



Evaluation of the South Yorkshire Social Infrastructure Programme

Report D: Investment in Volunteer Centres

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Yorkshire Forward: South Yorkshire Social Infrastructure Programme

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The South Yorkshire Social Infrastructure Programme (SYSIP) invested relatively small sums in volunteer centre capacity across South Yorkshire - from Sheffield (no staff posts) to two posts in Rotherham (to establish a new volunteer centre). Volunteer centres all sit within local infrastructure organisations.

The report finds that the SYSIP funding coincided with a period of significant policy changes which had significant effects for volunteering. These included both the general increase in the profile of volunteering but especially its prominence in the welfare reform agenda.

Formal Volunteer activities in South Yorkshire (around 20 per cent) are lower than the England average (23 per cent). However, it must be stressed that the work of the volunteer centres is on promoting volunteering amongst disadvantaged groups and, generally, in supporting volunteering involving organisations which are working with more disadvantaged groups.

Process Outcomes

A condition of the support from Yorkshire Forward is that the volunteer centres become accredited through Volunteering England and this has been achieved.

The research finds that each volunteer centre is well run and seen as an important part of local third sector infrastructure. The contexts of each volunteer centre varies. For instance, during the course of the research young people's volunteer support (funded by v, the national young people's volunteer support funder) and general volunteer support has been brought together in Barnsley.

Relationships with external agencies are seen to be important: with organisations who may refer volunteers (Jobcentre Plus), who see volunteering as a necessary part of programme delivery (for instance joint work with PCTs over Condition Management Programmes) and with volunteer involving organisations (both other third sector organisations but also hospitals and hospices).

During the course of the research, the volunteer centres reported that the supply of volunteers had dramatically increased but that the demand for volunteers had not kept pace.

Analysis of Volunteer Data

The most striking finding from this section is the dramatic increase in the clientele of the volunteer centres from 2006 to 2009: from around 75 to almost 240 per month. Interviews with the centre managers suggested that this increase was unprecedented, that the increase was due to a complex of factors (including uncertainty in the labour market, the welfare reform agenda and more generally the wider profile of volunteering).

From the data above other patterns and trends regarding the clientele of the three Volunteer Centres can be identified:

- **gender:** over the three years and across the three centres the proportion of women clients ranged from between 59 per cent and 70 per cent, reflecting the national pattern
- **age:** young people appear to access the Volunteer Centres in larger numbers than others. This is a departure from national volunteering figures which suggest that formal volunteering is highest among people in the 35–44 and 55–64 age brackets
- **disability:** over the three years and across the three centres the majority of clients, between 62 per cent and 83 per cent, reported not having a disability
- **employment:** people 'out of employment' (either unemployed, non employed or unable to work) make-up a significant proportion of each centre's client base.

Sustainability

Ultimately infrastructure organisations require public funding to be sustained. VCs may achieve some scale economies through being fully embedded in their CVS. They may also mitigate some problems through recruiting volunteers to support the VC. However, ultimately they require a core group of paid staff.

There were also found to be issues of capacity. Volunteer enquiries had risen many fold in each Volunteer Centre, but at a time when grant income had declined. This has resulted in consideration of how support was provided: notably support to volunteer involving organisations was squeezed. Increasing volunteer worker support had helped to alleviate some problems, but was not viable model for providing the core functions of the volunteer centre.

Good Practice

Good practice in the Volunteer Centres is evident in:

- the establishment (Rotherham) and development (all) of volunteering infrastructure which is Volunteering England accredited
- the development of Volunteer Centres as 'equal partners' in some areas of joint working with statutory agencies. A notable case here is Rotherham volunteer centre's work with the PCT/JC+ Condition Management Programme
- the commitment to improve volunteering infrastructure as a means to achieving sustainability
- the establishment of systems to capture and use data for performance management.

Recommendations

There are very few recommendations to make. **The volunteer centres are embedded within their local infrastructure organisations** and as such there are few transferable lessons.

A general recommendation is that the LSP, local authority and other agency commitment to volunteer centres is vital to their long term sustainability. This calls for a recognition of where the centres can contribute most (in providing a focal point for volunteers and support to VIOs - public and third sector), in addressing existing deficits (for instance agreeing to volunteering codes of conduct and paying volunteering expenses) and recognising the **appropriate contribution** of volunteering to agendas such as welfare to work.

Within LIOs, **there appears some scope for the further integration of volunteer centre activities**. Other developments in SYSIP, the construction of new buildings and support for sustainability have helped bring these changes.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to SYSIP

The South Yorkshire Social Infrastructure Programme (SYSIP) was supported by Yorkshire Forward, the South Yorkshire Objective 1 Programme and the South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council which committed investment funds of around £36.8 million (with £24.1 million from Yorkshire Forward, £11.6 million from the South Yorkshire Objective 1 Programme and £1 million from the Learning and Skills Council) to voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations in South Yorkshire between 2006 and 2009. This funding has now ended. A key aim of the programme was to increase the sustainability of the organisations supported.

