
Higher education	3	13
No formal qualification	-4-	17
Total	24	

Thirteen had qualifications through further education, and three through higher education.

So far, the findings show that these respondents came from diverse sectors of the population. The majority were economically less secure, and relatively less qualified than their national counterparts. Yet, whereas their personal circumstances may have influenced them, individual reasons, other than their class background, were at the heart of their wish to volunteer.

Motivation

This is a key factor in the explanation of why people are drawn to voluntary activity, why they remain and what they expect from it. My respondents' motives were complex, few coming for only one reason. This is not surprising, in the light of the concepts discussed in the first chapter, and also in common experience.

It is difficult to isolate individual motives, and even harder to classify them (Marshall, 1997, p. 13). However, in this section I attempt to do both, drawing primarily on qualitative material. The majority of my respondents (23: 96%) spoke of rewards for themselves (personal interest). Yet, benefits for others (altruism), also inspired twelve of them.

Table 7: Reasons for volunteering

	Nos.	%
personal interest:	18	75
practical personal interest -	14	58
general		
altruism	12	50
therapeutic	5	21
don't know	1	4

As noted in the literature review, Sherrott's broad categories are similar to mine. He found that about half of his subjects explained their volunteering in terms of tangible benefits for themselves (1983, p. 65). Some of his sub-categories (1983, pp. 65-100) are reflected in explanations that I use below.

Personal interest: practical

Eighteen of my respondents had practical reasons for wishing to undertake voluntary activities. For example, fourteen (58%) of my respondents to the first interview, like 59 per cent of Davis Smith's (1998a, p. 90), saw volunteering as enabling them to get a job. Four others looked on it as preparation for professional training: one in occupational therapy, another in social work, and two as part of a course in counselling. In the next chapter, I consider how the emphasis on 'something to do', current in the early 1990s, shifted under the influence of the government's policy.

Personal interest: general

Fourteen offered general reasons that related to their own interests. Nearly all of these were substitutes for incidental rewards from employment (Sherrott, 1983, p. 65). For instance, eight unemployed persons wanted occupation, as expressed by one of my respondents:

'I wanted something to do, because [I] was unemployed [and] bored at home'.

Another wished to: 'use my free time constructively'.

Five, including the two I have just cited, looked for 'something to do outside the home'. Their comments explain some of what these persons were seeking: relief from boredom and filling in time usefully. For one of them, voluntary work filled a gap left by retirement. She said:

'[I] didn't want to be at home all the time. [I] want to be involved [I] have been all my life'.

By contrast, a carer of young children required occupation within the home, whereas six respondents wanted opportunities for contact with others.

Therapy

Four believed that voluntary activity might be therapeutic for them. For example, one person, who had recovered from a depressive illness, hoped it would be a step to 'normality'. A fifth person came to the Bureau because it was 'recommended...by [the] patient advisor'¹⁰.

Altruism

Initially, three persons spoke of benefits for others, such as 'helping someone in need', but none of them expressed their motives in terms of altruism alone. However, when they were asked for other reasons, another eight said they wanted to 'help others,' 'help the agency' or 'contribute to the community'. The latter motive, like those of the next group, also has features of reciprocity.

Two respondents had each helped a friend who was in difficult circumstances and, when the need of those persons was over, wished to help someone else. Three other respondents, one of whom was under 24 years of age, had themselves benefited from assistance, one after a bad accident, a second one with an addiction and another through the Guides Association. They wished to 'pass on' to others something of what they themselves had received.

Altruism and reward for the donor

My findings support the view that that motivation is complex, for altruism itself brought rewards to some volunteers. Three of them mentioned the 'satisfaction of helping others' or 'pleasure at the response' of the beneficiary.

Other reasons: skills and hobbies

In the next chapter, I discuss the importance of leisure pursuits. Yet, even in their 'spare time,' the impetus to prepare for work is evident in the aspirations of the majority. Sixteen of them hoped to use skills they already had: their expertise was

¹⁰ The Bureau has links with services for individuals with particular needs, for instance mental health problems and learning disabilities. However, there were no others from these groups in my sample. As noted earlier, six persons who came for mental health reasons were excluded on ethical grounds.

mainly in 'communication,' or in driving a vehicle. By 'communication' they meant either their own aptitudes in inter-personal contact, or abilities in information communication technology ('I.T.'), sometimes both. Eight of them hoped to use a hobby which, for all of these persons, was sport.

Activities and aspirations

In the first interview, I asked respondents what voluntary activity they wanted to do or, as appropriate, what they were already doing through the Bureau. I followed this with two questionnaires based on the *National Surveys* (Lynn and Davis Smith, 1991; Davis Smith, 1998a;). The first concerns 'fields of interest,' that is, the areas of activity that the different organisations represented. The other is about 'voluntary activities': what respondents actually did, or wanted to do.

For simplicity, the preferences of those who had not yet started are combined, in this section, with the responses of the ones who were already involved. I also record here the outcome, which I learned from both the first and the second interviews. Because of the difference in the proportion of the sample who responded to the first and second interviews, the numbers do not all tally.

Fields of interest and voluntary activities

Prior involvement

Fourteen respondents were helping organisations in a voluntary capacity before they registered at the Bureau. Five of them were still with the same ones, at the time of the first research interview. These were dominated by health and social welfare (eleven persons, including two who were helping older people) and community development (children's education or out-of school activities: five).

Wishes

The responses to the open question on what the volunteers wanted to do showed that the most popular types of organisations were, again, in the field of health and social welfare (twelve). Five respondents, who were all job seekers, wanted practice in office skills, while two preferred to help children or young people.

The two questionnaires (schedule I.19 and 20), served a different function from the *National Surveys* (Lynn and Davis Smith, 1991; Davis Smith, 1998a). The purpose of these surveys was to discover what volunteers actually did, or had done, during the past year. However, since not all of my subjects had taken part in voluntary activity during the preceding twelve months, mine was prospective: to open respondents' view to other activities in which they might be interested. For these reasons, and because of my smaller sample, I did not attempt to discover whether there was a correlation between the 'activities' and 'fields', as I originally intended. However, some broad comparisons are possible with the *1997 National Survey* (Davis Smith, 1998a), which I make below.

In Tables¹¹ 8 and 9, I show the responses to the two questionnaires. The first one suggests that the preferred 'fields of interest' were in health and social welfare (20 respondents: 83%). Those that attracted the least interest were politics and campaigning (three; 13%) and youth or children's activities outside school (2: 14%).

Table 8 Fields of interest

Fields of interest	Nos.	%	*DS %
Children's Education/ Schools	9	38	23
Youth/ (Outside school)	2	8	14
Education (Adults)	9	38	4
Sports/ Exercise	9	38	26
Religion	7	29	23
Politics and campaigning	3	13	4
Health and Social Welfare	20	83	19
Older People	13	54	6
Safety, First Aid	13	54	9
The Environment	9	38	5
Justice and Human Rights	7	29	3
Community Groups	12	50	14

(*DS = :Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 43.:)

¹¹ Because each person could choose more than one response, the numbers given for the findings in this section may exceed the number of volunteers..

Davis Smith, (1998a, p. 39) found a different order of choice, among the 'active' volunteers in his study. In the *1997 National Survey*, the most common areas of involvement were sport and exercise (26%), then children's education and schools, and also religion (both 23%). At the end of the spectrum were health and social welfare (19%).

Outcome

Thirteen of my respondents helped an organisation through the Bureau during the research period. Eight of them were placed at the Bureau itself, at least initially. Four went to organisations concerned with health and social welfare, two others helped children or youth. One respondent took part in a sporting activity.

More assisted the Bureau than had initially thought of doing so and less went into the field of health and social welfare than originally asked for it. Manager Y explained that, if volunteers were unsure about what they wanted to do, they would often start at the Bureau, in order to gain 'a feeling of what volunteering [was] about.' They might then help other organisations at the same time, or leave the Bureau and move on.

The percentage occupied with children or youth was similar to that in the *1997 National Survey* (Davis Smith 1998a). But proportionately more of my respondents went into health and social welfare (31% of mine, compared with 19%) and more of Davis Smith's took part in sport (4% of my sample and 25% in Davis Smith, 1998a).

Activities

In effect, the questionnaires looked at the same subject from different angles. Yet, the second one focused on the actual activities, rather than on the organisations and included some that were not listed in the first.

Table 9 Types of voluntary activities

(Categories are from: Lynn and Davis Smith, 1991, *The 1991 National Survey*, p. 42)

Category	<u>% degree of interest</u>					<u>Total</u>	<u>no.</u>	<u>%</u>
	very	slightly	not particularly	not at all	d. k / not said			
Raise/ handle money	25	13	38	25	-	9	38	
Committee member	29	21	13	25	13	12	50	
Organise/ run activity/ event	29	29	25	17	-	14	58	
Visiting	50	17	8	25	-	16	67	
Advice/ information	29	25	13	29	4	13	54	
Sec./ admin./ clerical	29	17	21	33	-	11	46	
Transporting	25	13	13	46	4	9	38	
Other direct help	46	25	21	4	4	17	71	

Seventeen respondents (71%) favoured direct activities, one of the most satisfying for those offering their leisure time. Sixteen of them were attracted by visiting. The least popular were transport and fund-raising (nine, 38%). The latter is the most common pursuit, nationally (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 39). Three individuals each added a different personal interest: campaigning, sport and animals. There is some overlap between my findings and those of Davis Smith (1998a). However, I do not attempt a comparison, because my findings are based on all respondents, whereas Davis Smith's (1998a) included active volunteers only.

These questionnaires opened new avenues for enquirers, and also provided opportunities for those who were not ready to consider what they might do in the future. Moreover, as noted above, some might go on to something different. Indeed, Davis Smith (1998a, p. 39) found that 46 per cent of his respondents were involved in two or more organisations, which suggests that mobility within them is not unusual. The nature of 'work itself' is a motivating factor (Herzberg, 1968, pp. 76-77), so paying attention to volunteers' interests is essential. In the next section, I consider how the Bureau enabled them to fulfil their aspirations.

Motivation to approach the Bureau

This is how the volunteers heard of the Bureau and their views on spreading the word about its services. According to the nature of publicity, several learned of it from more than one source. Ten of them were told by someone in an official capacity; primarily in the Job Centre, by careers' advisors, or in a college of further education. Nine learned of the Bureau through the sign on the building, whereas seven heard of it by 'word of mouth'. One person saw a display in a supermarket during National Volunteers' Week, while another discovered it through the internet.

Eight of the respondents would not have gone to another organisation, if they had not contacted the Bureau.

The majority (15), appreciating the Bureau's services, thought it could do more to promote itself, chiefly through advertising. Three felt that other changes would be beneficial, such as improvements to the outward appearance of the Griffon office.

The Bureau as motivator of volunteers

Most of the respondents had a good first impression. Nineteen of them said that their initial visit was useful. Twenty considered the Bureau's response was helpful, indeed, 17 of them thought it was very helpful.

Table 10: Perception of Bureau's response

	No. of respondents	%
very helpful	17	71
helpful	3	13
very unhelpful	1	4
not applicable	1	4
don't know	2	8
	--	
Total	24	

Fourteen persons (58%) thought that the information about volunteering opportunities was accurate, and that its quality was good. About fifteen years earlier, 48 per cent of Gomersall's respondents (1984, p. 22) considered that the range of work offered by the Milton Keynes bureau was adequate.

Table 11 Accuracy of information (about volunteering opportunities)

	No. of respondents	%
very accurate	8	33
fairly accurate	6	25
not applicable	6	25
don't know	4	17
	--	
Total	24	

Fourteen said that they had received information about other organisations.

Nineteen volunteers thought that the overall quality of the service was good, four of them feeling that it was excellent. The response of the one person who did not find the visit to the Bureau useful is inconsistent with the others. It relates to a time of change, when mistakes may happen. Unfortunately, such an experience may deter persons from volunteering although, in this instance, it did not do so.

Expectations

These are some of the reasons why the volunteers came to the Bureau. For some, it was a new move, since nine of them had no previous experience of voluntary activity through an organisation. Most of them hoped that it would be a 'stepping-stone' to something else. Thirteen believed it might help them to get a paid job. Four others expected that they would gain experience that would help them in further training, such as for professional careers in health and welfare, counselling, or in preparing for an award in the 'Guides' Association. Two thought it might lead to other voluntary activities.

Off to a good start

At the first interview, ten respondents had already started some new voluntary activity since registration. They include the four who were placed at the Bureau for work experience. Five others had helped, or were helping an organisation it recommended to them.

Stopping and starting

However, eight of them had ended a previous voluntary activity, one of which started through the Bureau. They were influenced by personal circumstances: beginning a new job (four) a serious accident (two persons), or moving to a different address.

In this section, I have presented findings from the first interviews with the volunteers, looking at who they were, why they wanted to volunteer, what brought them to the Bureau, and how they perceived its response. In the next, I learn about the experience of those who participated in the second interviews, over six months later.

Motivation to continue volunteering: responses from schedule II

Again, I interviewed seventeen of the original respondents, nine men and eight women, six months after their registration. Fourteen of them (82%) had subsequently contacted at least one other organisation with a view to starting some new voluntary activity. Thirteen had helped at least one organisation, ten of which were recommended by the Bureau, and eight were still with the agencies, as volunteers. Two of them left to start a job, and another remained with the same organisation as an employee.

Duration of voluntary activity

The majority of those who undertook new voluntary work through the Bureau (eleven persons) had been helping an organisation for over four months, and one of them had stayed for more than two years.

Table 12 Duration of activity through the Bureau (up to two organisations)

	No. of respondents	%
1 day/equivalent	2	12
up to 4 months	3	18
4-6 months	6	35
over 6 months	5	29
not applicable	4	24

But, four respondents had been with a new organisation for no more than four months.

Prompt or delayed start?

Ten respondents (59%) were able to begin something new as soon as they hoped. For the majority, this meant between two and three weeks. Another person waited two months before starting. The one who took part in an event of one day’s duration was still waiting for a second, longer-term activity, six months later. And one person

withdrew, for a similar reason. In the next chapter, I refer to Niyazi's advice to organisations to take advantage of volunteers' enthusiasm, by engaging them without delay (1996b). Usually, those recommended by the Bureau did so, and these two persons' experience was exceptional. Fortunately, it did not deter either from continuing the voluntary activities they began before approaching the Bureau; but it might have discouraged others.

Falling through the net

Of the five respondents who did not undertake anything new through the Bureau, two were unsuitable: one for volunteering, and the other for the activity requested. Screening is a difficulty for organisations that operate an 'open door' policy (Roger Smith, pers. comm.). However, one of these two respondents participated in a fund-raising event, with the Bureau's assistance. A third person realised that she was unready, on health grounds, to begin a new activity. A fourth volunteer was not offered anything, through lack of communication from the Bureau. One person rejected a placement, due to a failure in matching, and another left after two sessions, for the same reason. I comment on the fortunes of two of these people in the next chapter.

Time given to volunteering

Regularity

Ten respondents (59%) had been, or were actually engaged in voluntary activity at least once a week, five of them daily (either four or five days). The proportion of those who helped an organisation every week was more than double the 21 per cent reported in the 1997 *National Survey* (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 21). Part of the reason for the increased time that they spent was because four of my respondents were under the voluntary option in *New Deal*. I look at findings about these persons in more detail, at the end of this chapter. Five others (29%), who participated at least once a year, may be considered 'current volunteers' (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 21). Some of these were probably involved more often.

Added value

Some persons donated a considerable amount of their time to voluntary activity. As noted in the literature review, one means of demonstrating the contribution of volunteers to the economy is an estimation of the monetary worth of their time.

Although I chose not to take that route in evaluating the Bureau, it is useful to record the number of hours they worked. For this adds to an appreciation of the agency's benefit to the local community, and puts it in context, by allowing some comparison with the *National Surveys*. My figures, which are approximate, relate to the responses of 'current volunteers', as defined above. It excludes the person who participated in a day's fund-raising event. Unlike the national sample, not all of mine took part in voluntary action during the week preceding the interview, although the majority did so.

Hours per week

Six of them spent between one and five hours a week in voluntary activities, and another six persons spent over eleven hours. Between them, they worked a weekly average of thirteen to fourteen hours. This was considerably more than the national average of four and a half hours (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 19). But it included those who were on the work preparation programme; these were among the higher contributors. However, even excluding these persons, the average is about five and a half hours a week. This may reflect a trend, for Davis Smith's figure (1998a) is nearly double that of the 1991 survey. It may also suggest that some of those who come through bureaux devote more time than others who do not. In addition, it shows the effect of *New Deal* in increasing the amount of volunteering.

How much longer?

Six respondents were happy to continue with the same number of hours. But one wanted to do more and three less. Two of them, who had already ended their commitment, did not want to do any more voluntary work, at that time.

Table 13 **How many hours do they want to continue volunteering?**

	No. of respondents	%
the same	6	35
less	3	18
not at all	2	12
more	1	6
not applicable	4	24
not stated	2	12
	--	
Total	17	

Looking ahead, six persons had in mind some point within the future when they would disengage from their voluntary activities. Yet, a minority of four wanted their commitment to last 'indefinitely'. It is interesting to compare these findings with the predictions from the first interviews. Then, eleven expected their voluntary activity to be short-term, dependent on prospective life changes. Five believed they would continue indefinitely.