SYSIP invested relatively small sums in volunteer centre capacity across South Yorkshire - from Sheffield (no staff posts) to two posts in Rotherham (to establish a new volunteer centre). Volunteer centres all sit within local infrastructure organisations.

1.2. Scope of the Evaluation

This is one of a series of reports produced on the different themes of SYSIP. These theme reports include:

- investment in volunteering (this report)
- acquisition and utilisation of assets
- core infrastructure services
- AfCL
- neighbourhood infrastructure
- partnership: voice, engagement and influence.

This research report focuses on the following theory of change or rationale for the intervention: *better support to volunteers leads to enhanced social and economic outcomes for volunteers and beneficiaries and contributes to more sustainable VCOs*. The majority of SYSIP funding in this area is supporting the development of Volunteer Centres in Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham. Whilst Doncaster and Barnsley have well established volunteer centres, Rotherham Volunteer Centre is being established with the SYSIP funding. Each Volunteer Centre is a part of the local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS).

A condition of the support from Yorkshire Forward is that the volunteer centres become accredited through Volunteering England. This provides a quality assessment 'kitemark' around what Volunteering England see as the six core functions of volunteer centres: brokerage and support, marketing volunteering opportunities, development of good practice, an enquiry service, development support services (e.g. legal issues), and policy. The three centres have now achieved Volunteering England accreditation.

A key issue to explore around this theme is that support brings social and economic outcomes for hard-to-reach groups and for disadvantaged communities. A range of research methods have been used including the analysis of volunteer centre held data, baseline data (from the national Citizenship Survey), case studies of support and focus groups and interviews with individual volunteers. The focus of the work is very much on volunteer centres, and it is acknowledged that this is only one route in which people may become volunteers. A wider issue which has emerged through the research has been how volunteer centres engage with other agencies (for example joint working with the PCT or Jobcentre Plus) and how volunteering has been included in some areas as an LAA target.

The report focuses on addressing a series of **thematic** and **core questions**. These are outlined below.

| Evaluation Questions | |
|--|--|
| <p><i>Thematic</i></p> <p>What is the nature of support and what works well? What outcomes have volunteering led to (training or employment)? Would the supported volunteers have undertaken the activities anyway? Are there any unintended consequences of the support? What has been the wider social and economic impact of volunteering? Have VIOs become more sustainable (e.g. instance in attracting trustees)? Who is (and is not) volunteering? What forms does volunteering take?</p> | <p><i>Core</i></p> <p>Have projects met their contracted output and outcome targets? What impact has the project had on the development of VCS organisations? What is the net social and economic impact? What is the strategic added value of the project? How has the project met the needs of hard to reach groups? How sustainable are the activities supported? Is there evidence of good practice? What recommendations for future programmes can be made?</p> |

1.3. Structure

The report is structured around the following sections:

- Section 2: About SYSIP and its Evaluation
- Section 3: Policy Context for Volunteering
- Section 4: Intermediate Outcomes
- Section 5: Analysis of Volunteer Data
- Section 6: Sustainability and Strategic Added Value
- Section 7: Conclusion: Good Practice and Recommendations

2. About SYSIP and the Evaluation

2.1. Introduction

The **aim of SYSIP** is to increase the sustainability of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in South Yorkshire through support to infrastructure organisations. Through helping frontline VCS organisations become more effective, this is intended to bring wider economic and social impacts. The programme consists of six elements, each with complementary aims:

1. Barnsley Community Infrastructure
2. Doncaster Social Infrastructure
3. Rotherham Social Infrastructure
4. Sheffield Community Infrastructure
5. Sheffield Community Action Plan Programme
6. Academy for Community Leadership.

The programme was **evaluated** by researchers at Sheffield Hallam University, working in partnership with consultants mtl and COGS, in order to:

- estimate the impacts of the activities over time on VCS infrastructure and the economic regeneration of South Yorkshire
- help build monitoring and evaluation capacity in South Yorkshire
- capture learning and inform future action during the course of the programme.

The evaluation ran in three phases from **March 2007 to June 2009** and involved:

- reviewing the context, development and delivery of the programme
- assessing the impacts of the programme on the development of VCS organisations in South Yorkshire
- considering whether the programme is effectively meeting the needs of VCS organisations - particularly those from 'hard to reach' groups
- identifying good practice developed by the programme and individual elements
- assessing the sustainability of activities developed by the programme
- making recommendations for the future development of social and community infrastructure building programmes.

2.2. Rationale for SYSIP

The core costs of the SYSIP projects were met by Yorkshire Forward, South Yorkshire Objective 1 Programme, and the Learning and Skills Council. The investment in the SYSIP projects was made jointly by these organisations and funding from each (largely) runs concurrently.

The funding provided was in a range of voluntary and community sector 'infrastructure' activities and associated projects. Investment in VCS 'infrastructure' has been part of economic development programmes in the region since 1995 (as part of the EU Objective 2 programmes and linked SRB programmes of this period). Investment under the South Yorkshire Objective 1 programme extended investment, by seeking to invest funds more equitably in deprived neighbourhoods, through the support of communities of interest (e.g. organisations working with black and minority ethnic groups, and people with disabilities), as well as support to district and sub-regional level infrastructure organisations (e.g. local infrastructure organisations such as Councils for Voluntary Service - CVSs and to groups such as the AfCL and the South Yorkshire Open Forum).

Funding under SYSIP was made at a time when VCS organisations faced a reported 'funding cliff edge' with significant declines in UK and EU regional and regeneration funding going to VCS organisations. The **rationale** for SYSIP was therefore very much to provide support for a transitional period which allowed VCS infrastructure to be supported at an appropriate scale (for the funding available) and to seek sustainability without EU Structural Funds and SRB funding. Such sustainability it is suggested would be through VCS organisations attracting funding locally through new commissioning and procurement opportunities, through charging for services, and in some cases reconfiguring the scale/scope of organisations, through for example merger.

Under BERR (now BIS) evaluation guidance, RDAs may intervene for the following rationales: market failure (including provision of public goods, externalities, imperfect information and market power) and equity. The SYSIP projects can be seen to address these in different ways:

- *equity*: this is the main rationale for the SYSIP investments - namely that the RDA investment helps to reduce disparities between areas or different groups. Measures of the performance of SYSIP should therefore be derived from this
- *market failure*: investment in VCS organisations working in deprived areas and with disadvantaged groups can be seen to be seeking to address myriad market failures. Under the BERR framework, investment in VCS infrastructure does contain public good elements (e.g. advice and guidance available to all residents of a community) and externalities (e.g. neighbourhood effects from increasing employment or wellbeing)
- *investment in volunteer centres*: the interventions of the RDA have been to establish/continue support for volunteer centres. The work of the volunteer centres has primarily been in disadvantaged communities or hard to reach groups (including workless individuals). The justification for support here is therefore very much on *equity* grounds
- *acquisition and utilisation of assets*: this theme covers asset management and purchase physical assets (buildings). The rationale for RDA intervention includes *equity* arguments (e.g. for asset management), but also seeks to address perceived market barriers faced by VCS organisations (for example in bringing together a critical mass of infrastructure activities in one place), and therefore address issues of *market power* and *imperfect information*
- *core infrastructure services*: these are primarily justified on *equity* and *public goods* grounds
- *neighbourhood infrastructure*: these are primarily justified on equity grounds through increasing resources going to disadvantaged neighbourhoods and the focus on stimulating economic related activities

- *partnership*: this was seen as a cross-cutting theme and could be justified on *public goods* grounds.

These issues are considered further in the thematic sections and more extensively in the section on impact.

2.3. Undertaking the Evaluation

The evaluation proceeded in three phases in 2007, 2008 and 2009 respectively. The research in 2007 focused on the development of an evaluation framework, interviewing stakeholders and an initial review of data. The research in 2008 undertook to complete the substantive research tasks around five separate themes and to run a programme of masterclasses. The research in 2009 focused on the primary fieldwork around core infrastructure services, an extensive round of stakeholder interviews, analysis of final monitoring data, and analysis of an array of other data sources (notably the NSTSO and financial account data). Judgements to inform the estimate of impact have also been made.

3. Policy Context for Volunteering

3.1. National Policy Context

Nationally policymakers have since 1997 become increasingly interested in volunteering, whether as a means to promote social capital and community cohesion (Taylor, 2002; Putnam, 2000) or as a means to connect with 'hard to reach' groups as part of the government's welfare to work agenda. For example, *Volunteering for All*, announced in March 2006 signalled an attempt to promote opportunities to potential volunteers, especially adults at risk of social exclusion (Home Office, 2006). Volunteering has also become a national PSA target (Home Office, 2006) measured through the national Citizenship Surveys. This has led some commentators to note that never before has the UK government "directed such attention to volunteering, or invested so heavily in initiatives to promote it" (Low, *et al.*, 2007 p.10).

Under the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) (2008-2011) Stronger Communities and a better Quality of Life theme, PSA21 carries greatest relevance for the voluntary or third sector. Two national indicators appear to be relevant: NI 3 'civic participation in the local area' and NI 6 'participation in regular volunteering' (CLG, 2008b). Both are assessed using the new 'Place Survey' to be undertaken by local authorities (CLG, 2007d). The Third Sector Review (July, 2007) made a key announcement of £117 million of new resources for youth volunteering, building on the work of V, the charity established by the Government in 2004 to develop a new framework for youth volunteering (HMTreasury, 2007).

The Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) (2004) conclude that volunteering is an effective way of alleviating the symptoms of social exclusion for many people, and can help to address some of the causes. However, they conclude that the impact of (formal, organisationally based) volunteering is not realising its potential, stating that "volunteering is not yet fully inclusive, and so its contribution to combating social exclusion is being limited" (IVR, 2004 p. 66). A number of barriers prevent people from volunteering in formal, organisational settings. These barriers are both psychological and practical and affect people's willingness and ability to volunteer at different points in time: some when an individual first considers volunteering; some when they attempt to start volunteering; and others when they have become involved.

IVR (2004) suggest that, for some people, volunteering does provide a route into employment, which government (and many others) see, in turn, as the main route out of exclusion. However, they go on to highlight that this is not the only contribution that volunteering makes to inclusion, nor is it (for many people) the main benefit to be derived from volunteering. Howlett (1999) has also argued that government's emphasis has been too strongly on the link between volunteering and employment generally. Thus, in policy terms, volunteering has become increasingly associated with training and re-retraining for the workplace (Russell, 2005).

In January 2008, the report of the Commission on the Future of Volunteering - *Manifesto for Change* - was published. The document made a series of recommendations by which government could remove barriers faced by volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs), how public sector organisations could be more

supportive of volunteering (e.g. through training of staff or recognising opportunities from volunteering), and the need for continued development of VIOs and their staff.

More recently the profile of volunteering has increased as greater policy interest has been shown to its contribution to labour market outcomes, and in particular in supporting groups seen to be furthest from the labour market. In July 2008 DWP published a Green Paper *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility* and in the following December a White Paper *Raising Expectations and increasing support: reforming welfare for the future*. These documents, the precursor to the launch of the Flexible New Deal, retained the emphasis on paid employment as the favoured outcome government sought for those claiming unemployment related benefits. However, the role of volunteering was increased with changes made to benefit rules, especially for JSA claimants (notably flexibility in receipt of volunteer expenses and in an extension of the permissible period to attend interviews for those volunteering). In particular (DWP, 2009, p 119-120):

Volunteering can help job seekers develop important work-related skills and improve social cohesion. The current benefit rules balance the expectation that claimants should be actively looking for paid employment with recognition that volunteering can be part of the path back to work.

The responses we received showed support for our approach to volunteering for people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance and provided valuable feedback on how we could further promote volunteering opportunities to claimants. This included improving the information provided to customers, and the guidance provided to staff, to ensure that the benefit entitlement rules for volunteers are understood by all.

As a result, Jobcentre Plus is now following through with the project proposed in the Green Paper to involve key players from the third sector to look at how this can be done. This will feed into a memorandum of understanding between Jobcentre Plus and third sector representatives to improve the relationship between employment support and voluntary activity.

Although volunteering has been referred to by previous national employment policies as an important component of action, this White Paper formalises the position between Jobcentre Plus and the third sector, and in particular local volunteer centres.

In February 2009 the government, in response to the recession, announced an action plan for the third sector (Real Help for Communities) and this included £8 million to fund volunteering opportunities as part of employment support. This programme is managed nationally by BTCV and delivered by BTCV with CSV, v and Volunteering England, with a volunteer broker appointed in every Jobcentre Plus district.

The national **Citizenship Survey** (2009) contained full findings on volunteering. Interim findings which can be drawn for volunteering include:

- in 2007-08, **73 per cent of all adults had volunteered** (formally or informally) at least once in the last 12 months, with 48 per cent having volunteered at least once a month
- **overall levels of volunteering (at least once in the last 12 months) have not changed since 2001**. However, levels of formal volunteering have risen over this period, whilst informal volunteering has declined

- **41 per cent of people from groups at risk of social exclusion participated in voluntary activities** (formal and informal) at least once a month. This is unchanged from 2001 (41 per cent).

In terms of formal **civil engagement** the Citizenship survey found:

- in 2007-08, **10 per cent of people had, in the last year, either participated in direct decision-making about local services or issues, or participated in the actual provision of these services** by taking on a role such as a local councillor, school governor or magistrate
- **39 per cent of people engaged in some form of civic participation**, such as contacting a local councillor, attending a public meeting or signing a petition at least once in the past year.

Finally, in terms of **influencing decisions**:

- **in 2007-08, 38 per cent of people felt they could influence decisions in their local area**, similar proportions to 2005 and 2003 but lower than in 2001 (44 per cent).
- **20 per cent of people felt they could influence decisions affecting Great Britain, lower than in 2001 (25 per cent).**
- **white people are less likely than people from minority ethnic groups to feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area** (37 per cent compared with 48 per cent). White people are also less likely to feel they can influence decisions affecting Great Britain (19 per cent compared with 34 per cent).