One of the questions that I have considered in this section, and look at again in the next chapter, is whether or not bureaux attract new recruits who are likely to develop a lifetime commitment. So far, my findings suggest that they do not recruit many in this category. More than half of those in the original sample were already involved in other volunteering, before they came to the Bureau. The majority of those who sought new activity regarded it as temporary.

Satisfaction from voluntary activity

I incorporated into the interview schedule II a questionnaire based on 'The benefits of volunteering', from the *National Surveys* (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 90). I changed the introductory word from 'benefits' to 'satisfaction', because of the ambiguity of its present use for financial payments by the state. 'Rewards' would have been better. However, since I otherwise kept the same wording as the surveys, it is unlikely that the change made a difference to the replies. All of my respondents answered the questionnaire, whereas in the *National Surveys*, it was administered only to 'regular volunteers': those who participated at least monthly (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 89). Those in my study who had not started a regular commitment through the Bureau were able to draw on other, relevant experience to guide their answers.

The questionnaire served two main functions. Its chief purpose was to ask about motivation in a different guise from schedule I, and to compare it with the national picture. Its second aim was to discover whether there was any relationship between volunteers' motivation and their involvement. Through the assumption that they may expect personal rewards, it gives the message that these are acceptable.

After recommendations at the 'pilot' stage, I added two questions to the survey's model. These were, firstly, whether volunteering gave respondents work experience, and, secondly, what else they enjoyed about it. Fourteen persons (82%) considered

that it gave them work experience. It is interesting that, of the seven responses to the final, open question, which is not included in the Table, five of them were about personal rewards. Three of these answers were altruistic.

Table 14 Satisfaction from volunteering - a comparison with the *National Surveys, 1991 and 1997*

Note

The figures quoted in the comments below are taken from David Smith (1998a, p., 90) and from my study.

Key to Table

- Line order 1) *The 1991 National Survey (Lynn and Davis Smith, 1991) n=421*
 2) *The 1997 National Survey (Davis Smith, 1998a) n=419*
 3) **The Evaluation of a Volunteer Bureau, 2005 n=17**

	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree	don't know
	%	%	%	%	%
I meet people and make friends through it.	48	37	11	4	0
	52	33	11	3	-
	41	41	12	6	0
It's the satisfaction of seeing the results.	67	37	5	2	1
	71	25	2	1	-
	53	41	0	6	0
It gives me the chance to do things I'm good at.	33	36	24	7	0
	36	42	16	5	-
	29	47	18	0	6
It makes me feel less selfish (<i>as a person</i>).	29	33	24	13	2
	36	37	20	10	-
	29	35	12	18	6
I really enjoy it.	72	21	6	2	0
	73	20	6	1	-
	65	23	6	0	6
It's part of my religious belief or philosophy of life to give help.	46	26	0	14	13
	44	22	9	23	2
	35	35	0	18	6
It broadens my experience of life.	39	36	13	9	1
	45	39	13	3	-
	35	59	6	0	0
It gives me a sense of (<i>personal</i>) achievement.	47	31	16	6	0
	49	38	9	3	-
	53	35	0	0	12
It gives me the chance to learn new skills.	25	22	29	23	1
	28	31	27	13	-
	53	23	6	6	12
It gives me a position in the community.	12	16	33	38	1
	15	20	40	24	24
	29	41	23	0	6
It gets me 'out of myself'	35	30	19	15	1
	32	36	22	9	-
	47	23	6	12	12
It gives me the chance to get a recognised qualification.	3	7	15	74	1
	4	6	30	57	-
	23	29	12	23	6
It gives me work experience.	41	41	6	6	6

Summary and comparison with the 1997 Survey

In general, my findings are close to those in the Survey (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 90). Here, I summarise the main similarities and differences between my sample and his. Dissimilarities are in the amount of emphasis placed by the three groups on the rewards.

Similarities

Sixteen (94%) of my respondents, like 96% of their national (English) counterparts in the 1997 Survey, gained satisfaction from seeing the results. Likewise, sixteen persons in my study (94%) and 84% in the 1997 Survey agreed that volunteering broadened their life experience.

Earlier in this chapter, I noted the importance of enjoyment. Indeed, fifteen of my subjects (88%) and 93 per cent of Davis Smith's (1998a) said they enjoyed voluntary activity. It gave fifteen persons a sense of achievement (Davis Smith, 1998a: 83%). Meeting people and making friends was another of the chief benefits for fourteen of my respondents (82%), as well as nationally (85%).

Differences

The chief difference between my sample and the national one is in the emphasis of the Midville and Griffon volunteers on preparation for employment. Thirteen (76%) of them, including all of those who were actively seeking work, said it gave them the chance to learn new skills. The national proportion was less (59%) although that was twelve per cent higher than in 1991 (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 89). As noted earlier in this dissertation, volunteering increases job prospects, which was a strong motivating factor for my subjects.

Twelve (70%) of my respondents, comprising all but one of the unemployed persons, felt that voluntary work gave them a position in the community. This was twice the proportion of the respondents in the Survey (35%: Davis Smith, 1998a). The contrast may derive from a greater sense of community in these small towns, than in England as a whole. Recognition by the community is also a by-product of work, an aspect of voluntary activity in its function as a substitute for a paid job.

Nine of my interviewees (52%), comprising seven of the ten unemployed persons who were seeking work, agreed that voluntary activity gave them the chance to get a recognised qualification. This is, proportionately, over five times more than the 10% in Davis Smith's sample.

This comparison suggests that my respondents were most like other volunteers in their appreciation of social rewards and personal enjoyment. The chief difference was in the more serious purpose of their involvement.

Volunteers' experience of the Bureau's response

So far in this text, I have focused on basic, or 'core' motivation. Next, I consider influences that may affect it, on the part of the Bureau and the organisations it recommends. Kendall *et al.* (2003) found that motivation can vary. Core motivation tends to alter in the long-term, and other motives may vary in the medium-term, relative to a person's situation. In the short-term, it is likely to fluctuate, according to how individuals experience the environment. This new, conceptual theory is relevant to my study, regarding the effect of both the Bureau and user-organisations on volunteers' motivation, in short and medium time-spans. In particular, their experience of either agency may determine whether or not they commence a project and stay with it.

In this section, I examine the volunteers' perception of the Bureau's fulfilment of key aspects of its goals, with particular reference to its response to them. In the next one, I look at their views on how they got on, in the organisations they approached.

Equal opportunities¹²

Fifteen respondents felt they were treated fairly by the Bureau, irrespective of their gender, age, race or ability.

¹² In the last four interviews, I changed the words 'given equal opportunities' to 'treated fairly', which conveys the same meaning. I consider that the latter avoided ambiguity that was implicit in one of the responses. The reply suggested that the interviewee thought the question meant 'volunteering opportunities', in the sense of 'activities', rather than an attitude to the person.

Table 15 Volunteers' perception of the Bureau's attitude to equal opportunities

	No. of respondents	%
general, positive attitude	7	41
positive attitude to minorities	4	24
widen options for volunteering	1	6
dissatisfied/ not entirely satisfied	2	12
not applicable	1	6
not stated	2	12
	--	
Total	17	

Seven persons thought that the Bureau had a positive approach to equal opportunities. In particular, four of them, each representing one of the disadvantaged groups, commented favourably on its attitude to minorities.

Advice and guidance

Usually, the quality of the Bureau's input was good. Twelve respondents said that the Bureau had given them suitable advice and guidance. Five of them emphasised its appropriateness, with particular reference to the placement with an organisation. Four others were satisfied with the options for voluntary activities. However, advice is beset with difficulties, and the Bureau was no exception. For instance, a minority of two persons considered they had been given either 'none,' or the 'wrong advice'. In addition, there were two more issues, one in respect of matching two volunteers with organisations and the other concerning information or training for two others. I comment on the former below.

With regard to training, two answers drew attention to the need for new recruits at the Bureau to be trained in giving information and advice to enquirers. None the less, both of the two persons who felt that the advice could have been more adequate, began new voluntary activity through the Bureau. They were satisfied with the agency, and continued there as long as they could.

Communication between volunteers and the Bureau

Follow-up, as acknowledged by manager Y, was a particular weakness. Only one person, except for the eight who assisted the Bureau itself, had contacted it since

registration. This person felt that a telephone call from the office was 'helpful'. Seven others said they had not been in touch after the initial visit, three of them would have liked to hear from it again. Further communication might have resulted in a more satisfactory outcome for these people.

The Bureau was not alone in this failing: Gomersall (1984) notes the lack of follow-up by the Milton Keynes bureau. Osborne, too, (1999b) comments on the problem that bureaux have in communication. When the Bureau introduced someone by letter to an organisation, it sent a 'reply slip' for information about whether or not the agency took on that person. Yet, few returned the slip. Manager Y explained that: '[We] always offer [them the] opportunity to come back...If [they do so], they get help, but those who don't assert their need get left in limbo.'

She considered that:

'Follow-up should be a dedicated job', but it depended on the availability of a suitable volunteer.

A year later, Manager Z took a similar approach in giving volunteers some responsibility for maintaining contact, including: 'if [they are] not satisfied with their placement'. She formalised the practice of a monthly 'follow-up' telephone call made by a development officer, for whom she obtained a specific grant.

Matching

The Bureau encouraged volunteers to make their own arrangements with agencies if they wished, but was willing to assist them, according to their preference. Fourteen respondents to the second interviews said they had approached some organisations with a view to helping them. Ten of these were recommended to them by the Bureau. Twelve persons affirmed that these were the right ones for them. Eleven felt that the organisations' response was positive. On the other hand, two of them were inappropriately matched with an agency.

The actual activities that eight volunteers did within the organisations met their expectations, even though one satisfied customer had initially asked for something else. Moreover, the ten who wanted to practise a skill were able to do so, as well as the three who wished to use a hobby.

Respondents' overall estimation of the Bureau's response

Twelve felt they had gained something of value from approaching the Bureau. Ten of them spoke of personal benefits, six of social ones, while seven had career incentives.

However, whereas four respondents were entirely satisfied with the service, eight others felt there could be some improvements. Most of these were issues I have noted already: training for the Bureau's helpers in advising enquirers (one person), and matching (four). One person felt that it would have been helpful if the Bureau had provided a job description, and another mentioned an administrative difficulty, in a different agency. All but two of the respondents' observations concerned organisations affiliated to the Bureau that sometimes operated at the same premises. Their comments imply that some of them believed that these agencies were actually the Bureau itself. The misunderstanding might have been avoided by a clearer explanation of their separate identity.

Nonetheless, sixteen respondents (94%) said they could recommend the Bureau to their families or friends. Eight of them gave personal or social reasons and five emphasised the advantages of the Bureau's function as a resource. In the main, the Bureau fulfilled its goal of encouraging individuals to become involved in voluntary activity.

Volunteers and user-organisations

The first part of this section concerns good practice by organisations in the management of volunteering. It is based on an adaptation by Sheard (1995) of Herzberg's theory of essential conditions in the workplace. These avoid practices that, if present, might deter workers (Herzberg, 1996). The Bureau requires that the agencies it recommends to enquirers cultivate good practices in respect of volunteers. The Bureau itself was a user-organisation and, as such, underwent the same scrutiny as the others. Here, I present the responses of the thirteen volunteers who actually took part in voluntary activity through the Bureau, but I express the numbers in relation to all the participants in the second interview, with one exception. This was where it was appropriate, in line with the *National Survey*, to consider only the responses of those who actually had a job description. I also consider the

agencies' perception of how they fulfilled their obligations to volunteers. Parallel questions on this subject were included in my interviews with managers Y and Z.

Equal opportunities

Twelve respondents thought they were treated fairly by the organisations, and nine of them emphasised that they felt valued by them. However, one person considered that agencies, except for the Bureau, had initial reservations about him, because of his disability.

All but one of the respondents for the organisations said they had an equal opportunities' policy. However, the agency that did not have one practised it. Ten respondents said they knew of the Bureau's policy. The Bureau included its policy in its annual report, which it sent to all local agencies.

However, there were exceptions in two areas, both related to transport services. One arose from the high cost of adapting a vehicle for physically disabled volunteers. The other was caused by the age limits required by vehicle insurance companies. As a result, one organisation did not take on disabled volunteers, and the other took none over seventy years of age. None of these constraints affected volunteers in the study sample.

Preparation and support

Job description

Five persons (30%), who went to five different agencies, said they had received guidelines for the work, or a job description. Each of them considered that it was accurate.

Table 16 Accuracy of job description

	No. of respondents	%
very accurate	4	24
accurate	1	6
not applicable	11	65
not stated	1	6
	--	
Total	17	

Although few had a job description, they were proportionately more than the national 17 per cent (Davis Smith, 1997a). However, the percentage of those who did not have any form of guidelines, and who would have liked to have one (three persons: 18%), is less than the national 27 per cent. Yet, although so few of my respondents wanted a description, it was important for those who did have one. One of them commented that, because of the 'fluid roles' in the voluntary organisation 'it might give some sort of idea about the job'.

Eleven agencies said that they provided a job description. However, the perception of some of the respondents did not match that of two of the organisations they helped. Four volunteers denied having a job description, but two others, who went to the same agency as them, stated that they did have one. For its part, the agency claimed that it did provide a description of duties. By contrast, another person who helped a different agency, believed that there was a job description, whereas the agency said it did not give one.

In the first case, the organisation's provision of a job description was inconsistent, although there may have been reasons for this omission. In the second instance, the volunteer and the organisation may have understood the term differently. The 'catch-all' phrase in the interview question: 'a description, like a job description, or guidelines about the work' might have contributed to this misunderstanding, and could indicate a design fault. This could be rectified by adding a supplementary question, in the form of a probe, to clarify the nature of the description.

Induction and training

Nine persons, who helped five organisations, said they were given an induction; all of them said it was adequate. However, only three respondents, the same percentage as that reported in Davis Smith (1998a, p. 74), claimed that they had additional training. Again, all of them considered it was adequate. These figures match those in the *1997 National Survey* (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 74), in which 18 per cent received training that the majority thought was adequate. Osborne emphasises the need for training in the voluntary sector which, he claims, is virtually nil for volunteers (1996, pp. 207-8). Yet, only one of those who had received none would have liked some, whereas three others considered they did not require any. Handy (1988, p. 7)

suggests that people tend to be less critical of some aspects of their environment in voluntary organisations than in other ones.

The agencies were asked about induction and training as one item, whereas the volunteers were asked about them in separate questions. Eleven organisations said they provided an induction, or training. Two offered little or none, one of them saying: 'We have no budget for training'.

Table 17 Induction/ training for volunteers

<u>Type</u>	number of responses	%
informal	5	39
formal, direct	5	39
little/none	2	15
written material	1	8

Total	13	

Its nature varied: five trained their volunteers informally, and one gave them an induction pack. Five others trained them formally, using direct methods.

Supervision and support

Nine respondents, who named seven agencies, said they had received supervision or guidance. Its nature varied between 'ongoing' (six persons), or occasional guidance when requested (three respondents). None of them said they needed extra support in order to make volunteering possible, despite the fact that six persons said, in the first interview, that they would require additional help on account of a disability. This suggests that the support available for these respondents was sufficient.

All but one of the organisations said they offered ongoing support. Eight respondents described its nature, which was either regular and planned (four persons), or on request (also four agencies).

Expenses

Seven respondents incurred out-of-pocket expenses, which were repaid to four of them. But five, over a quarter, incurred none. Ten organisations said they repaid volunteers their expenses. This finding is similar to Davis Smith's (1998a), in which

more than half of the volunteers incurred no expenses, and 48 per cent of those that did so were reimbursed, either in full or in part. He adds that those on the lowest incomes were the least likely to run up expenses that might not be repaid. He comments that, for this reason, poorer individuals might avoid some types of voluntary activity, such as secretarial work. Indeed, three of my respondents, who were all on low incomes, said that the refund of expenses made a difference to their ability to undertake voluntary activity. Unfortunately, one of them had administrative difficulties over repayment. This example illustrates both the importance of paying expenses and of their prompt reimbursement, if disadvantaged persons are to be encouraged to participate.

Different viewpoints?

Although there appears to be a difference in perception between some volunteers and the agencies, particularly concerning volunteers' rights, it can be explained simply. Eight volunteers who responded to the second interview, (35%) said they helped at least one of the organisations that took part in my study, and one other person went to a different agency, that did not participate in the research. The remaining eight volunteers either went to the Bureau only, or did not contact any agency.

Only seven agencies, just over half of those that answered schedule III, engaged a volunteer who also responded to schedule II, and two other voluntary helpers did not stay long enough to benefit from all that the organisations claimed to provide. In addition, some respondents may not have recognised the training and supervision that some agencies claimed they built into meetings. Moreover, four volunteers were based at the Bureau itself, for reasons that I explain next.

Work placements under New Deal

Four persons were at the Bureau under the *New Deal* 'voluntary option'. Five respondents actually registered there under this programme but, by the time of the first research interview, one of them had started a new job. The other four all participated in both interviews.

They were placed by an officer of a local trades and industry consortium, who undertook mentoring for *New Deal*. This officer had herself been placed at the

Bureau in the past, in similar circumstances, and had a good opinion of its work. All four of these people chose to go to the Bureau. One of them actually took the initiative:

'I needed a [work] placement because of [my] health problems. [The officer had] difficulty in getting [me a] placement, [so I] suggested voluntary work.'

These respondents also registered at the Bureau as volunteers because, as explained by manager Y, they could remain in that capacity, if they did not obtain employment. Hence, they had a dual role in relation to this organisation.