Although these figures are for a national level, they are likely to be broadly reflected regionally and locally. The most noticeable differences often appear between different socio-economic and ethnic groups and between small (ward) geographical areas.

3.2. Local Policy Context

National government policy towards volunteering is reflected in Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham: the volunteer centres are engaged in a range of initiatives with different agencies, and volunteering forms part of LAA commitments to the voluntary and community sector. In Doncaster there is a shared LAA priority to encourage residents to participate in social, community, cultural and environmental activities, and that this would be measured through different National Indicators, including influence over decision making (NI 4), environment for a thriving third sector (NI 7), engagement in the arts (NI 11) and young people's participation in positive activities (NI 110). Barnsley's LAA contains less direct reference to volunteering but it does include the specific national indicator for volunteering (NI 6, participation in regular volunteering) and an emphasis on youth volunteering. In Rotherham, the LAA includes NI 4 (influence over local decisions) and NI 7 (a thriving third sector) but not NI 6 (volunteering).

However, Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham LSPs do not have Volunteering Strategies (in contrast to Sheffield - Coule and Morgan 2008). However, this was not seen as a gap, and each Volunteer Centre reported that volunteering was a part of local policy agendas. Despite this, it is also unclear as to the contribution of volunteering to different agendas - for instance working neighbourhoods, LEGI or a

thriving third sector. More critically, volunteer centres had often to develop and negotiate bilateral relations with public sector agencies - for example around codes of conduct for the treatment of volunteers - which could be resource intensive.

In Rotherham, this situation had been helped by the adoption of the Compact and a volunteering code of practice. The importance of public agency commitment to volunteering is demonstrated by work by Penberthy & Forster (2004 p. 10), who suggest: "our education, health and criminal justice systems (to cite only three) rely on volunteers for their effective delivery. What is more, our governance systems - from the organisation of political parties through to the exercise of power by elected officials - are delivered, in the main, through volunteers". A cursory analysis of VBASE (the Volunteering England developed package for managing and tracking volunteer and organisation enquiries) data on organisations registering volunteer opportunities with Volunteer Centres, highlights the significance of the statutory sector, and in particular hospitals and social services.

It is worth noting the context and development of volunteering infrastructure. For instance, the strategy for modernising the volunteering infrastructure, *Building on Success: Strategy for Volunteering Infrastructure in England 2004–2014*, was produced by Volunteering England and developed through a process of consultation "in parallel with the development of ChangeUp" (England Volunteering Development Council, 2005 p. 2). The overall vision of Building on Success is of "a modern, dynamic, strategic, coordinated and sustainable infrastructure for volunteering at national, regional and local level" (Penberthy and Forster, 2004 p. 6). However, Building on Success highlighted a number of concerns relating to the state of the volunteering infrastructure in England. Perhaps the overriding issue was that:

The volunteering infrastructure in England has grown over more than 50 years both locally and nationally. This growth has been evolutionary, often without a sense of cohesive strategy or a plan for long-term sustainability (Penberthy and Forster, 2004 p.6).

More specifically, staff time spent on fundraising to meet salary costs was significant. As a result VSAs can find it difficult to deliver the core functions and some were closing owing to a lack of funding (Coombes, 2007). Coombes further suggests that additional work must be undertaken to demonstrate the impact of volunteering infrastructure modernisation and that there is a need to identify clearly any difference that investment has made to beneficiaries in both the short and the long term.

The South Yorkshire 'Part of the Picture' study (Macmillan, 2006), reveals the following about volunteering within the *voluntary and community sector* in South Yorkshire:

- the total number of volunteers working in the voluntary and community sector in South Yorkshire as a whole is estimated to be 112,500
- female volunteers make up approximately 59 per cent of the total and male volunteers comprise 41 per cent of the total. Nearly half (48 per cent) of volunteers are aged 50 or above, one third (33 per cent) are aged between 25 and 49, and nearly a fifth (19 per cent) are aged under 25
- overall 41 per cent of groups have less than 10 volunteers (15 per cent between 0 to 4 volunteers, 26 per cent between 5 and 9). A further 33 per cent have between 10 and 20 volunteers.

When the data from this report are presented at a district level, they reveal the following (see table 3.1):

Table 3.1: How many volunteers or unpaid workers are involved in your organisation/group? (South Yorkshire and by district)

| | SY | SY | Barnsley | Doncaster | Rotherham | Sheffield |
|----------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Number of volunteers | Frequency | % | % | % | % | % |
| 0 - 9 | 239 | 40.5 | 29.8 | 35.5 | 48.2 | 42.6 |
| 10 - 19 | 192 | 32.5 | 35.7 | 41.8 | 26.8 | 30.3 |
| 20 - 49 | 115 | 19.5 | 22.6 | 18.2 | 19.6 | 19.0 |
| 50 or more | 44 | 7.5 | 11.9 | 4.5 | 5.4 | 8.1 |
| Total | 590 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

N = 590 (Barnsley 84, Doncaster 110, Rotherham 112, Sheffield 284)

The data suggest that a higher proportion of volunteers in Rotherham are in smaller organisations, whilst the greatest proportion in larger organisations is in Barnsley.