In most respects, they were like the other respondents: for example, the spread of their ages, gender mix and the range of their disabilities. All, except for one of them, were white British. They were unemployed, and actively seeking work, but so were over a third of the other respondents to the first interview. Three of them, like most of the other unemployed persons, had previously been at work. Even their purpose: to gain experience that would help them to get paid employment, was the same as that of the other job seekers. Indeed, one of the four was a successful applicant for a position at the Bureau, during the time of this study.

Although their motivation focused on their practical needs, it included altruism, beside an appreciation of other rewards that volunteering might hold for them. Three of them had previously undertaken other voluntary activity, and two were still involved with it. Moreover, the person who joined the Bureau's staff returned there as a volunteer, for a while, after the contract had ended. Yet neither he, nor his fellows, anticipated that they would continue there in that capacity, beyond the time when they obtained employment. None the less, their estimation of the Bureau's approach and support to them was generally high, although this did not prevent one of them from making a constructive criticism, suggesting an improvement to the service.

The findings indicate that these respondents were not coerced to undertake voluntary activity at the Bureau, although they were constrained by the government's programme to prepare for employment. They freely chose an activity that the provisions of the scheme made possible for them. As well as serving their needs, volunteering enabled them to contribute to the local community. For the reasons

stated above, I have treated their data like those of the other respondents. Nonetheless, their inclusion in this study brings it into the arena of a clash between the values of voluntarism and politics. However, more recently, persons under *New Deal* have been regarded as separate from the volunteers, as in other bureaux.

Summary of section and a look ahead

In this section, I have looked, chiefly from the volunteers' perspective, at how the Bureau, and some of the organisations it recommended to them, influenced their experience. My findings suggest that the attitude of both the Bureau and the agencies, and their attention to the volunteers' wishes and needs, was a prime means of sustaining their motivation. In the next section, I present evidence from the organisations and the Bureau about the relationship between them, which assisted them in their support of the volunteers.

User-Organisations and the Bureau: Schedule III

I now consider the agencies' relationship with the Bureau, their expectations and experience of its services, and the communication between them.

Background information

Nature and setting

Thirteen organisations that took on volunteers recommended by the Bureau participated in the research. All, except for one of them, were voluntary agencies, but another operated within a statutory organisation. The majority (eleven) were based within the Midville and Griffon borough and the other two in the next small town, in the same county.

Complex relationships

Five of these agencies were represented on the Bureau's committee, two because they were affiliated to the Bureau. Manager Y, and the person who was later appointed as manager Z, were each in charge of one of the affiliated agencies. I interviewed them both in that role, as well as in their position as managers. Two other agencies, including one that was represented on the committee, also shared premises with the Bureau, at the time of the study. These relationships among small

voluntary organisations are usual, and generally beneficial (Roger Smith, pers. comm.). This inevitably caused some bias, of which manager Y was aware. However, eight of the agencies that I interviewed were not closely connected with the Bureau.

Main purposes of organisations, respondents' role and staffing

The main purposes of these agencies were: social care (nine), the provision of resources (three) and improving the environment (one). All of the respondents were working with their agency during the research period. Eleven of them had a managerial position. One of the other two respondents was a clerical assistant, and the other was a project worker.

Most of the organisations were small: there were few, or no paid staff.

Table 18 Number of paid staff in organisation

number of paid staff	number of respondents	%
none	1	8
1-5	9	69
6-10	2	15
over 10	1	8
Total	<u>13</u>	

Nine organisations had between one and five paid workers; several of these persons were part-time. Three organisations were somewhat larger: two had between six and ten paid staff, but only one had more than ten.

Policies regarding volunteers

The agencies had four main reasons for taking on volunteers. These were that: involving them was helpful to others, such as 'our clients' (eleven respondents), they enhanced the organisation's work (eight) voluntary activity benefited volunteers themselves (four) and historical reasons, such as: 'We have always had volunteers' (three). Indeed, some organisations could not operate without them. However, few thought of the rewards that volunteers might have, through helping them.

Table 19 Agencies' reasons for involving volunteers

	number of respondents	%
benefits others	11	85
benefits organisation	8	62
benefits volunteers	4	31
<i>status quo</i> (includes historical reasons)	3	23

Note: There is no percentage total to this table, because responses overlap

Experience of volunteers through the Bureau

How many?

The representatives of seven organisations said they had received at least one volunteer through the Bureau, during the research period. Nine volunteers who responded to schedule II, and one who replied to schedule I, said they had helped at least one of these organisations.

Table 20 Number of volunteers in (local) organisation

	number of respondents	%
1-5	2	15
6-10	3	23
11-20	3	23
21-30	3	23
over 30	2	15
Total	<u>13</u>	

However, it is likely that nine agencies benefited from this source. I base my estimation on the fact that two volunteers claimed in a research interview that, for a short period, each of them had helped one of the organisations that subsequently told me they had not had anyone from the Bureau. There is enough evidence in the volunteers' description of the agencies to support the conclusion that their information was correct. Clearly, the agencies were unaware of the Bureau's involvement.

Two organisations received about six volunteers between them through the Bureau, at this time. Each of the other five respondents said that between one and five

helpers came to them from this source. The numbers ranged on a continuum, from as few as between one to ten persons, in five organisations, to as many as over twenty-one, in five others. For some agencies, these helpers were but a small proportion of the voluntary workforce, whereas others relied entirely on the Bureau.

Comparison between volunteers through the Bureau and the rest

Perceptions varied among the agencies on the differences between those who came through the Bureau and the others.

Table 21 Views on degree of difference between volunteers through the Bureau and the others

degree of difference	number respondents	of %
none	5	39
some	1	8
quite a bit	1	8
a lot	2	15
not applicable	3	23
don't know	1	8
total	13	

Five respondents said there was no difference between them, two thought there was some difference, or 'quite a bit' and two said there was 'a lot'. For instance, two respondents cited positive characteristics that made the volunteers stand out from their fellows. Two others said the difference was not in the volunteers themselves, but resulted from the Bureau's input.

However, two respondents each gave an example of someone who was unsuitable for their work. Similarly, the Kent study (1986) found that at least 27 per cent of the agencies claimed they had received unsuitable volunteers. Yet the majority (eight) were satisfied with those who came to them through the Bureau. One of them said: 'We have appropriate volunteers. [Some] have been very appropriate.'

Communication between the agencies and the Bureau

Information about requirements

Twelve of the organisations said they informed the Bureau about what they required from a volunteer. Seven respondents (54%) said they sent the Bureau specific criteria. For example, one of them said:

'[We list] particular skills [that we require] for [a] specific vacancy'.

Likewise, 47 per cent of the organisations in the Kent sample (1986) specified what they wanted from a volunteer. Yet, another expected the Bureau to send volunteers continuously, whenever possible and explained that:

'Our need is ongoing. We do not approach the Bureau for specific volunteers.'

However, two respondents were unsure what to tell the Bureau. One of them wanted:

'knowledge of what the Bureau needs to know from us about the person to be introduced.' And the other asked for

'more information...about what [the Bureau] has to offer, [and] the type of people who come [there].'

Three agencies provided general information about their needs, for example through a leaflet which contained general information about the organisation. For instance, this person said:

'[I] think the only contact is the leaflet'. Then, as an afterthought, the respondent added: '[We also have] informal discussion with the manager'.

Personal contact, mentioned by six, including those who sent leaflets, was the preferred means of getting in touch. However, two respondents had other, informal links. For instance, one of them said:

'A colleague has close links with the Bureau.'

As in the previous section, respondents differed in their views on the extent to which volunteers who came to them through the Bureau suited their purposes.

Table 22

How far requirements met

	number of respondents	%
very well	5	39
all right	3	23
partly	1	8
not at all	1	8
not applicable	3	23
	--	
Total	13	

The majority (eight) were satisfied with the volunteers, but two had reservations about them.

These examples illustrate the variability of contacts between the Bureau and the organisations, and the difference in their perception of the brokerage. Next, I present findings about what the Bureau learned from the agencies about enquirers and how the information was transferred.

Feed-back about volunteers

Seven organisations (54%) said they informed the Bureau about the volunteers it recommended. Five of them spoke directly to the manager, and two others said they passed on minimal information, but did not say how they did so. One person mentioned a 'reply slip'.

'Normally, when the Bureau sends details through, there is a tear-off slip, [asking if] we [took] on a volunteer'.

This convenient means of notification was not often followed. However, as though unaware of it, one respondent commented:

'[There's a need for a] monitoring system, [with] feedback to the source of referral'.

Indeed, the following responses suggest that the system needed to be strengthened. For instance, some admitted that there was little or no communication, like this respondent:

'[We don't tell them] a lot. When [a volunteer] comes through the Bureau, we let [them] know we have taken someone on, and that everything is going well. Unless the Bureau comes back to ask, we don't communicate [again] about that person.'

Moreover, a few agencies felt remote. For example:

'[I've had no contact] with the Bureau, because I haven't had any volunteers' [from there, during the research period].

In fact, one volunteer who participated in the study claimed to have had a satisfactory short-term placement with that organisation. This would have been clear to all parties, if the procedure had been followed.

Ten of my respondents suggested how the Bureau could make it easier for them to report back.

Table 23 What would make feed-back easier?

	number	percent
form	6	46
satisfied with arrangements	2	15
onus on organisation	2	15
meetings	1	8
more information from Bureau	1	8
not applicable	1	8
	--	
Total	13	100

Not everyone wanted the same solution. They made various suggestions, six of them saying they would like to have a form, for example:

'a printed form, with target headings for feed-back.'

One person hesitated about the use of a form, unless the volunteers' consent was obtained. Moreover, it was unclear why a form was more likely to be returned than the 'reply slip' which, as noted above, the Bureau sent with the introductory letter.

Another person wanted meetings that would cover wider ground, as outlined by this respondent:

'We] 'need more regular contact, [in] meetings [to] see where we are at, [to] review methods [and consider] any improvement that could be made.'

But a different person ‘would not have time to attend meetings,’ so would be excluded. This respondent asked for the Bureau to post ‘any information they have got...regarding their volunteers.’

On the other hand, two of my respondents were satisfied with current arrangements for feed-back. In the next chapter, I compare their views with that of the Bureau.

Brokerage and other services

Twelve respondents stated that the Bureau was a recruitment agency, and that they would again ask for help in finding volunteers. One of them was influenced by previous good experience. As noted in the literature review, Thomas (1988) comments that ‘recruitment and referral’ through the bureau was the most popular service with the agencies in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Eight persons had not consulted the Bureau on anything else. This lack of knowledge about its other functions is not isolated. Thomas (1988) confessed he was ‘staggered’ by the number of agencies that were ignorant about the full range of services provided by the local bureau. For instance, one respondent for an agency in my sample believed that, by using the transport scheme which was based at the Midville and Griffon offices, but organised separately from the Bureau, she was consulting the Bureau itself. This misunderstanding highlights the confusion that there was among some respondents about the identity of the few, different agencies that shared the Bureau’s premises.

However, five persons had asked for advice or assistance on matters other than recruitment.

Table 24 Other matters about which the Bureau was consulted

	number	percent
volunteers’ issues	3	23
general information	1	8
not applicable	8	62
not stated	1	8
	--	
Total	13	

Three of them asked about specific issues and another for general information about volunteers.

Suggestions for improvements in co-operation and in the Bureau's service

Ten of my respondents (76%) said that they would welcome a closer working relationship with the Bureau, although three were satisfied with the relationship they already had. Seven of my respondents felt that better communication would improve their relationship with the Bureau. I have already recorded most of their suggestions for this purpose. Five of them also recommended shared activities. Indeed, poor communication between agencies and bureaux may be a general failure. For, as recorded in the literature review, there was a similar problem in Kent (1986), where about 47 per cent of the interviewees wanted better links with bureaux. Some of my respondents implied that the Bureau should take the initiative in improving communication, but four considered that this was their responsibility. One of them said:

'A lot has to come from our side.'

Four of those who were not often in touch with the Bureau, for geographical and other reasons, understood the necessity of two-way communication. One of them said:

'(We need) regular contacts...instead of leaving it 'til we just need a volunteer, or they have someone to send along.'

Nine persons suggested additional improvements that the Bureau could make to its service. These covered such topics as information, outreach and advertising, recruitment, and the screening of volunteers. But four were satisfied with the service and did not want any changes.

End comment

It is in the nature of evidence that all accounts do not always tally, as shown in the different perception of some volunteers and agencies. However, in order to make a judgement about truth, underlying agreement is essential. In the next chapter, I compare the observations of managers Y and Z with those of the two groups of

witnesses presented here. This enables me to discuss the findings from the viewpoint of all three main parties.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Since only a small proportion of volunteers come to bureaux (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 66), it is useful to look closely at who comes to them, and why. In this chapter, I discuss what the findings show about how well what the Bureau offers matches the volunteers' requirements. As appropriate, I consider this from three perspectives.

Summary of chapter

First, I look again at volunteer's motivation: what impelled them to start, and to continue; why some of them did neither, or ended a new commitment. Then, I reconsider their views on the Bureau's part in this process, and their experience of the agencies it recommended to them. I compare their comments with those of manager Y. These are supplemented by observations of manager Z on changes in the Bureau's practices, since the study period. Last, I re-visit the agencies, examining how the Bureau fulfilled its obligations to them and, through them, to the volunteers.

Psychological and social reasons for volunteering:

I discuss, in the second chapter, the view that motivation can affect the quality of both giving and receiving. Altruism, traditionally the source of voluntary action, safeguards against its becoming only a means to an end. However, I also note that that there is nothing wrong with givers having a vested interest, so long as this does not harm the recipients (Aves, 1969, p. 43). Like volunteers in other studies, for instance Sherrott (1983, pp. 65-138), my interviewees offered a variety of explanations that included both types of reason.

Altruism

My findings suggest that, although altruism was not the main reason for the majority, it was an important driving force for nearly half of my respondents.

A desire to help a friend in need was the starting point for two. One of them said:

'I helped a friend who...[was] dying of cancer. [I] took [my friend] to hospital for appointments.'

The experience of these two persons led them to offer to assist others. However, they were in the minority.

Reasons for altruism's lower rating

As described in the literature review, there was a change in attitude towards volunteering before the end of the twentieth century. This view is supported by the finding that most of those in my sample were slow to mention altruism. Indeed, all of my young respondents under-played it, like those in Davis Smith's survey (1998a, p.158). Maybe the negative stereotype of volunteering, inherited in reaction to the nineteenth century approach, deters open expressions of doing good. For instance, eight other respondents, including one young person, added reasons of altruism to their first ones.

Sherrott (1983, p. 137) found that that some of his respondents, like two of mine, had themselves been recipients of voluntary help. His comment, that this absolved them of the accusation of being patronising, is in tune with the present-day reticence to acknowledge a wish to help others for their own sakes. In this study, I do not attempt to answer the philosophical question about whether or not altruism exists alone. However, my findings illustrate a higher proportion of other motives, often of a practical nature. I consider that this may be characteristic of those who approach bureaux.

The two persons quoted at the beginning of this section began their involvement through an altruistic impulse. But what encouraged them to continue was the *enjoyment* they derived from it. Qureshi *et al* (1983, p. 164) comment that: 'The variable that had the most consistent association with sustained involvement was altruism based on personality needs'. They also discovered, like Davis Smith (1998a), that the reward most frequently mentioned was personal satisfaction.

Nearly a third of my respondents felt personally rewarded through their actions. But another respondent, who 'wanted to do something useful to help others,' called those

motives 'selfish', which suggests awareness of self-interest. So, although some may begin through altruism, more is required to maintain their impetus.

Social reasons

What were the additional needs that sustained their involvement? Although social class was not a particular reason, other aspects in their situation influenced them.

Groups under-represented in volunteering

Most of my subjects were from at least one of the groups that were under-represented in volunteering. The majority were unemployed, and over half of them were actively seeking work. More than half of the respondents were disabled; most of them were unemployed, as well.

In the literature review, I discuss the social and financial disadvantage of these persons. Several authors point out that volunteering enhances employability, for example, Watson, (2000). However, usually unemployed persons are less likely to volunteer than those in paid work (Davis Smith, 1998a. p. 26); in my study, more unemployed than employed persons came to the Bureau. Next, I examine the expectations of my unemployed respondents, using as subheadings the two main categories by which Gay (1998) describes those who expect volunteering to enable them to prepare for work.

'Job hopefuls'

'A (paid) job' was the goal for the majority of the unemployed persons, like this one, who said:

'[I was] unemployed [and] wanted [a] reference for a job'.

In the second interviews, more than three quarters of the respondents agreed that voluntary activity gave them work experience. Hoping that it would enhance their job prospects, they expected various benefits, such as self-confidence, skills, or qualifications. Niyazi, (1996d) emphasises the worth of volunteering for these reasons, especially for disabled persons.

Thirteen of the respondents to the second interviews, proportionately more than in the *National Surveys* (Davis Smith, 1998a, p.90), agreed that volunteering offered them the chance to learn new skills. For instance, this person said:

'[I had] finished work [and hoped] voluntary work would be [a] means of getting back. Perhaps [I could] learn new skills and make use of [my] existing skills. [It might prepare me for] future employment, [and help me to] practise new skills'.

Moreover, nine (53%), proportionately over five times more than the national average of ten per cent, considered that it gave them the chance to get a recognised qualification. These persons were driven by the urgency of their situation. Others had different aspirations.