Finally, the report found that 48 per cent of organisations reported finding and recruiting new volunteers as a major or significant problem. 27.5 per cent of organisations reported that keeping and developing volunteering was a major or significant problem.

In terms of the change in demand for volunteers from voluntary and community sector organisations, 30 per cent of organisations reported that the numbers of volunteers they used would increase, with only 15 per cent reporting that this would decrease. As the Part of the Picture report concluded, the 'perennial problem' of recruiting and retaining volunteers is likely to continue: "The most pressing problems facing the sector appear to be fundamental to its health: raising funds, **finding and recruiting new volunteers**, and the time to get involved in networks and partnerships" [emphasis added]. (Macmillan, 2006, p.66).

More recent data from the local **Place Survey** (Ipsos-MORI 2009) reveals the following around the indicators for influence and volunteering.

Table 3.2: Findings from the Place Survey

| | NI 3 (%) ¹ | NI 6 (%) ² |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| England | 14.0 | 23.2 |
| Yorkshire & the Humber | 13.1 | 22.3 |
| Barnsley | 11.6 | 18.3 |
| Doncaster | 12.3 | 19.6 |
| Rotherham | 11.1 | 20.0 |
| Sheffield | 12.3 | 21.0 |

Notes: NI 3: % who have been involved in decisions that affect the local area in the past 12 months
NI 6: % who have given unpaid help at least once per month over the last 12 months

The Place Survey findings for the South Yorkshire districts are broadly in line with expectations and reflect that higher income levels tend to be positively correlated with formal participation. However, there is a need for some caution. Research by Gilbertson and Wilson (2009) for the ESRC has found that other measures of participation are required, and that despite the use of standardised survey questions, there can be variation in responses.¹

¹ Gilbertson, J. and Wilson, I. (2009), *Measuring participation at a local level: be careful what you ask for!*, People Place and Policy Online, v. 3 pp. 78-91 (www.ppp-online.org)

3.3. Conclusion

This section sets the policy context which volunteer centres operate in. It highlights the increasing profile of volunteering in government debate and in particular a greater role ascribed to it in welfare reform agendas. Within South Yorkshire there was found to be a greater profile of volunteering in local policy agendas, either directly or as part of wider support for the third sector, although only in Bardsley was the Local Agreement Target for volunteering included.

The greater issue was around shifts in the welfare to work agenda with a greater policy emphasis placed on volunteering. This was also held to place a greater onus on local Jobcentre offices to work with volunteer centres. Alongside this, the recession had also brought greater attention to volunteering, with additional funding to support volunteer brokerage activities (by Jobcentre Plus offices).

4. Intermediate Outcomes

4.1. Introduction

Our research has found processes and systems to be working well - and appropriate to the capacity of each volunteer centre. Evidence was found of organisations improving volunteer management practice in their areas (for example, around ensuring organisations comply with CRB checks, establish health and safety procedures, and pay volunteer expenses where necessary). More generally, the volunteer centres were found to be engaging in partnership relationships with public agencies to promote volunteering. Notable examples here were with JC+, PCTs, hospital trusts and local authority children's and adult services departments. In many cases this had led to additional funding but also to volunteering opportunities being seen as part of a wider package of support being offered. Examples of work here include links with JC+ personal advisors to discuss volunteering opportunities for Incapacity Benefit claimants, and work with adult services and PCTs providing supported volunteering to people with mental health and additional learning needs. However, there were also examples found of referrals to the volunteer centres being inappropriate or outside what had previously been agreed. These operational issues had largely been solved or were being resolved.

The volunteer centres interviewed reflected on the importance of volunteering to be seen within the strategic context of LSP and LAA discussions: in particular, for an appropriate and realistic assessment of the contribution of volunteer centres and volunteering to Community Strategy and LAA agendas, but not necessarily a call for local volunteering strategies.

Monitoring systems were primarily based on VBASE. This was being used effectively and in Doncaster the system had been enhanced to allow for additional follow-up surveys of organisations and individual referrals. An initial analysis of the data suggests that targets for volunteers set in the SYSIP contracts will or have already been exceeded.

A final issue we found was around the 'coordination' of volunteering activities across different volunteer involving organisations. Both VCS and public organisations are active in providing opportunities for volunteering and in attracting funds to undertake these activities (from DWP support to V - the agency to promote volunteering for Young People). We generally found that activities were well coordinated although it may be useful to explore this further and whether there is much duplication. This also has implications for the 'coverage' of volunteer support: in particular whether provision is targeted effectively whilst maintaining a brokerage service open to all.

4.2. Processes

Employment related outcomes are considered in further detail below. Other outcomes fell into the following two categories:

- *organisational benefits for Volunteering Involving Centres and Volunteer Centres.* The research found that the three volunteer centres were accredited and were effectively using monitoring and client management systems. These

were typically focused on the VBASE system, which also allowed data to be shared with Volunteering England. In Doncaster, this system has been supplemented with an additional database

- *partnership benefits - working with other agencies and VIOs.* A major benefit of the support was reported to be the additional capacity for a staff member (typically the Volunteer Centre manager) to engage in development activities. An example of this work in Rotherham was cited to be joint work with the Jobcentre Plus and PCT around a condition management programme. In conjunction with this, the Volunteer Centre had recruited nine volunteers onto a training programme who would in future help with the running of the centre. In Doncaster, the support had enabled its training activities to be extended and to work in increasing the awareness of volunteer involving organisations' responsibilities towards volunteers (for example, health and safety or the payment of volunteer expenses). In Barnsley, the volunteer centre had worked with the Churches Drugs Action Project to recruit and support volunteers.

Despite evidence of strong partnership working in the three districts, we also found areas in which it could be improved. A common response was that the volunteer centres could only do so much – agencies and district partnerships (in particular LSPs) needed to take a more strategic approach for particular barriers to be addressed. This included the commitment to implement the Compact and also signing up to a code of conduct for volunteering, as in Rotherham.

| Case Study: Third Party Referrals |
|---|
| <p>This issue was raised in interviews with each Volunteer Centre. They reported that their policy was not to accept third party referrals. That is where an agency (typically involved in employment advice) phones on the potential volunteer's behalf. The core of volunteering is that individuals offer their time freely. One interviewee suspected that on occasion that enquiries from JCA claimants are prompted by employment agency personal advisers and indeed, calls are made from their offices.</p> <p>However, the Rotherham Volunteer Centre reported that it had regular contact with Jobcentre Plus and were able to advise them on the range of volunteer opportunities available and who these would be most suited to. They reported that this worked well in reducing referrals which were ultimately unsuccessful.</p> |

At an operational level, relations with individual agencies worked well although a common response was that this could be wider ranging: for instance links had developed with individual departments in local authorities or with specific area teams of the PCT and without commitment across the organisation. Similarly, relations with Jobcentre Plus were found to be positive, although again individual practices could undermine more strategic relations - for instance, the practice of third party referrals to volunteer centres of 'inappropriate cases'. One volunteer centre reported that it no longer accepted third party referrals - individuals had to approach the volunteer centre on a voluntary basis.

4.3. Conclusion

This section explored the development of the three volunteer centres. It finds that each is well run and seen as important part of local third sector infrastructure. The contexts of each volunteer centre varies. For instance, during the course of the research young people's volunteer support (funded by v) and general volunteer support has been brought together in Barnsley.

Relationships with external agencies are seen to be important: with organisations who may refer volunteers (Jobcentre Plus), who see volunteering as a necessary

part of programme delivery (for instance joint work with PCTs over Condition Management Programmes) and with volunteer involving organisations (both other third sector organisations but also hospitals and hospices). During the course of the research, the volunteer centres reported that the supply of volunteers had dramatically increased but that the demand for volunteers had not. Indeed, the volunteer centres reported that pressure on third sector funding had reduced volunteering opportunities in some organisations.

5. Analysis of Volunteer Data

5.1. Introduction

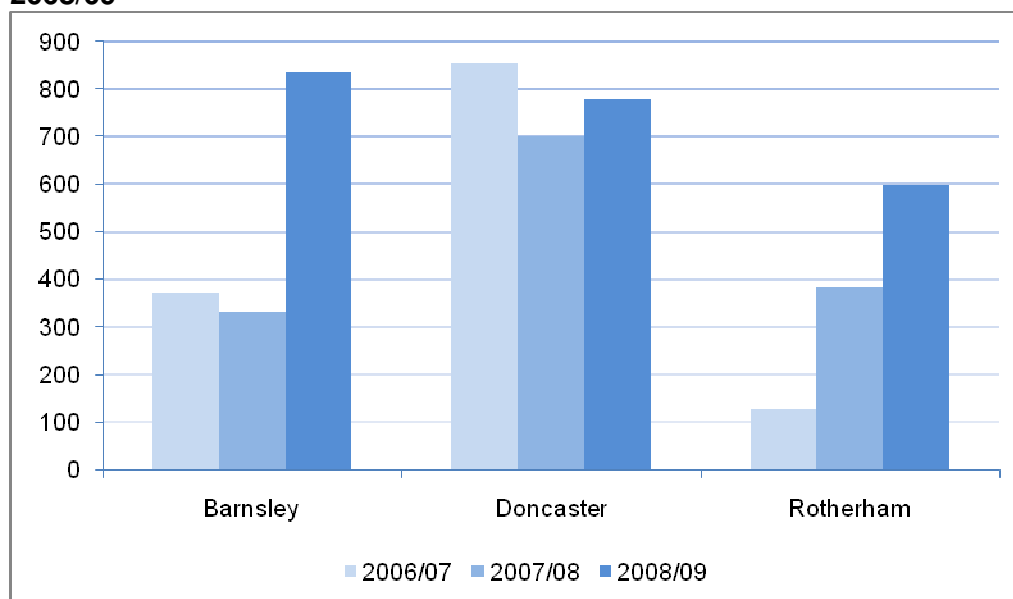
The analysis below shows the numbers and key socio-demographic characteristics of the clients of the South Yorkshire Volunteer Centres in receipt of SYSIP funding (i.e. Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham). It is based on each centre's monitoring data which is systematically collated through the V-base system in accordance with the requirements of Volunteering England accreditation. The data reflect the client base of each Volunteer Centre and should not be considered representative of actual levels of volunteering in the three boroughs. Neither can the outputs and client numbers reported be attributable solely to SYSIP. Nevertheless, it does provide an indication of activity levels and interest in volunteering over time and highlights the important impacts that the Volunteer Centres have.