'Career builders'

One respondent, hoping for a path to a new career, after an expected redundancy, said:

'[I want to] get experience for youth work'.

Nearly a quarter (four) saw voluntary activity as a preparation for professional training. Two of them expected to move on to careers related to health and social welfare. Two others wanted a practice placement, for a course in counselling. One of them explained:

'[It's] course requirements...to become a counsellor'. This respondent was the only one for whom volunteering was a supplement to actual employment (Sherrott, 1983, p. 88). As noted earlier in this section, this was unusual (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 26).

For two, it might be part of a career in volunteering. One of them hoped to use [her] 'recent computer qualifications to gain a Queen's Guide Award'. This person was seeking permanent employment and did not expect to stay long in the new activity, once it had served its purpose. The other, who had been unemployed for several years because of a disability, regarded volunteering as a substitute for a career (Sherrott, 1983, p. 82). However, by the time of the second interview, he was

actively seeking work. Both of these persons expected to continue their earlier voluntary activities.

Two others thought it might be a stepping-stone to different voluntary opportunities.

One of them still had paid employment in mind, saying:

'[I want to] get a job [or] this type of voluntary work'.

All but one of those that I have quoted in this section regarded volunteering as increasing their chances either of work, or voluntary activity akin to employment. Over half of my sample looked on volunteering as enhancing their employment prospects (Sherrott, 1983, p. 75). The increase of 12 per cent between 1991 and 1997, noted by Davis Smith (1998a), may reflect a trend, following the government's policy on employment. As I observed earlier, the Bureau's involvement with unemployed persons took it into the political arena. I explore that role in this chapter.

Other rewards

Thirteen, over half of my sample, valued tangible benefits other than a paid job. Yet, eleven looked on voluntary activity as a substitute for employment, providing non-financial rewards that they had previously received from work, as found also by Sherrott (1983, p. 65). Among these rewards, my interviewees looked for occupation and social contact. Some expected different rewards, such as therapy and enjoyment. Below, I illustrate and discuss aspects of these requirements.

Something to do

Eight of my respondents, like most of Gomersall's (1984), emphasised occupation.

One of my subjects said that, before he approached the Bureau:

'[I was] unemployed, [and] sat at home twiddling my thumbs.'

Another unemployed interviewee wanted to use his free time 'constructively'. For a retired person, voluntary activity, in the same field as her former job, eased the transition from work, like some in Sherrott's study (1983: p. 65).

Family duties

Two persons had specific needs connected to their family situation. One of them, the main carer of a severely disabled spouse, required 'work that fits in with my responsibility as a carer [and] allows for holiday breaks'.

The other, a lone parent, wanted something that could be done within the home.

Voluntary work should be sufficiently flexible for those who would have sought paid employment if they had not had home responsibilities (Sherrott, 1983, p. 69), like these carers. Flexibility is also important for disabled volunteers as explained by a 'pilot' interviewee.

Meeting point

As noted above, most of those who sought tangible rewards wanted them outside their homes. Nearly all of these persons, a quarter of my sample, also looked for social contacts, a reward that is often associated with work (Sherrott, 1983 p. 91). For example, a disabled person said: [I want to] 'socialise...[I have] few friends'.

And an unemployed person remarked:

'[I] needed to mix with people'

Meeting people and making friends was one of the most highly rated benefits of volunteering, both for my respondents and nationally (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 90). Niyazi, (1996b, p. 4) comments on the isolation of disabled persons, and of those who have experienced life changes, like unemployment. She suggests that opportunities to get out and meet others on equal terms can relieve their loneliness.

Therapy

Different authors, for example Mostyn (1983, p. 36), and Qureshi, Challis and Davies, (1983, p. 155) support Niyazi's comment, that volunteering may be beneficial to the well-being of the helpers themselves. Its therapeutic potential motivated nearly a third of my sample (seven), and is evident, implicitly or explicitly, in several of the responses I have quoted in this section.

Some emphasised the healing power of volunteering. For instance one person, who was looking for another job after three heart attacks, said:

'[I chose the voluntary option under *New Deal* because of my] health problems. I asked my employment officer for a placement in a voluntary organisation, because I thought it would have [a] less stressful environment than a busy, commercial office.'

Another, who had recovered from a depressive illness, hoped that volunteering would be a step to 'normality'. He described the reasons for his decision to approach the Bureau:

'I was not feeling too well... [I] thought I'd do something to improve my situation. [There were] financial pressures [to pay my] rent. [I was] looking for various ways to get up...on my feet'.

A different aspect of volunteering, as prevention of future ills, was voiced by a newly retired respondent, who explained one of her purposes:

'[I] don't want to grow "old"...[I] don't mind getting older...[you] help yourself'.

In the literature review, I comment on the role of volunteering, implicit in this reply, in preventing the apathy that may beset some older persons (Niyazi, 1996c).

In the next section, I consider the relaxed approach that is suitable both for those with health needs and for all volunteers.

Leisure

Volunteering is essentially a leisure pursuit (Sherrott, 1983: p. 95). He comments that it 'was only one of the ways in which [volunteers'] needs could...[be] met or their interests pursued' (Sherrott, 1983: p. 141). Leisure was implicit in about half of the responses in my study, notably from those who wanted to fill their spare time.

So enjoyment, or 'satisfaction,' is relevant although only three offered this as a reason and then only as one of several. For example, an unemployed respondent hoped for 'job satisfaction', a second one looked for 'interest', and yet another wanted to 'do something different'. A third of the respondents wanted to use a sporting hobby. Moreover, fifteen (88%) of them, like 93% in the 1997 *National*

Survey (Davis Smith, 1998a, p. 90) said that they enjoyed voluntary activity. Indeed, Niyazi (1996e) emphasises the importance of entertainment and fun.

By contrast, the importance of satisfaction with the activity is highlighted by a person, discussed further on, who left because of lack of stimulus. Writers have highlighted boredom as a cause of non-involvement by some (Niyazi, 1996e, p. 3) or of giving up (Davis Smith 1998a). Those who are bored at home, like the unemployed person cited earlier in this section, want volunteering to provide an escape. Paying attention to volunteers' interests as, indeed, the Bureau usually does, could reduce the drop-out rate. I discuss this aspect next.

Ending, or not beginning

Earlier, I refer to the assumption of different governments: that many who were not already involved in volunteering would be willing to make a long term commitment. While this may be true of some, for others, like one of Sherrott's interviewees (1983, p. 74), it was a transient part of their life's career. Nearly half of those who responded to my first interview expected it to be short-term. There were various reasons for this, stemming from their ultimate goals of permanent employment. For example, as I record earlier, five of those who were unemployed on registration had found jobs, two of them by the time of their first research interview, and three before the second one. They all said they could not continue voluntary activity. This was succinctly expressed by one of them:

'I started a job and [had] no time to spare.'

Indeed, half of those who responded to the supplementary questions for the *1997 Survey* stopped through lack of time (Davis Smith, 1998a, pp. 138-139).

On the other hand, some activities, like fund-raising, often last only a short time. For instance, one respondent ran a marathon that was over in a day. Another, 'J', also stopped after the equivalent of one day, for reasons discussed below. However, ten remained for longer periods, five of them staying for over six months. Eleven, over half of these persons, were satisfied with the outcome, although a few, including 'J' were not.

A chapter of accidents

'J' was already helping another organisation, but wanted to do something different. Three organisations were recommended to her, but she rejected the first. Although contact was made between her and the organiser of the second agency, they did not actually meet, due to the organiser's illness. During that time, she concluded that the work on offer in the second agency was too much like what she was already doing for a different organisation, before she came to the Bureau. She spent two sessions with the third agency, which rented the Griffon Bureau's premises for half a day a week. Concerning the latter, she said:

'One person came in when I was leaving. [There was] not a lot going on there.'

Her experience may not have been the Bureau's fault. However, volunteers often have busy lives and wish to feel that their time is well spent, a theme voiced by other respondents, who wanted to do something 'worthwhile'.

J was disappointed, and did not pursue volunteering through the Bureau. However, she was not deterred from future voluntary activity, intending to continue with her previous commitment. Maybe, her frustration could have been avoided, if there had been further contact between her and the Bureau. Follow-up now takes place in a more structured way; later on, I discuss more fully this aspect of its work. The mismatch may also have resulted from insufficient suitable placements. At the time, the Griffon Bureau had not long begun to make links with local organisations. Since then, volunteering opportunities have increased.

Non-starters

Six persons did not start any new voluntary activity through the Bureau. Two of them were offered an inappropriate placement. One of them said:

'I went to see [an agency, but] I was on medication, so I couldn't work with children.'

One other respondent was not offered anything at all, through lack of communication. She commented:

'[They] said they would get back [but didn't]. Now, I've started a [full-time] course, [so I've] no [spare] time.'

Going on or dropping out ?

The main causes of leaving were either the lack of available time, or the fact that the activities were unsuitable. Niyazi comments that it is important for the work to be both interesting and feasible (1996a, p. 3). But, however enjoyable it is, voluntary work does not take precedence over paid employment, for those whose leisure and incomes are limited.

Some might continue in the activities they started through the Bureau. For example, one of them said:

“[I’ll go on] as long as ‘L’ needs me [to visit her].”

And some of those already involved might say, like this one:

‘I can’t see me ever stopping’.

However, the reality was that, in the long term, several were unlikely to be able to spare the time, once they left their voluntary commitment (Davis Smith, 1998 p. 95 ; Lynn and Davis Smith, 1991, pp. 93-94).

Summary

In this section, I discuss volunteers’ core motivation (Kendall *et al.*, 2003). These persons offered a variety of reasons, mostly related to their own needs, which were predominantly centred on securing paid work. In this respect, I consider the effect of the government’s intervention, through measures to reduce unemployment. However, respondents also wished to help others for their own sakes, a necessary corrective to the abuse of voluntary activity. Governments have aimed to channel this motive, too, in the promotion of citizens’ participation, but there was little direct evidence of this, in my sample.

Then, I explore reasons why a minority did not start any new activity through the Bureau, and why others left. I note that, counter to the belief of some politicians, volunteering is short-term for several, and may result partly from the government’s policies on employment. In the next section, I consider the Bureau’s role, chiefly from the volunteers’ perspective.

The Bureau as motivator and supporter of volunteers

Promotion

How did the Bureau motivate volunteers and encourage them to maintain their impetus? The first step was publicity, in order to attract those who might wish to use its services. This was essential, particularly for the newly opened Griffon office. Fifteen respondents, like the majority of Gomersall's (1984), considered that the Bureau could do more to advertise itself. But, as manager Z later explained, the Bureau had only a small budget for advertising. Manager Y gave examples of some of the outlets she had used:

'I have tried every level: [the] local press, leaflets in the library, "yellow pages", [the] radio'. In addition, one volunteer told me that she had discovered the Bureau on the internet.

Manager Y commented that: 'Word of mouth' had [the] 'biggest success'. However, my findings suggest that the sign on the building may have been at least as effective. Yet, if recommendations to volunteers from official sources were chiefly verbal, manager Y's estimate was accurate. Manager Z followed her predecessor's strategies, and also expanded the I.T. system that began under manager Y. To this, she added the BBC's 'Timebank' and the National Volunteers' Database.

The next step for the enquirer, once acquainted with the Bureau's presence, was to contact the office. In the next section, I consider respondents' memories of their first visit.

First impressions

Niyazi (1996 b) emphasises the importance of making a good first impression. The Bureau conveyed its message at the outset, through the decor. For example:

'The posters made me feel everyone was included, [and that] I was welcome, irrespective of who I was.'

Most of the respondents reported favourably on their reception.

For instance, this person said:

'[The] people were nice, [there was a] nice atmosphere.'

Several, like the next one, commented on the welcome they received, and the friendliness of the personnel, which made them feel valued:

'The whole team [was] very helpful, welcoming, friendly and informative. [They] gave [me] every opportunity [they] could.'

As noted in Findings, this person responded to the question on equal opportunities, linking it to the process, rather than the approach to the person. Next, I consider views the Bureau's handling of this important matter.

Equal opportunities¹³ at the Bureau

Some spoke of the positive approach towards them, for instance:

'[They had a] very pleasant attitude, ever so open.'

Two remarked on the interviewer's attitude, in the meeting that usually took place after registration. For example, this young respondent said:

'[The interviewer] treated me as a person, talked to me properly, with respect, [and] was very kind.'

And a disabled volunteer reported:

'I told [the interviewer] about my disabilities. She was fine about it.'

Someone from every group in my sample that is under-represented in volunteering testified to the Bureau's positive approach and fairness. This reinforced the enquirers' motivation to become involved.

Advice and guidance

Most of the respondents spoke highly of the Bureau's helpfulness, and said that the initial visit had been useful. A few of them described it in detail. This person outlined the beginning:

'[They were] extraordinarily helpful....(They gave me) a cup of tea and explained different projects.'

¹³ As noted in 'Methodology', the phrase 'treated fairly', in the sense of 'given equal opportunities' was used with four volunteers.

Another volunteer supplemented this picture:

'[The person I saw] gave me a form to fill in [and] asked if there was any information I required. [My interviewer] offered to contact organisations [for me and said that], if ever I had any questions, [I could] call in and ask. They would do what they could.'

A third respondent confirmed, and continued the story:

'I was surprised at [the] careful vetting, and that I had an interview. [I was handed a] form [to complete], [on which I was asked to provide] references, [and was given an appointment [for the interview]. I felt it was serious, though low profile. I had thought it would be casual and that [I would] walk into a voluntary placement. [I was] pointed completely in the right direction.'

Niyazi (1996a, p. 13) recommends a 'friendly and informal' atmosphere that is also 'organised and businesslike.' This approach, often a strength of small voluntary organisations, was one of the Bureau's, too. However, for its efficiency, it relied on slender resources, which I illustrate next.

Information

A distinction should be made between general information, such as leaflets, that were available for enquirers, and the more specific information service. The Bureau had begun to build up its stock of the former. The latter was provided, as appropriate, in the interview with the manager, or other representative of the Bureau, that usually followed registration.

Manager Y explained that she encouraged interviewees 'to make [an] informed choice'. She continued: '

[I give them] leaflets, [and] job descriptions, if [I] have [any], [and] inside knowledge, if [I] have [it]'. She spoke of the problem of insufficient information from agencies, and said that the Bureau's information service was 'getting better'. She added:

'We need to encourage agencies to give more than just to say they need volunteers. [We require] induction packs, [with] job descriptions.'

Despite her reservations, the majority were satisfied with the information that they had received from the Bureau. Two were impressed by the number, and variety, of volunteering opportunities. One of them said:

'[They gave me] a list of organisations, [a] very wide list [I was] unaware [there were so many.]'

The second one described how the manager used her knowledge to widen his horizon:

'[She] had [an] idea of some organisations I [might] volunteer for, and] was able to tell me of several others [I could] talk to, [in] directions I didn't know about.'

Yet another respondent described how the interviewer used her personal knowledge to supplement the information:

'[The interviewer] explained things about the organisation I wanted to help, [about] what [you] would expect. I knew a bit about [it], not a lot.'

However, a small minority had a less favourable impression. For example, this one said:

'It's hard to say, because no-one else was there. [I] asked for information, and [the person I saw] helped as best as [he/she] could'. This comment is supported by manager Y's observation on the shortage of information from agencies, and illustrates the difficulty that a small organisation has in staffing two offices adequately. It also indicates the need for training voluntary workers in giving information. Both issues are discussed, later in this chapter.

However, about a year later, manager Z could say:

'[The] registration pack includes leaflets'. And she could draw on a 'computer database', initiated, like the registration packs, by her predecessor, in order to 'match volunteers' hobbies and interests' to volunteering opportunities.

Next steps

The process of matching the volunteer with an agency began at the interview. As discussed in the literature review, both managers rejected the earlier language, enshrined in the Constitution, that used such terms as 'recruitment' and 'referral'. Instead, they preferred the up-to-date ones, which reflected the new emphasis of bureaux.

'We don't refer, we introduce,' said manager Y. She then explained her informal method of encouraging volunteers to take responsibility for making their own arrangements. When she telephoned an agency, she would allow interviewees to 'take over the call and make their own appointment'. She added:

'[I] signpost those who know what they want to do, [and] let them make their own arrangements, if they wish'.

By the time of the research interview with manager Z, the procedure had become more formalised. She called it 'brokerage' saying:

'We introduce them...by letter'.

So far, I have inspected 'snapshots' from different enquirers, of the Bureau's immediate response. Next, I look, through their eyes, at what happened after that.

Good experience

Six months after their registration, the majority had contacted at least one organisation, with the intention of starting some new voluntary activity. Three quarters of them had helped at least one agency, most of which were recommended by the Bureau. Twelve said that the Bureau had recommended the right ones, and eight, just under half of them, were still helping the agencies.

These were exactly what two persons required. For example, one of them said:

'The work [that I] do fulfilled [the] criteria I had in mind: support, counselling or advice: [it's] spot on.'

The other said:

'It's just what I wanted to do.'

And a third person's experience was even better than he anticipated:

'I expected to help older people with their gardens. [This was] really a bit more. [I] enjoyed [it] because [I was] working with people, helping [them], and I was getting something out of it.'

Another respondent said:

'I love it, working with little toddlers. [The other helpers and mothers are] very friendly'. Both of these persons mentioned their enjoyment. As noted earlier in this chapter, altruism combined with the satisfaction of personal needs encourages commitment (Qureshi *et al.* 1983, p. 164).

Two others spoke of different rewards that they received from their activities. One young person, who gained useful experience in preparation for a career, commented:

[I am now] experienced in working with different age ranges and all kinds of people. If I hadn't come to the Bureau, I wouldn't have known about the other [possibilities]'.
Another young person, who was disabled, said:

'I was given something to do, [and] helped to socialise.'

'I was given something to do, [and] helped to socialise.'

This agency made the most of the volunteer's enthusiasm, by starting the activity immediately, as recommended by Niyazi (1996 b). It also provided support in the development of skills which, as this researcher comments, is particularly useful for those whose education has left gaps. So, the majority were satisfied with the organisations, to which the Bureau had acted as signpost.

Room for improvement?

Yet, everything was not perfect: there were three areas that needed attention. One of them was the follow-up of volunteers, on which I comment later on. The other two matters arose from the Bureau's growth from a small agency, with one co-ordinator and a few volunteers, to one that covered two offices, which required to be staffed accordingly. One of the areas that caused difficulties was the Bureau's structure and administration, and the other was training. These are treated as two separate issues.

Informal structure

Manager Y found the non-hierarchical structure both 'invigorating and frustrating' and spoke of it as a 'disadvantage.' She said: 'I provide my own structures'. A respondent, who was placed at the Bureau for work experience, and who had previously been employed in industry, also remarked on the lack of structure. He said that, as a result:

'[I] don't know what my duties are.'

Handy (1988, pp. 39-43) comments on the ambiguity of roles that stems from a lack of hierarchy. However, this type of structure is a common feature of many voluntary agencies, and goes along with informality. Properly harnessed, it does not necessarily result in disorganisation, and may have a positive side (Roger Smith, pers. comm.). Indeed, throughout the time of this study, the Bureau was striving to improve its administration, and developing its use of I.T., with consequent benefits for itself and its service users.

Resource problems

However, the difficulty of staffing two offices adequately did lead to some inconsistencies in its response to the public. This is shown in the complimentary reports of some respondents, and the less favourable impression of others. Nonetheless, there could still be a satisfactory outcome. For instance, one enquirer said:

'[The person I spoke to] had not long started in the agency. [It was] difficult for [my advisor] to know about all the activities.'

But this was not a disadvantage, for:

'In my situation I couldn't commit myself to other volunteering. [So] I didn't ask for detailed information about other [activities].' This respondent was happy with the placement, saying:

'It was just what I wanted:...an introduction to volunteering.' Yet another, who was also satisfied with the outcome, was surprised at the superficiality of the enquiry:

'[My interviewer] didn't ask what I should or shouldn't do, [nor about] my previous experience.'

This reply contrasts that of another person, quoted earlier, who was impressed by the thoroughness of the interview. These examples illustrate some inconsistency of response from the Bureau, dependent on the interviewer. They emphasise resource difficulties.

Training requirements

In another case, an interviewer assumed that a respondent did not need training and support, because of his previous experience of volunteering. These examples indicate a need for staff training, in such matters as interviewing skills and providing information. Osborne (1996, pp. 204-208) comments that, although training was available for voluntary organisations, it was often not suited to their needs (1996, pp 204-208). However, the Bureau was aware of this gap, and offered *ad hoc* training to its staff and volunteers, a provision which has been developed since the completion of my study.

Compliments

As recorded in the 'findings,' nineteen of the first interviewees felt that the overall quality of the Bureau's service was good. Indeed, fifteen of them thought it was excellent, for example:

'[It's] excellent [I] can't fault it'.

And another person said:

'[Its] very good. [It's] nice to have a lot of support when [you] need it. [I] couldn't do without it.'

These praises are supported by the affirmation of sixteen persons, nearly all of those who were interviewed after six months, who said that they would recommend the Bureau to their families and friends.

In the final section of this chapter, I discuss the organisations' experience of the Bureau, and its influence on their response to the volunteers.

The Bureau as enabler of organisations

Although the focus in this study is primarily on the Bureau's responsibilities to volunteers, they are only half of its clientele, the other half being the organisations that involve them. I note in the literature review that bureaux are confused about who they serve (Osborne, 1999b, p. 73). This author also found that there were conflicting expectations of them, among the different organisations and people to which they related. How did the Bureau respond to this dilemma and how did

volunteers and agencies regard its answer? In this section, I examine the agencies' perceptions of the Bureau's approach. As explained in 'methodology,' the representatives of two of the organisations are managers Y and Z in a different role, so their replies are included, in this context.

Advice and guidance

One of the Bureau's objectives is to advise and guide organisations about good practice towards volunteers. The Bureau is concerned that agencies should maintain good standards, and does not recommend them to enquirers unless they do so. I illustrate this by examining views on the handling of equal opportunities.

Equal opportunities in the agencies

The majority of the volunteers said they had been treated fairly by the organisations they approached. For instance, a young person said:

'Every organisation treated me fairly and equally'.

And a disabled respondent, who was unemployed, replied:

'[I've] no experience of anyone giving me cause to think I'm not wanted or needed.'

However, not everyone felt the same, like another disabled person, who commented: 'I believe [organisations] don't take [equal opportunities] into consideration. 'Til they get to know you, they are a bit wary of you...They ask different questions of you to what they do of normal people.' Yet, this respondent made an exception for the Bureau, rating it highly.

Another young person, also disabled, felt valued by the organisation, but had a different response from a client:

'[The managers of the two agencies] they're great. [But] I didn't have much respect from [the older person I visited].'

For their part, all the organisations claimed either to have an equal opportunities policy, similar to that of the Bureau, or to adopt it as good practice. Yet, there were two exceptions in the transporting services, which meant that two agencies could not take on certain elderly or disabled helpers. These limitations were largely beyond

the control of the agencies and did not affect my interviewees. However, as Niyazi (1996 b) comments, it is unfortunate that financial and similar barriers may exclude some disadvantaged helpers.

The provision of support by the agencies through induction, training, and the payment of expenses, and volunteers' experience of them, was inconsistent. None the less, most of the volunteers were satisfied with their placements. That may be because they had other preoccupations, in particular whether their needs were met, and the interest of the activity. It may also suggest that their expectations were different from what they might have been in a statutory or commercial setting, because of the different ethos (Handy, 1988, p. 119).

Agencies' perceptions of the Bureau's role and function

I demonstrate in the 'findings' that nearly all of the organisations in this study looked on the Bureau as a recruitment agency. Some saw it only in this role, despite its decision not to act in that capacity alone. Indeed, Manager Y said that she had helped organisations, in response to their requests, 'to do their own block recruitment'. Clearly, this would equip them to become more self-reliant. However, as noted in the literature review, research suggests that bureaux are less effective in recruitment than in the promotion of volunteering and the encouragement of good practice (Davis Smith, 1998a; Osborne, 1999a, p. 28). Substituting the word 'matching', used by Manager Y, or 'brokerage', used by Manager Z, both of which better describe its function, should clarify its role. The latter term is currently used by the national body (Penberthy, 1992).

Next, I illustrate what most agencies expected from the Bureau, with quotations from their representatives. The manager of organisation 'P' said:

'We don't have any other avenues for recruiting volunteers'.

Her comment indicates the total reliance on the Bureau for volunteers, on the part of some organisations.

Another explained:

'They are more specialised [and] have contacts. They can also filter volunteers.'

This remark shows the unrealistic expectations of some, for example in the belief that the Bureau was able to 'filter' those it introduced. Indeed, it did screen them to some extent, through the interview and matching process. However, both manager Y and manager Z confirmed that agencies were expected to carry out their own checks.

A third respondent commented:

[The Bureau has] access to a wide range of people [and] knows our requirements. It's two-way; letting them know what our needs are helps them to place volunteers.'

This person demonstrated a better understanding of the importance of 'two-way' communication, which I consider further on.

Few saw the Bureau in its wider role of the local development of volunteering. Indeed, respondents from seven agencies said they had not consulted it on any matters other than the recruitment of volunteers. One of them asked me:

'What do they do?'

This question illustrates the lack of knowledge about its other functions that was shown by several agencies. Furthermore, two others had used the transport service, apparently without realising that it was a separate organisation, although managed by the Bureau. The belief that it was actually part of the Bureau demonstrates the confusion about the Bureau's role, of which manager Y was well aware. However, one respondent had asked for general information, as well:

'[I've asked for] help with transport for a young person. I've also rung for various information: phone numbers and places.'

Only three agencies had consulted the Bureau about the rights and responsibilities of volunteers. However, at least one of them had made informed use of its services. She said:

'[I've asked about] guidelines, [the] management of volunteers, policies and procedures, age limits, and insurances.'

Seventeen months later, manager Z thought that considerable progress had been made in raising awareness of the Bureau's functions. She felt this was largely through the volunteering forum, a previous idea of manager Y. Recently formed 'to promote good practice', it had 'seventy member organisations, plus volunteers.' She claimed that 'Most organisations now know the role of the Bureau: [it] promotes volunteering in general.'

The organisations' experience of volunteers through the Bureau

Although nine organisations received a volunteer through the Bureau during the research period, not all of them realised the Bureau's involvement. For some of them, helpers from this source were few among many, but others, like 'P', quoted earlier, depended wholly on the Bureau.

Volunteers that came from the Bureau suited the requirements of the majority. Opinions varied among the organisations about whether there was any difference between those who came through the Bureau and those from other sources. A small minority thought that there was a difference in quality: greater maturity, or strong motivation. Others considered that there was 'added value' in services they received. These advantages were administrative: the Bureau drew from a wider pool, could match volunteers to agencies, offered specialist support, and was reliable. For instance, one respondent said:

'[The difference is in the] feedback from the Bureau.'

On the other hand, two respondents felt these aspirations were not met. One of them said:

'Two persons were introduced; these were unsuitable. They had communication difficulties, and communication is our main business.'

The other commented on the lack of preparation for volunteers to help clients with mental health problems.

These two examples illustrate the expectations of some organisations that were different from those of the Bureau. This misunderstanding, similar to that in Kent (1986), suggests a failure in communication. I consider this topic next.

Communication

Good communication was essential, in order for the Bureau to be effective. Yet, it was in this area that there was the least consistency, not only between the Bureau and the volunteers, but also with the organisations. Indeed, Osborne (1999b, p 82) comments on this problem for bureaux, which have to extend their small resources to include many other bodies as well.

In this section, I examine this topic from the perspective of the Bureau and the agencies, with reference to findings about volunteers. I start with manager Y's conviction that communication should be two-way, and how she had tried to bring this about. Then, I look at the agencies' views on the need for improvement, particularly in respect of brokerage. In this area, I consider how they informed the Bureau about what they wanted, and their feed-back on the volunteers. I connect the latter with findings about the follow-up of individuals. Next, I consider ideas of both the agencies and manager Y on how to improve communication. Finally, I comment on various means of contact, that are open to all organisations, and state which the Bureau used.

The manager's assessment

Manager Y described some of the difficulties that the Bureau experienced, commenting that:

'It works both ways. There were failings on both sides'. She explained that, when the Bureau became independent of the Council for Voluntary Service, [it] had to establish new links. She continued:

'There were some organisations [that we] worked well with; others were more casual. There has not been the contact there should have been. Some, requiring volunteers, never approached the Bureau. I invited organisations to attend groups, [but their attendance was] patchy.'

Manager Y's reflection illustrates the inconsistency of contacts between the Bureau and the agencies. She emphasised the need for two-way communication, an important element in any relationship, which was advised, too, by Osborne (1999a). She also mentioned one of her initiatives to increase contacts with them, through group meetings.

The follow-up of volunteers often left another gap, possibly because the Bureau's resources were fully deployed at the initial stage. Although both managers Y and Z confirmed that they enquirers were invited to contact the Bureau if they wanted help, few of them did so. The 'reply slip', sent with the introductory letter to the agency, was generally not returned. The alternative of making telephone calls from the Bureau, possibly a more effective means of keeping in touch, depended on the availability of a 'dedicated' volunteer. No-one was able to take on this task, during the study period; employing a staff member for this purpose was a later development. In the words of manager Y:

'We start off well and then trail'.

She felt that:

'[The persons] who have rapport with the Bureau have access, which others don't have.'

I explore next the perceptions of the agencies.

Organisations' viewpoint

Like manager Y, over half of the agencies confirmed that better communication was needed. Several of them wanted 'regular contacts'. The majority, like just under half of the respondents in the Kent survey (1986), said they would welcome a closer working relationship with the Bureau.

Most of the contacts with the Bureau that the organisations mentioned concerned brokerage. In the main, the purpose of getting in touch was either to exchange information that would assist in matching, or to feed back information about volunteers, after their introduction. I treat these two aspects separately, considering for each the nature of the communication and how it took place.

Information from the agencies

Most of the organisations in the study, again like those in Kent, informed the Bureau about what they were looking for in a volunteer. This was either in relation to a particular vacancy, or a general request for continuous needs. However, a small

minority was uncertain about what to tell the Bureau, or what it could offer. Their uncertainty emphasised the need for more information from the Bureau

Personal contact was the preferred means of communication, but a few sent leaflets which contained general information about the agency. However, two respondents kept in touch through other, informal ways. For instance, one of them said:

'The [Bureau's] manager is on our committee.'

I comment, later in this section, on the informal networks between voluntary organisations that strengthen communication between them.

Their suggestions, recorded in the findings, demonstrate the variability of two-way communication about the agencies' needs. Next, I examine what contacts took place between the organisations and the Bureau about volunteers.

Feedback

Seven organisations informed the Bureau about the volunteers it introduced. Five of them spoke personally to the manager. Only one person mentioned the 'reply slip' that the Bureau sent to the agencies with an introductory letter.

Manager Y considered that:

'There should be a formal introduction and a formal follow-up.'

She commented:

'If a volunteer has not fed back, it's very rare that any organisation will. It depends on [a] close relationship between the managers [of the Bureau and of the agency] and it's informal'.

Later on, manager Z took manager Y's advice, and formalised the procedure. She said:

'We have a response form, from the organisations.' She also obtained a grant to employ a development officer, who telephoned registered enquirers, monthly.

The respondents' description of their agencies' practices, and manager Z's actions, validate manager Y's observation. This indicates that communication between the

agencies and the Bureau was inconsistent. Suggestions by the organisations for its improvement are recorded in the findings.

Their comments illustrate some of the different means of communication, both formal and informal, that they felt would benefit them. These were already used by the Bureau, but neither regularly nor consistently for all agencies. As already noted, the later establishment of a volunteers' forum did increase communication. However, meetings could exclude some persons. No-one mentioned I. T. which, at the time, was probably in its infancy, or non-existent, among small voluntary organisations.

Paths of communication

There are several means of communication available to agencies; these may be high, medium or low cost. The Bureau used a variety, but it preferred the less expensive methods, partly through budgetary restrictions. However, as manager Y said, maybe the publicity could sometimes have been better planned.

Some approaches, usually indirect ones, cost little or nothing and may be built into daily practice as, indeed, the Bureau did. These ways of communication are, for example, sharing the same building, networks between people, which are fostered through meetings, I.T. and public relations. The latter includes press releases, and interviews for radio and television. However, much interchange between voluntary agencies is informal. Taylor (1996, pp. 22-23) points out their interdependence, through the necessity of collaboration, in order to maximise resources.

During the study period, the Bureau invested in computers and was developing its I.T. system. Through this means, Manager Z claimed, it was able to use it to reach a wider public, as recommended by Osborne (1999b, p. 82). Yet, this should not replace the personal touch, which is a strength of small voluntary organisations, and was emphasised by manager Y. The greater use of I.T. might affect the brokerage role of the Bureau, but could free it to concentrate more on promoting volunteering. However, focusing on development has implications for funding, in that counting the numbers of enquiries, or of those who register, is a more tangible way of measuring work than the results of promotion.

Summary

In this project, communication was a particular issue, because the Bureau's resources, like those of other similar organisations were over-stretched. On the whole, individuals and agencies that had closer links with it had a better service.

Since the completion of my study, there have been moves both to increase contacts, and to change its public image, in particular through information technology and the volunteering forum. Some persons may be excluded from both of these approaches and the challenge will remain for the Bureau to serve equally all those who need its assistance.

More than the sum of its parts

This chapter focuses on the perception of the Bureau by its main customers. More of the agencies looked on it in its traditional role, as a recruitment agency, than as promoter and supporter of volunteering. The volunteers, too, saw it chiefly as enabling them to find a placement. Whereas this is an important function, the Bureau is more than a broker.

Like them, I initially believed this was its main task, but this project expanded my understanding of its wider, cohesive role. However, exploring other aspects of its work is outside the remit of this study. Nonetheless, the Bureau's worth to its local community has become evident. The Bureau is a vital part of the local infrastructure. It is a resource centre for volunteers and for all who have an interest in volunteering. These include minority ethnic communities and other disadvantaged groups. It is influential in the promotion of volunteering and the development of good practice by individuals and within agencies. Through its local, regional and national networks, it is able to respond to developments beyond the local scene that are beneficial to volunteering generally and at home. In these ways, this Bureau is set, alongside other ones, to develop volunteering in the future.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research looks at volunteering through a bureau, over a period of 22 months. It spans the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. The study covers the early years of the New Labour government, and its policies that aim to harness the voluntary sector in reducing unemployment.

During this time, the Bureau underwent changes. These included the retirement of the manager, who had steered it as an offshoot of the local CVS, and then as a separate entity. She established a centre in the second town in the borough, in response to local requests, and initiated its independence from its parent organisation. In the hands of her successor, the Bureau was established in one centre that served both towns. This move took place when bureaux in a neighbouring county were merging with other local development agencies.

Through this study, I gained an understanding of the Bureau in the words of its main users: volunteers and local organisations, as well as from the viewpoints of manager Y and of her successor, Z. This information was supplemented by my own observations of the two centres, where I met other volunteers who were not in the study sample. My access to the Bureau's committee, besides my position as employee of the county, widened my perspective.

The focus of my research was on the motivation of volunteers, and how the Bureau enabled and supported them in their quest to undertake voluntary activity. A second spotlight was on local agencies. This illustrated how the Bureau encouraged them to provide an environment that would both attract volunteers, and keep them interested and involved.

The Bureau's contribution to the local community

In all, the quality of the Bureau's response to volunteers was good. Yet, had local agencies not provided suitable volunteering opportunities, it would have been impossible for the Bureau to offer them a service. Most of these agencies looked to

the Bureau for assistance with brokerage, but few of them were aware of its role as a development agency. However, I understand that, since then, more have learned about this primary function.

Organisations that were nearest to the Bureau geographically, or were in regular contact with it for other reasons, fared better than those that were further away. Likewise, individual enquirers who kept in touch with the Bureau were more likely to be satisfied with the service than those who did not do so. The chief reason for this inconsistency was communication, which is a weakness in bureaux, as in similar organisations. Improvements that the Bureau was making at the time of the study, and subsequently, have alleviated this difficulty. However, keeping in contact will remain a problem, because it depends not only on technology, but also on human resources.

The Bureau's coordination role

As an intermediary body, the Bureau retained its historic function of coordinating matters relating to volunteering within the borough. However, it was changing from a focus on the recruitment and placement of volunteers to a greater role in the development of volunteering. This was in part a response to changes in government policies. Later in this Conclusion, I comment on the political aspect of the Bureau's involvement in government policies.

At the time of the study, Manager Y had difficulties in balancing the Bureau's priorities, due both to the needs of its different stakeholders and the limited resources to meet them. The main interested parties were in the local community. My focus is on specific members of the community: volunteers and organisations that involved them. Bodies outside the community, in particular national organisations, and government bodies such as the Home Office, also claimed its attention.

The Bureau's chief need at the time of research was for consolidation. Its growth had caused it, in some ways, to be uncertain about its direction. Was it to become a volunteer recruitment and placing agency, or to grow along the broader lines of development of volunteering? Moreover, it had practical needs, resulting from the acquisition of a second centre. Responding to the new challenges of a team shared

between two towns required time for adaptation. Grifton needed a volunteer centre. Its advent enabled the community to become more involved in volunteering. Local organisations needed encouragement to achieve good standards of practice in relation to volunteers, which benefited them, the volunteers, and the community as a whole. Another conflict of priorities arose from organisations' expectations of assistance in the recruitment of volunteers. Individual volunteers needed advice and assistance with volunteering opportunities and information about their rights. In particular, unemployed and disabled persons sought the Bureau's help.

How did the Bureau respond to the difficulties in balancing the needs of the various claimants for its attention? The development of information technology and other changes helped improve the balance. Moreover, better standards of practice among organisations enriched not only volunteers but also the whole community.

Volunteers' motivation

The findings suggest that it is important for bureaux to consider volunteers' motivation in responding to their requests. These people have many other demands on their time: for instance, some may be family carers, and others, informal volunteers. They could be deterred, if they do not feel valued, or if they meet obstacles.

My subjects' reasons for volunteering were both personal and socio-economic. These indicate a cultural shift in emphasis, from predominantly altruist to a more pragmatic one. Political intervention, demographic changes and economic necessity have influenced this change.

The findings illustrate the pressure on unemployed persons to commence or return to work. They also suggest that bureaux attract persons from groups that are generally under-represented in voluntary activity, in particular unemployed, disabled and young persons. In this respect, the Bureau supports government policy to promote volunteering for disadvantaged people. It supports the government in other ways, as well.

The Bureau and government policies

The dominance of unemployed persons in my sample signals the influence of the government's policies. The 'voluntary option' is now a recognised way of preparing for employment, and bureaux may assist in this task. Although this Bureau was not a mentor for *New Deal*, Manager Y was involved in the local planning for youth, and co-operated with the placement officer.

As in earlier government schemes, participation is a difficult choice for bureaux as, indeed, for all voluntary organisations. On the one side, it is counter to the belief that constrained involvement is 'not volunteering', a view held by several members of the Bureau, including managers Y and Z. On the other side, there is evidence that the unemployed respondents who were placed there under the programme both chose to come, and benefited from what they did. Although my findings do not suggest that the Bureau's participation assisted the government's goal of increasing the number of those who were not already committed, there were other rewards.

For the Bureau, these were not financial, but rather an add-on to its resources that ensured some stability for its workforce. This increased its capacity to serve the local community.

Since the end of this project, the Bureau has continued to take on persons under *New Deal* but, like other bureaux, does not consider them as volunteers (Chris Hinchley, pers. comm. Volunteering England). Yet, in practice, how they are regarded is probably not relevant to their role within the Bureau.

However, I did not intend this study to be a policy enquiry, so did not analyse the political implications in detail. The political background reflects the changes in the broader world and how they affected the Bureau.

Adequacy of methodology

There is a dearth of large-scale research on bureaux, although there are many small projects, a few of which were available to me when planning this one. I comment below on two studies, each of which I could have used as a model, had I known of it at the time. To my knowledge, there has been no similar one, so the unexplored

waters were open for me to chart. The test is: do my plans result in valid findings? I believe that they do.

Strengths and weaknesses of the research

My initial forecast of the strong and weak points in the study was largely accurate. Next, I comment on the effectiveness of my strategies to overcome them.

A main drawback was the bias, arising from my several roles in relation to the Bureau, which might have affected the reliability of my findings. Throughout the study, I was aware of this potential, and have aimed to make it clear in this dissertation.

A second disadvantage that I anticipated was that, should my sample be smaller than I originally intended, there would be less room for attrition. In the event, the numbers were fewer than I expected, even when the Bureau's (then) main office was included. So, they were insufficient for validation through statistical tests.

My chief means of overcoming these difficulties was the system of triangulation, both of the sources of information and of the methods. For example, I made greater use of the qualitative material than I had anticipated. In addition, comparison with other studies, particularly the *National Surveys*, confirmed the validity of several of my findings. For example, my young respondents, like many of their counterparts, were reticent about displaying their altruistic reasons for volunteering. The correspondence between my findings and those in the bigger picture, indicate that my respondents are like other volunteers in England, in several ways. The differences indicate the uniqueness of my study.

In addition, I consider that the internal consistency among the majority of the interviewee's responses validates the methods. Moreover, the changes that the Bureau was making throughout the study, and after its end, adds strength to the validation.

Hence, I believe that, in the main, the findings present valid answers to the research question: that the Bureau is an asset to its local community, with regard to its main users. The focus changed during the course of the study, from a primary emphasis on its help to individuals to a stronger one on its service to agencies. However, the methods were sufficiently flexible to allow this shift.

External validity

Another researcher should be able to replicate my study, on a different bureau. For this reason, I include copies of the interview schedules in my appendix. However I would recommend some changes, which I myself would make, should I repeat it. These are, as follows.

The interviews should be shorter. A main reason is that there might have been a better response to the second ones, had the first not been so long (Robson, 1993). An example of possible cuts to the first schedule is a reduction of the number of questions asking for personal information.

However, there would be room for an additional question in schedule III, asking what information the Bureau conveyed to the organisations, and how. That would make possible a fuller appraisal of their two-way communication.

Earlier in this dissertation, I comment that the evidence would have been stronger, if there had been more, different witnesses. These persons would be the committee members, the majority of whom are volunteers, in that role; some of them represent other organisations, as well. To include them would add a fourth perspective: that of the executive body. However, the extra time required could deter another researcher; for example, a separate interview schedule, adapted from the first three, would have to be written.

Two types of respondents included for pragmatic reasons

A few persons were included for practical reasons. These were, firstly, the four persons who were placed at the Bureau under *New Deal* and secondly, manager Z. The views of this manager complemented those of her predecessor. They were essential in confirming manager Y's perceptions and also demonstrated the continuation of the Bureau's work.

The four who were at the Bureau for work experience had dual roles. They were functioning as staff, but were also like other volunteers, except that they came more regularly than some. Their exact position was unclear to me before three of them were included in the sample. However, their direct experience of the Bureau added further insights to the study.

A different approach?

Had I undertaken this research with the knowledge that I now have, I could have aligned it with one of the two other studies of bureaux that I considered in the literature review. These are: Gomersall (1984) and Osborne (1994). Both of them, like those I used as models, looked at patterns of recruitment. The former investigated unemployed volunteers' experience of the service offered to them. The latter was an organisational study of a bureau that was decentralised in a library. Basing my work on either would have avoided the production of another isolated study. Next, I discuss each in turn, outlining their merits and disadvantages for my project.

My first choice would have been Gomersall's research. Her study of individuals' experiences of volunteering through a bureau was the nearest to what I had in mind, although the focus, on the attitudes of unemployed persons to volunteering, was different. Her criteria for evaluation, based on her practice as the bureau's organiser, were more relevant to my project than those I initially discovered. Her role in the bureau was, however, a weakness in her study, as well as a strength, as it was in mine, although I was less involved than she. If she had included the opinions of more, different groups of persons she would have increased its validity.

Nonetheless, although her criteria were not exactly what I sought, they could have been adapted, for my purpose.

In the absence of Gomersall's research, I would have considered using Osborne's (1994) as a model. The Bureau already undertook similar 'outreach' projects, on a smaller scale, in several public venues, including libraries, community centres and the local college of further education. I have not yet commented on these projects, because they were excluded from my research. Following Osborne's lead would have enabled comparison between his large town's initiative, and mine in two smaller ones. It has the advantage, too, of being nearer in time to my study.

Alternatively, I could have compared aspects of the Midville and Griffon 'outreach' projects with the established office-based work. A disadvantage is that such a study would have diverted the focus away from the main centres, particularly the one in Griffon. Moreover, the feasibility of research on 'outreach' projects would have been even more uncertain than the one that I undertook, because of the *ad hoc* nature of this work undertaken by the Bureau. For example, the project that was based in the college stopped after about seven months of my study, when the volunteer left for university.

Contribution to the study of volunteering and of bureaux

This research confirms that it is difficult for bureaux to communicate equally with both volunteers and agencies, the two main groups to which it has responsibilities. This problem is best tackled by several modes of approach, while paying attention to the needs of individual persons and different organisations.

The findings suggest that bureaux have an important role in enabling and supporting individuals who wish to volunteer. Those who approach them are likely to have both personal and practical reasons for doing so. In advising volunteers, bureaux should pay careful attention to individual motivation, as a guide to matching them with agencies. The follow-up of enquirers is also important.

The incentive for individuals to become involved, and to remain as volunteers depends, in the short-term, on their experience: chiefly whether or not they are treated fairly by the agencies they help, and in the activities that they do. However, their long-term commitment is influenced more by changes in their personal circumstances.

Organisations that include volunteers consider the Bureau primarily as a recruitment agency. Their co-operation in preparing the ground for the persons who they take on, and in supporting them, is essential, in order for the Bureau to act as an effective broker. However, in respect of its development function, their mutual expectations may be different.

The government's increasing use of the voluntary sector, although controversial, is an established fact. The government should ensure that funding is sufficient to provide adequate infrastructure that includes support to bureaux and other, similar agencies. The means to develop various types of communication is particularly necessary.

Pulling together lessons for conducting research

I learned much from this study, some of which I should like to pass on to other researchers, especially new ones.

Research is unlikely to be trouble free. Some problems can be anticipated and lessened through careful preparation. Paying attention to feedback from pilot interviewees helped to avoid ambiguity in interviews. Other difficulties, such as attrition, are outside the control of the researcher. Strategies to handle such problems should be strong enough to combat them.

One of the strategies that I found helpful was triangulation, in particular using different methods and interviewing persons who represented different groups of stakeholders. The former enabled the research to continue along qualitative lines when it became clear that the data would not support a quantitative approach. Interviewing a range of subjects meant that different perspectives were represented.

Indeed, in an evaluation it is useful to seek as many viewpoints as possible, because of inevitable discrepancies among different witnesses. However, triangulation may lengthen the time needed for the research. The practicality of this for the researcher should be considered carefully. A further problem of using different methods is data processing, since computer programmes tend not to process more than one type of data satisfactorily. However, not all the data may be relevant, so careful sifting is necessary to screen out an overload of information.

In this matter, as in the project overall, it is valuable for the researcher to communicate with the host organisation. Foremost in my study was the manager, who was a primary source of information about the Bureau, its workings and clientele. It is also important to maintain communication with other persons in the organisation such as office staff and committee members. The value of this has several advantages. One is the smooth working of the project. Another is the opportunities for observation, and the testing of the researcher's assumptions, which should be revised in the light of findings. However, in maintaining close contact with the organisation, the researcher should be aware of personal bias in the organisation's favour. In this, it is essential to declare this factor and scrutinise it critically, in order to combat it.

Recommendations for further research and practice

As my understanding of the Bureau grew, I realised the complexity of my task. It raised issues that could be explored further.

One theme that would repay more study is the role of bureaux for persons from marginalised groups. A starting point could be to look in greater depth into the experience of unemployed volunteers. The testimonies of these people in my project, indicates the value of bureaux in helping them, at this turning point in their careers.

A different group, for which there is little research, is that of ex-offenders. These persons were not included in my study, partly for that reason and also because there were none in my sample. However, in several respects, they are like other

disadvantaged volunteers, for instance in their need for the restoration of confidence in their ability to work.

Another approach to this subject would be to investigate various means of encouraging agencies to identify, and to remove, their own barriers to involving people who are socially excluded. Ultimately, this might lead to the provision of more volunteering opportunities for them.

A different topic, suggested by Volunteering England, is the relationship between bureaux and other local development agencies, such as CVS. Between the Bureau and the Midville and Griffon CVS, there has been, and still is, a good rapport. However, the relationship is complex. The route leading to amalgamation, along which other, similar agencies have gone, is not without its difficulties. Their mutual support is essential to both.

This study demonstrates that research on different means of communication between bureaux and other agencies is urgently needed. Although the wider use of I.T. has improved contacts and the spread of information, over-reliance on this technology would be a mistake. For instance, not every small organisation has access to a website.

This research draws attention to the need for better co-ordination of individual research projects undertaken by bureaux. These could be publicised on the internet, so that other researchers on bureaux could relate new studies to previous ones. The national body, Volunteering England, which may do this, is best placed for the task. I look forward to the larger studies that would then be possible. I have also confirmed with Volunteering England the need for research on matters I suggest here.

A look ahead

Volunteering is set to grow, both in quality and in amount. For the first time in English history, long-term plans have been made for co-ordinated support for it. Bureaux, and similar agencies, will play an important part in this infrastructure. My

research suggests that the ability of bureaux to promote and develop volunteering lies in the three-way relationship between them, volunteers and other agencies.

Final words

The chief strength of my study remains in the openness of the Bureau to this research, despite its vulnerability if some findings were adverse, and its readiness to accept constructive criticism. This was shown particularly in the positive attitude of manager Y, which continued with her successor.

Their co-operation has been rewarded, for I found that, in all, the Bureau has done good work. For instance, it launched a disabled young person into volunteering that built up her confidence. With its assistance, unemployed persons gained experience that prepared them for work. A retired person found an interesting occupation. Through the organisations that they helped, these people, like several others, were able to contribute to the community.

I end with the words of a satisfied customer:

'[Volunteering] fulfils you, gives you things to do, doesn't waste your time, [and] gives you a social life.'

Appendix 1: Research Proposal

**Frances Hawker,
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Rationale

This study is based on three premises. Firstly, volunteering is beneficial to the local community, through the advantages it brings to individuals as well as to the organisations assisted by them. Indeed, this is in line with the view of the Labour government, for instance the belief that volunteering is to be encouraged as a yardstick of 'a giving society' (Blair, 1998). Secondly, a bureau may fulfil a useful function in stimulating voluntary activity,, especially through the recruitment of volunteers. Thirdly, understanding the reasons why people volunteer is important both for their recruitment and their retention.

The notion of volunteering covers a variety of activities. In this study, I will scrutinise voluntary activity that is done through an organisation which is neither statutory nor for profit. Voluntary activity is understood here to mean 'individual action undertaken neither for payment primarily nor for personal gratification alone' (Marshall, 1997). People volunteer for several different reasons: some out of altruism, others from a duty to society, still others for different, personal motives. The latter are as acceptable in a volunteer as unselfish ones, provided that the volunteer's personal motives do not adversely affect the work.

Aim and objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the working of an English Midlands Volunteer Bureau in order to discover the worth of such an agency. This will be done by looking at the Griffon Bureau with the intention of discovering how effective it is in meeting its main purposes, and what benefits it has for users of its services.

The Bureau states in its constitution that its main purposes are as follows:

'to promote volunteering and community activity by recruiting, motivating, supporting and enabling ... individuals in ... the Borough ... to take a fuller part in society, to take greater control over their lives and to increase their opportunities for learning and development.'

The constitution's objectives are that it shall:

- advise and guide persons willing to volunteer
- provide a [volunteer] centre

- advise and guide organisations regarding issues relating to the rights and responsibilities of volunteers
- publicise opportunities for volunteering within the Borough.

This study will consider the extent to which the Bureau's purposes are met in the experiences of volunteers and of user-agencies. The detailed objectives of this research are explained in the following sections.

Perspective

Methodology

The researcher will evaluate the Bureau through interviews with a population of 30 volunteers. The interviews will take place as soon as possible after their registration with the Griffon Bureau, and again six months later. In order to allow for attrition: that is, the loss of those who do not actually complete the study, the initial sample will be 35.

The researcher will ask the volunteers about their reasons for seeking voluntary activity through a bureau, and their experience of the assistance they received from this one. She will interview the organisations that the Bureau recommends to them once, regarding their perceptions of the help that the Bureau gave them. The Bureau's office staff who interview the volunteers at their registration will complete an initial questionnaire. The researcher will also interview the staff once.

Population

The subjects of the study will be the first 30 volunteers who register with the Griffon Volunteer Bureau after 1 February 1999. There will be no control group. The researcher will obtain additional information from the agencies.

Stages in data-collection

Volunteers are recruited all the year round, so interviews will be ongoing. These will take place as soon as possible after registration and again, six months later. The researcher will interview the agencies once, six months after the volunteers came to assist them, or at the end of the project. The Bureau's staff, who interviewed the volunteers, will complete an initial questionnaire and will respond to an interview once, at the end of the study.

Data sources and procedures for collecting and recording data

The researcher will collect the data through two interviews with the volunteers. She will take initial data from their registration forms. Representatives of the agencies that the volunteers assist will respond to one interview. Further data will be provided by the Bureau's staff, both on a printed questionnaire that will be attached to the volunteers' registration form & later, through an interview.

The data will be mainly quantitative, enhanced by some qualitative data. The volunteer's registration form, which is usually completed by them, as well as the initial staff questionnaire, will be administered by the Bureau's staff. The researcher will prepare and administer structured interview schedules, & will record the responses on them. There will be two different schedules for the volunteers: 'initial' and 'after six months'. Some of the questions will be adapted from the questionnaires used by Lynn and Davis Smith (1993).

The volunteers will be asked about their motivation for volunteering, their reasons for coming to a volunteer bureau, and the extent to which their expectations of this Bureau have been fulfilled. There will be additional questions supplementary to the registration form with the purpose of finding the social characteristics of people who seek voluntary activity through a bureau. The agencies will be asked about the extent to which their expectations of the service they received from the Bureau have been met. They will also be asked about two-way communication between them and the Bureau regarding the volunteers. The Bureau's staff will record their initial impressions of the volunteers and their views on the appropriateness of the placements.

Pilot study and reliability tests

Draft questionnaires will be used for a pilot study, before it is finalised, in order to test the appropriateness of the questions. Some key questions may be tested for their reliability through asking the same ones, in different forms. The methodology will be redesigned after the pilot study.

Procedures for analysing data

The computer programme SPSS¹⁴ will be used for analysing the data.

Timetable for the study

The questionnaires will be developed and piloted between November 1998 and January 1999. The data will be collected over one year, starting from 1 February 1999. Approximately half a day a week will be available for interviewing.

Costs and management

Most of the costs will be borne by the researcher, who will manage the study.

Overview

A feasibility study was conducted, in order to find out how many volunteers registered with the Bureau over the past year. The use of the Griffon Bureau's private interviewing room has been offered to the researcher, as required, for the duration of the project.

The following difficulties may be expected. If the attrition rate is too high, the sample will be insufficient to support meaningful conclusions. There may at times be difficulties in co-ordination between the study and the researcher's work schedule. In addition, it may sometimes be necessary to alter appointments because of unforeseen events that affect either the researcher or the interviewee.

In order to counter anticipated difficulties, the following measures will be taken. The co-operation of the Bureau's staff will be sought to ensure that volunteers complete the reply slip stating whether or not they are willing to participate in the research. Careful time-tabling of the study will be necessary, both in order that respondents may be interviewed on days and times convenient to them and in order to co-ordinate with the researcher's work schedule. It will be necessary for the researcher to have means of contacting interviewees at short notice, in the event of rescheduling an interview. It will also be necessary for the interviewees to be able to pass a message on to the researcher, should they wish to alter an appointment.

Expected contributions of the study

It will show the Bureau whether or not it is meeting its objectives. It will also find out how volunteers and users of volunteers experience the service they receive

from the Bureau. There will be lessons to be learned from the study for all similar bureaux.

Permissions required

The Bureau's Committee has already consented that the research may be conducted. In addition, the proposed respondents will be asked for consent to their participation in the study. These are: the volunteers, the user-agencies and the Bureau's staff. Permission will be requested from the proposed respondents by a letter describing the study that asks them to indicate whether or not they wish to be included in it. The letters will be given to the volunteers who register with the Bureau during the period of the study and to the Bureau's staff. Letters will be sent to the user-agencies as well. The purpose of the letters will be ethical: to obtain the consent of all participants and to assure them of confidentiality. Interested respondents may be offered access to the completed research report or a summary, a copy of which will be given to the Bureau.

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule I

Confidential

Interview Schedule I

Volunteers I

Case no. Gender: f/m Age Date regd. Date/ interview

Introduction I'm (*name*), from University. Here's my identity. (*Show card.*) Thank you for coming here to help me with the study of the Bureau. This will also help me prepare for a postgraduate degree. It will be helpful to the Bureau to know **why people like you come to them** when you are looking for voluntary activity. And it will be useful for them to understand more about **why people volunteer**. I'm also trying to find out how far the volunteers who come through the Bureau are the sort of volunteers that the **voluntary organisations they go to are looking for**. As well, I'd like to ask you a few questions about yourself. This will help me to find out whether or not there is any **difference between the volunteers who come here volunteers nationally**. Your **identity** will be **confidential**. Are you willing for me to use this information for my research? It will be used for no other purposes. I know about the data protection legislation and shall abide by it.

Is there anything that you would like to ask me before I start (*the interview*)?

First, I'd like to talk with you about what you put on your

Volunteer Registration Form

1.(i) a) Present occupation, including unemployed

b) (*If unemployed/ retired*) Last job

c) Name/ title of job (*specify*)

d) What kind of work *do/ did* you do in your job?

e) How many hours...?

f) (*If past*) How long ago?

g) (*If past*) For how long?

h) What *training / qualification(s) do/ did* you need?

i) *Are/ were* you an employee or self-employed? (*If self-employed, see (ii) over*)

j) *Do/ did* you *manage/ supervise* anyone?

yes/ no

k) (*If yes*) How many people *do/ did* you *manage/ supervise*?

ii) (**If self-employed**) a) What *do/ did* you *make/ produce*?

b) *Do/ did* you employ people or work on your own?

c) (*If employer*) How many?

iii) (**If studying**) a) College/

University?

(*If appropriate*) b) Name of course

ii) Are you *hoping to make use of / already using your skills and aptitudes* in voluntary activity? **yes/ no/ don't know**

iii) *(If yes & if appropriate)* Which ones?

5.a) Did you do any voluntary activity **before you registered** here? **yes/ no**

b) *(If yes)* Could you tell me more about that:

- for **what organisation(s)**?
- **when** did you **start**?
- are you **still** with them **now**? **y/ n**
- **what do/ did** you do?

c) Are you doing any voluntary activity **now**? **yes/ no**

d) *(If yes to (c))* Could you tell me more about that:

- for **what organisation(s)**?
- Did you get to know about that **through the Bureau**? **yes/ no**
- *(If no)* How did you get to know about it?
- **What** are you **doing** for *the organisation*?
- **when** did you start?
- are you still with it/ them **now**? **yes/ no**
- *(If no)* **When** did you **stop**?
- *(If no)* **Why** did you **stop**?
- **How long** do you expect to **go on** helping them?

until... / weeks/ months/ years/ indefinitely

6.a) *Days available for voluntary activity, from registration form.*

M T W TH F SA SU

b)(If necessary) What days are you already doing voluntary activity?

M T W TH F SA SU FLEXIBLE

b) **How many hours** a week are you **already** taking part in voluntary activity?

7a) **How many (more) hours a week** do you want to give to voluntary activity?

b) For **how long** do you want to take part in voluntary activity?

until... / weeks/ months/ years/ indefinitely

Reasons for voluntary activity through the Bureau & response

8a. (From Regn Form) Heard of Bureau through...

8b. Could you tell me your **reasons for coming to the Bureau?**

9. If you had not come to the Bureau, would you have gone to a voluntary organisation directly? **yes/ no/ d/k**

10.a) Was your visit to the Bureau useful? **yes/ no/ d/k**
b) Could you tell me more about that?

11. What did they (*the Bureau*) actually do for you?

(Prompts)

- gave information about opportunities for voluntary activity that are available
- gave addresses to contact
- gave information about organisations offering voluntary activity
- made 'phone call(s) to other organisations
- made appointment(s) with other organisation(s)
- anything else (please say what)?

12. How helpful were the staff? very helpful 1 2 3 4 very unhelpful

13. How good was the information? excellent 1 2 3 4 very poor

14. How accurate was the information? very accurate 1 2 3 4 very inaccurate

15. How good was the overall service? excellent 1 2 3 4 very poor

16. Do you think the Bureau could do more to promote its services?
Yes/ no/ d/k

17. (**If yes**) What suggestions can you make about that?

18.a) Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the response you had from the Bureau? **yes/ no**

b)(*If yes*) Could you tell me...?

19a) What sort of **voluntary activity** *are you doing/ do you want to do?*

b) Fields of interest

I'm now going to ask you about specific areas of voluntary activity. Could you tell me for each whether or not you are interested in it.

Children's Education/ Schools **yes/ no/ don't know**
e.g School for disabled children

Youth/ Children's Activities (Outside School) **yes/ no/ don't know**
e.g 'Take-a-Break'
Family Support Centre,
Youth Club

Education (Adults)	yes/ no	don't know
Sports/ Exercise;	yes/ no	don't know
Religious	yes/ no	don't know
Politics and campaigning	yes/ no	don't know
Health & Social Welfare e. g Befriending Service Citizen's Advice Bureau. Midville and Griffton Hospital Headway Transport Service (health appointments) Victim Support	yes/ no	don't know
Older people; e.g. Salvation Army Drop-in Centre W.R. V S : Meals on Wheels	yes/ no/	don't know
Safety, First Aid;	yes/ no/	don't know
The Environment e.g. Borough Council: Tree Warden Scheme	yes/ no/	don't know
Justice and Human Rights	yes/ no/	don't know
Community or Neighbourhood Groups)	yes/ no	don't know

Types of voluntary Activities

20. These are some of the (*other*) kinds of voluntary activity you could do. Could you say for each kind how **interested** you are.

	very interested	not at all	d.k
	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	x
A) Raising or handling money, e.g.			x
• selling in a charity shop, e.g. Help the Aged			
• fund raising (e.g.stall in market for VB)			
B) Committee member of a voluntary organisation	1 2 3 4		x
• e.g. Volunteer Bureau			
C)Organising/ helping to run an activity/ event e.g	1 2 3 4		x
• a parent and toddler group (Family Support Centre)			
• a youth club activity			
• for older people (Salvation Army Drop-in Centre)			
• in a centre for people with mental health problems			
D) Visiting people, e.g	1 2 3 4		x
• housebound person(s) (Befriending Service)			
• visiting people in hospital			
• visiting victims of crime (Victim Support)			

Personal details Could you tell me a little more about yourself?

26. To which of these ethnic groups do you think you belong?

- **Black**
 - of African origin
 - of Caribbean origin
 - of other Black origin (please say which)
- **Asian**
 - of Indian origin
 - of Pakistani origin
 - of Bangladeshi origin
 - of Chinese origin
 - of other Asian origin (please say which)
- **White**
 - of British origin
 - of Irish origin
 - of other White origin (please say which)

Other (please state which) (OPCS, 1991)

27a) Have you

- | | | |
|-------------------|------|----|
| • a disability | yes/ | no |
| • an impairment | yes/ | no |
| • health problem? | yes/ | no |

b) (***If necessary***) What is your

- disability?
- impairment?
- health problem?

c) (*If yes*) What provisions *are/ should be* made, to enable you to do voluntary activity?

28. Could you tell me about where you live?

a) Is it a house/ flat/ bedsitter/ other (please say what)?

b) “ “ your own or rented?

c) (*If rented*) Is it owned by the council/ private landlord/ a housing association?

29. Researchers have found that people’s marital status may mean that they are more likely to volunteer through an agency. May I ask, are you (*read out*)

- single
- married
- living with a partner
- separated/divorced
- widowed
- other?

Income. *You do not have to answer these questions, but it will be useful to the research if you do. Your information will be **confidential**.*

30) Do you depend on your own income? **yes/ no not stated**

b) Are you supported by *someone else*? **yes/ no not stated**

31) (***If yes***) a) Would you be willing to tell me something about what *that person* does for a living? **yes no**

b) (***If yes***) What is *her/ his* job?

b) What kind of work does (s)he do?
Employee/ self-employed? manager/ supervisor, for how many?
training / qualification(s)?

32. From where do you get your main (*household*) income? (*Prompt*)

- work
- Social Security Benefit(s)
- pension, including work pension
- other- self-employed
 - private income
 - other source of income, e.g student grant
- not stated

33.(*If on Benefits*) a) Are you on a work programme? **yes/ no**
(*If yes*) What programme is that? (*If necessary, prompt*)

- Employment Training
- Millennium Volunteers
- New Deal
- any other?

b) What Benefits are you on?

- Income support
- Job Seeker's Allowance.
- Incapacity Benefit.
- Disability Benefit(s)
- State Retirement Pension
- Other Benefits
- not stated

c) (*If unemployed*): **economically active**: seeking work/ waiting to take up a job
economically inactive: permanently sick/ disabled/
housewife/ retired/ student (**OPCS,**
1981 see Q2)

34a) Could you tell me, in what band is your main weekly (*household*) income?

- 00- £50
- £51-100
- £101-200
- £201-300
- £301-400
- £401-500
- £501-600
- over £601

b)(*If over £83/week/ £361/month/ £4335 -single pers.*)Is that before or after tax?

35 Many people who volunteer through an agency also have experience in caring for another person informally (*ie. not through an agency*).

a) (*If necessary*) Do/ did you have responsibility for looking after another person?
yes/ no

b).(**If yes**) Who is this person/ are these people?

- a child/ children
- adult(s)
- disabled person?

c)

- family
- partner
- friend
- neighbour
- lodger
- other?

d) **How old** is this person / are these persons?

e) (*If cares for disabled person*) Could you tell me what disability that person has/ these persons have? (*Prompts*)

- physical (*specify*)
- health problem (*specify*)
- mental health problem
- learning disabilities
- visual/ hearing impairment
- other

f) Does *this person/ these people* live with you? **yes/ no**

g) (**If no**) (a) Does (s)he live locally/ at a distance?

h) Is there anything else you would like to say to me about the *person(s) you look after*? **yes/ no**

(i) (*If yes*) Could you tell me more...?

36. Researchers have found that the wish to volunteer may be related to education.

a) Could you tell me when you finished your full-time education?

14 or under/ 15/ 16/ 17-18/ 19-20/ 20-21/ over 21 still studying

b) Did you pass any exams.? **yes/ no**

c) (*If yes*) What is your highest educational qualification? (*Prompt if necessary*)

- School
- college
- night school
- through work
- University:- first degree/ higher degree
- Other

37. Is there anything else you would like to say to me?

- or ask me about this research?

Thank you for your time and for answering these questions. I hope you will be able to meet me again in about six months' time. When do you expect it would be convenient for you to meet me again?

- *how much notice required?*
- *day of week* *time of day: am/* *pm*
- *place: all right here? **yes/no** (if no) where else?.*

Please let the Bureau know if you change your address/ tel. no.
I'll get in touch with you nearer the time to arrange to meet you again.

17. Do you think that the VB gave you suitable advice and guidance about volunteering? **yes/ no/ don't know**

18. Could you tell me more about that?

19a) Has anyone from the VB been in touch with you since you registered? **yes/ no**

(b) (If yes) What sort of contact was that (*'phone/ letter/ visit to the VB*)?

(c) (If yes) Did you find that contact helpful? **yes/ no/ don't know**

d) Would you have liked someone from the VB to contact you?

yes/ no/ don't know

20a) What organisations did the VB recommend to you?

21a) Did you get in touch with any of them? **yes/ no**

b) (If yes) Which ones did you approach?

c) (If yes) What response did you have?

Volunteeringor not

22a) (If necessary) Have you helped this organisation/ any of the organisations you approached after registering with the VB?

yes/ no

b) (If yes) Which ones?

c) (If yes) Are you still with *it/ them* now? **yes/ no**

23a) Was/ were the ones the VB recommended the right organisation(s) for you?

yes/ no

b) Could you tell me more about that?

24a) There can sometimes be delays in starting volunteering, e.g. because of getting references, or maybe in waiting for a job/ *something to do*. Were you able to start as soon as you had hoped? **yes/ no**

b) (If no) How long did you have to wait?

day(s)/ week(s)/ month(s)

c) (If longer than six weeks) Could you tell me more about that?

25a) (If **no volunteering** and as appropriate) Could you tell me

a) why you did not do any volunteering after you registered?

b) why did you stop volunteering?

c) why you left *the organisation(s)*?

26. (Those who have actually taken part in volunteering) a) For how long did you help/ have you helped the organisation(s) you went to after you registered ?
 day(s)/ week(s)/ month(s)/ year

b) How often? daily/ weekly/ fortnightly/ monthly/ occasionally

27a) For how many hours a week are you volunteering/ did you volunteer?

b) Do you now want to give more hours or less hours to volunteering?
 more/ less/ the same

28. For how long do you want to go on helping the organisation(s)?

until... / week(s)/ month(s)/ year(s)/ indefinitely

29. When I interviewed you before, you said you wanted to...
 (Quote previous preference(s) for **voluntary activity/ies**, Sch. I, Q.19.)

30. (As appropriate) Could you tell me more about

a) what you are (actually) **doing** (now) for the organisation(s) that you have been helping since you registered with the VB?

b) what you have actually **done** for the organisation(s) that you helped after you registered with the VB?

31a) How alike is/ was the work you are doing now/ have done to what you wanted to do when you registered?

very much alike (1) (2)the same (3) different (4)very different
 1 2 3 4

b)(If (very) different) Could you tell me more ?

32. (If appropriate) When we last met, you said you were using/ hoped to use some of your hobbies and interests, and your skills and aptitudes in your volunteering. Which ones have you used?

33. Other volunteers have said that they get different kinds of **satisfaction** from voluntary work. Could you tell me how much you agree with each of these statements?.

	strongly agree	strongly disagree	don't know
a) I meet people and make friends through it.	1 2 3 4		x
b) It's the satisfaction of seeing the results.	1 2 3 4		x
c) It gives me the chance to do things I'm good at.	1 2 3 4		x
d) It makes me feel less selfish.	1 2 3 4		x
e) I really enjoy it.	1 2 3 4		x

- f) It's part of my religious belief/
philosophy of life to give help. **1 2 3 4** **x**
- g) It broadens my experience of life. **1 2 3 4** **x**
- h) It gives me a sense of achievement. **1 2 3 4** **x**
- i) It gives me the chance to learn new skills. **1 2 3 4** **x**
- j) It gives me a position in the community. **1 2 3 4** **x**
- k) It gets me 'out of myself'. **1 2 3 4** **x**
- l) It gives me work experience **1 2 3 4** **x**
- m) It gives me the chance to get a recognised qualification. **1 2 3 4** **x**
- n) Is there anything else that you enjoy about doing voluntary work? **yes/ no**
- o) (If yes) Could you tell me what that is?

34. Writers on volunteering have said that some things are particularly **important to volunteers**. I'm now going to ask you about some of these things in relation to the organisations(s) you *helped/ are helping*. (As appropriate. Adapt for those who have done no actual volunteering.)

35a) Did you feel that you have had equal opportunities with other people, irrespective of your gender, age, race or ability in any of *the organisations you help/ have helped*? **yes/ no/ don't know**

b) Could you tell me more about that?

36a) Has/ have any of the organisations you *help/ have helped* given you a written **description**, like a job description, or **guidelines** about the work? **yes/ no/ don't know**

b) (If yes) Which ones?

37 a) (If yes) Repeat for each organisation, as appropriate. 'How was that for..?')
How **accurate** was the job description?
very accurate **very inaccurate** **don't know**
1 2 3 4

b) (If no) Would you have liked to have a description of the work? **yes/ no/ don't know**

38a) Were you given an **induction** or shown what to do when you started *with any of the organisations*? **yes/ no**

b) (If yes) By which ones?

44a) Have you been told who, in any of the organisations *you help/ have helped*, is responsible for the health and safety of the people who work there?**yes/ no**

b) *(If yes)* In which ones?

45a) *Are you/ have you been* covered by the insurance of any of the organisations when you are volunteering there? **yes/ no/ don't know**

b) by which ones?

46. Looking back, what did you gain from approaching the VB?

47a) Would you recommend the *VB* to your family or friends?
yes/ no/ don't know

b) Could you tell me *why/ why not?*

48. From what you know now, is there anything else that you would have liked the *VB*

a) to do for you? **yes/ no**

b) or to tell you? **yes/ no**

c) *(If yes)* Could you tell me more about that?

Thank you for helping me with this research.

Appendix 4: Interview Schedule III

Schedule III

User Organisations

Organisation Name

Date of interview

Case no(s) of volunteer(s)

Introduction. I'm (Name of researcher). Here's my identification (show card). Thank you for helping me with the study of the VB. One of the things I am trying to find out is how far the volunteers who come through the Bureau are the sort of people that organisations like yours are looking for. I'm interested in what communication you have with the Bureau and whether or not you would like any changes in this. I would also like to learn something about your organisation and your policies in relation to volunteers. I know about the data protection legislation and am prepared to abide by it. Your personal identity will be confidential. Is there anything that you would like to ask me before I start (the interview)?

First, I'd like to know a little about your **organisation and its policies**.

1. What is the main purpose of *your organisation*?

2. What is your role in *the organisation*?

3. How long have you worked for *the organisation*?

weeks

months

years

4. How many paid staff do you have?

I'm going to ask you now about your **policies regarding volunteers**.

5. Why do you use volunteers?

6. Do you give volunteers guidelines about your work, or a written description, like a job description? **yes/ no**

7. What induction/ training do you give volunteers?

(If necessary, prompt: Does that include Health & Safety?)

yes/ no

8. you aim to give volunteers ongoing support?

yes/ no

9. Are volunteers covered by your insurance?

yes/ no

Volunteers in your organisation

10. How many volunteers are there in your (local) organisation?

11. To your knowledge, how many of these have come through the Bureau between 1 February 1999 and 31 May 2000?

12 What difference is there between the volunteers who come through the Bureau and the other volunteers?

none **a lot**
1 2 3 4

13. (If 3/4) Could you tell me more...?

Recruitment

14. What did you tell the Bureau you required from a volunteer?

15. To what extent *do/does the volunteer(s)* who come through the Bureau fit your requirements?

not at all very well
1 2 3 4

Communication with the Bureau

16. What feed-back have you given to the Bureau about *the volunteer(s)*

17. What could make it easier for you to give feed-back to the Bureau about volunteers?

18. When you next need a volunteer, would you ask the Bureau to help you again?
yes/ no/ don't know

19. (If yes/ no) Could you tell me why?

20. Have you ever consulted the Bureau on anything other than the recruitment of volunteers?
yes/ no

21. (If yes) Could you tell me more...?

22. Are you aware of the Bureau's policy on equal opportunities? **yes/ no**

23. How does that fit in with your own policies?

24. Would you welcome a closer working relationship between *your organisation* and the Bureau?
yes/ no/ don't know

25. (If yes) What suggestions can you make that would lead to your organisation and the Bureau working more closely together?

26. Do you think the Bureau could do more to improve its service to *your organisation*?
yes/ no/ don't know

27. (If yes) What suggestions can you make about that?

28. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the way *your organisation* and the Bureau have worked together? **yes/ no**

29. (If yes) Could you tell me more...?

Thank you for your time and for answering these questions. Are you willing for me to use this information for my research? **yes/ no**

It will be used for research and no other purposes.

Is there anything that you would like to ask me about this research?
(Organisations interviewed before sample complete) If you take more volunteers from the Bureau who are also part of my study, may I contact you again?

Thank you.

Appendix 5: Interview Schedule IV

Confidential Interview Schedule IV Bureau Staff

Number of respondent-----

Date of interview-----

Starting time-----

Thank you for meeting me to help me with the study of the Bureau. I'd like to learn about **your experience of working in the Bureau**. I'd also like to know your **views on how the Bureau operates** and on **what changes** you think could be made in order to make its **services even better**. I shall keep what you tell me in **confidence**.

Could you first give me some **basic information** about yourself.

1. Date of birth -----

2. Ethnicity -----

3. Have you a disability/ impairment/ health problem?

4. *(If any)* What is your disability/ impairment/ health problem?

5. What was your occupation before you came to the Bureau?

6. In the Bureau, are you paid staff or a voluntary worker?

7. How long have you worked for the Bureau (date of starting)?

8. How much longer do you expect to stay?

9. For how many hours are you working for the Bureau?

10. What has been your experience of each aspect of your work with the Bureau?

(Ask about each in turn.)

- administrative/ clerical work
- publicity and promotion
- meetings and development work
- recruitment (staff)
(volunteers)

1. To your knowledge, what feedback has there been about how *each volunteer* has got on? *(Use checklist of volunteers participating in project).*

2. *(If necessary)* From what source(s) has that feedback come?

- volunteers
- other agencies
- the Bureau
- other sources *(specify)*

1. Do you think it would be useful for there to be any changes in the way(s) volunteers are followed up? **yes/ no**

2. *(If yes)* What changes could you suggest?

3. Has your work with the Bureau been the same throughout your time here? **yes/ no**

4. Could you tell me, how have you got on generally in the Bureau?

5. How do you see your role in the Bureau?

6. How have you found communication within the Bureau?

7. How have you got on with the other workers within the Bureau?

8. What have you gained personally from working in the Bureau?

21. Some writers¹⁵ have suggested that an effective strategy for volunteer recruitment and retention would include the following.

To what extent has the Bureau been able to provide each of these?

- selection/ screening
- equality of opportunities
- job description/ guidelines
- induction and training
- an information service
- support and supervision
- involvement in decision making
- out of pocket/ travelling expenses

- health and safety
- insurance cover

22. What, in your experience, are the Bureau's strengths?

23. What do you think are the Bureau's weaknesses?

24. **In its Constitution**, the Bureau states that its aims are to promote volunteering and community activity by recruiting, motivating, supporting and enabling...individuals in the Borough ...to take a fuller part in society, to take greater control over their lives and to increase their opportunities for learning and development. I'll take each item in turn.

(Also ask, if necessary) Do you think that any changes in the way(s) the Bureau does each would be useful. (If yes). What changes could you suggest?

25. What do you think about the ways in which Bureau recruits volunteers?

26. In what ways have you observed that the Bureau motivates people to volunteer?

¹⁵ Bitel (1999); Sheard (1995).

27. What support does the Bureau give to volunteers?

29. In what ways do you consider that the Bureau enables people to do voluntary work?

30. The Bureau states that its **objectives** are to give advice and guidance to volunteers.

How, in your experience, does it advise and guide volunteers?

31. What do you think of the way(s) in which the Bureau advises and guides volunteers?

32. How does the Bureau provide for people who need extra support (e.g. people from minority ethnic groups/ people with physical/ learning/ sensory disabilities)?

33. What do you think of the help the Bureau gives to people who need extra support?

34. One of the Bureau's powers is to provide an information service for volunteers. In what ways does it do this?

35. What do you think of the Bureau's information service

- to volunteers
 - to voluntary staff
- to other organisations?

36. What do you think of the publicity the Bureau gives to opportunities for volunteering within the Borough?

37. Another of the Bureau's objectives is to provide a (volunteer) centre. What difference do you think that having an office both in _____ and in _____ makes to the promotion of volunteering and community activity? *Although the purpose of this research is not to compare the two offices, it may be inevitable for there to be some comparison between the two offices at this point.* Let's consider each office in turn.

38. What difference do you think the office in Midville makes to the promotion of volunteering and community activity?

39. What difference do you think the office in Griffon makes to the promotion of volunteering and community activity?

40. What else would you like to tell me about your time with the Bureau?

Thank you for your time and for your help with this research. Best wishes for your future.

Appendix 6: Questionnaire

Research Project: Volunteering through the Volunteer Bureau

Would the staff member who interviewed the volunteer please complete this questionnaire as soon as possible after the volunteer has registered.

Name of Volunteer _____ Case no. _____ (Frances will add this)

1. Please write here the names of the organisations you have given to the volunteer.

2. What is your main reason for giving to the volunteer the names(s) of this/these particular organisation(s)?

2.a) Do you think the volunteer will still be doing voluntary work in six months' time?
yes/ no/ don't know

b) (If 'no' or 'don't know') What is the likely reason why the volunteer may not be doing voluntary work in six months' time?

3. What assistance did you offer to the volunteer?

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|----|
| • information about suitable voluntary work | yes/ | no | |
| • more information about particular organisation(s) recommended | | yes/ | no |
| • telephone call(s) to (an) organisation(s) | yes/ | no | |
| • appointment with (an) organisation(s) | yes/ | no | |
| • other (please specify) | yes/ | no | |

4. What assistance did the volunteer accept?

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------|-----|------------|
| • information about suitable voluntary work | yes/ | no/ | don't know |
| • more information about recommended organisations(s) | yes/ | no/ | don't know |
| • telephone call(s) to (an) organisation(s) | yes/ | no/ | don't know |
| • appointments with (an) organisation(s) | yes/ | no/ | don't know |
| • other (please specify) | yes/ | no/ | don't know |

5. Write here any other relevant comment you wish to make about the volunteer.

Name of person registering volunteer _____ Date completed _____

Appendix 7: Introductory letter for volunteers

Dear Volunteer,

Research project: Volunteering through the Bureau

I am carrying out a study on the work of the Bureau. The research is explained on a separate sheet of paper, which is for you to keep. I hope you will wish to take part in this study. All the volunteers who registered with the Bureau from February 1999 are included, except for those who tell me they want to withdraw. Even if you take part in voluntary activity without the help of the Bureau, or maybe do not take up any voluntary opportunity at all, your views are important.

For you, it would involve meeting me twice, for interviews that will last about half an hour each. The first meeting will take place as soon as possible and the second in about six months' time. Please could you let me know whether or not you are willing to take part in this research by completing the top part of the form headed 'Research on the work of the Bureau. I shall take it that I may read your Volunteer Registration Form, unless you tell me that you do not want to take part in the research. Your identity will be confidential. Could you return this form to the Bureau, or leave it there with your registration form.

When I have received your consent to be included in the research, I shall get in touch with you, to arrange a first appointment. The Bureau has kindly agreed that I may use the private interviewing room. Instead, if you prefer, I could meet you at another place of your choice. It would be helpful if you would also indicate on the research form what days and times you expect to be available to meet me. If you are not on the telephone, I should be grateful if you could also give another telephone number where you could receive a message, if necessary. If you wish to contact me, you may do so through the Bureau.

I look forward to meeting you.
Yours sincerely,

(Name of researcher)

Research project: Volunteering through the Bureau

To: *(Name of researcher)*

From: *(Please print your name here.)* _____

1. I **am willing** to take part in this research.

I **am not willing** to take part in this research.

(Please cross out the sentence that does not state your wish.)

Signed _____ Date _____

If you **are willing** to take part in the research, please complete the rest of this page.

2. I expect to be available for the first research interview on:

(Please circle the days and times when you expect to be available.)

<i>Days of week</i>	<i>Times</i>
Tuesdays	between 10.00 am-12 noon 12.00 noon-2.00 pm
Wednesdays	„ 10.00 -12 „ 12.00 noon-2.00 „
Fridays	„ 10.00 -12 „ 12.00 noon-2.00 „
None of these days	None of these times

If none, please state what days/ times you will be available.

3. Please write here any dates during the next month when you will have holiday or other commitments.

4. If you are not on the telephone, if possible please give another telephone number where you may be contacted.

Please hand in this page with your Volunteer Registration Form
Thank you.

Appendix 8: Information for volunteers about proposed study
Research project: Volunteering through the Volunteer Bureau

Knowing about your experiences when you register with the Bureau could help the staff to give a better service to other volunteers in the future. It would be useful for the Bureau to know, too, whether or not you find suitable voluntary work afterwards. You could also assist the Bureau in doing its job by contributing to the knowledge of what you and other volunteers want from voluntary work. By 'voluntary work', I mean the help you give through an organisation. I do not mean the informal help that you may also give to your family, friends or neighbours, although that, too, is very important. Usually, voluntary work is not paid. But it is all right for you to be given your expenses. If you are on a government scheme, you may be paid a small wage.

The aim of this study is to find out how effectively the Bureau does its work. I will do this by asking volunteers like you about your experience of the assistance you were given by the Bureau. This is why I will need to see you soon after you registered as a volunteer and again in six months' time. Even if you do not go on to do any voluntary work, your views are still important. I shall also ask the Bureau's staff and the organisations that look for volunteers about how they see the work of the Bureau.

In order to compare this study with other research, I shall need to ask you some questions about yourself in addition to those you have answered on your registration form. If you are interested in knowing the outcome of this research when it is completed, you may ask the Bureau's staff.

Appendix 10: Introductory letter for organisations

Dear

Research Project: The Volunteer Bureau

The Volunteer Bureau has agreed to my carrying out a study that will become the basis for an M. Phil. thesis. I enclose a copy of my research proposal. I hope that you will consent to taking part in this study. I should be grateful if you would let me know whether or not you are willing to participate in it, by completing the attached form. Could you please return it to me in the enclosed envelope.

One of the key questions to which I shall be trying to find an answer is how many volunteers actually approach the organisations recommended to them by the Volunteer Bureau. For this reason, I should be grateful if you would keep a record of those volunteers who contact you and whether or not they have come through the Volunteer Bureau.

I shall get in touch with you at a later date, subject to your consent, in order to arrange an appointment with you for a research interview.

Thank you for your response.

Yours sincerely,

(Name of researcher)
University of Leicester

Research on the work of the Volunteer Bureau

To: *(Name of researcher)*

From: *(Please print your organisation's name)* _____

(Please print your own name here) _____

I am willing to take part in the research on the Volunteer Bureau

I am not willing to take part in the research on the Volunteer Bureau

(Please cross out the sentence that does not state your wish)

Signed _____

Date _____

Thank you for your interest.

Please post this form back to me in the enclosed envelope.

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