Although data for each centre is reported for a series of common categories it should be noted that this is not a like for like comparison. The centres have been in existence and collecting data for varying periods of time: Barnsley and Doncaster are well established centres but have only been monitoring data in this way since 2006 and 2002 respectively while Rotherham has only been collecting data since its inception in 2006. Moreover, the centres have different funding and staffing arrangements and therefore different strategies and targets relating to various client groups. For example, since 2008 Barnsley and Rotherham have been in receipt of 'V' funding which targets young people aged between 16 and 25 but Doncaster has not.

5.2. South Yorkshire wide

Figure 5.1 provides an overview of each Volunteer Centre's client numbers during the SYSIP funding period.

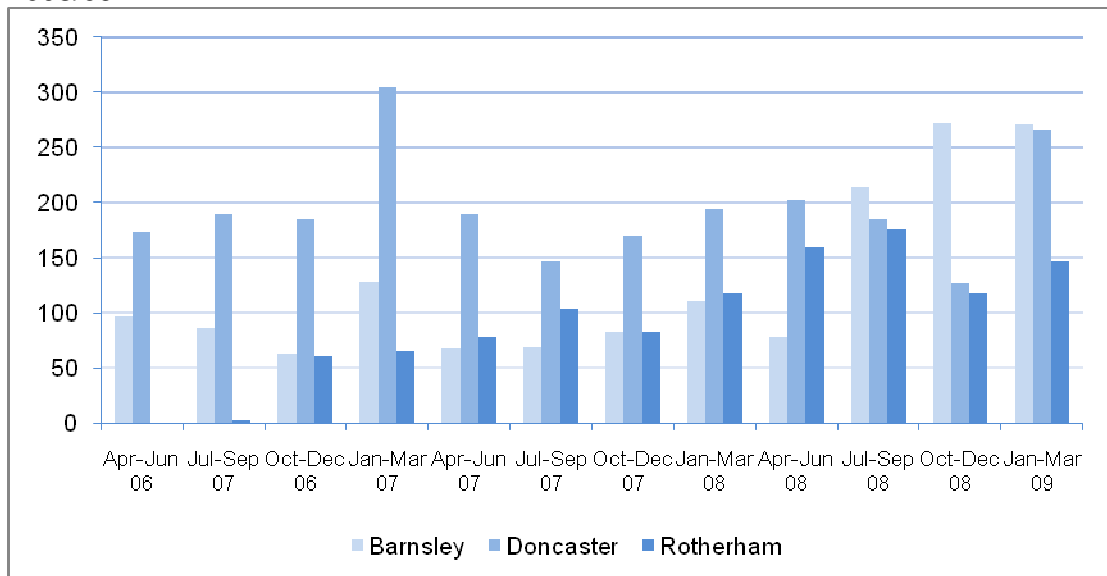
Figure 5.1: Number of Volunteer Centre clients on an annual basis 2006/07-2008/09



This shows that the number of clients of each Volunteer Centre varied considerably. Barnsley had 373 clients in 2006/07, 331 clients in 2007/08, and 835 clients in 08/09. The large increase in 2008/09 is perhaps due to the extra resources provided through V. Doncaster had 853 clients in 2006/07, 700 in 2007/08, and 780 clients in 2008/09. Rotherham had 127 in 2006/07, 382 clients in 2007/08, and 599 clients in 2008/09. This demonstrates that Rotherham has developed its capacity quickly since its inception in September 2007, having tripled its client numbers in 2007/08, and increased them by more than 50 per cent again in 2008/09.

Figure 5.2 shows each Volunteer Centre's client numbers on a quarterly basis throughout the SYSIP funding period.

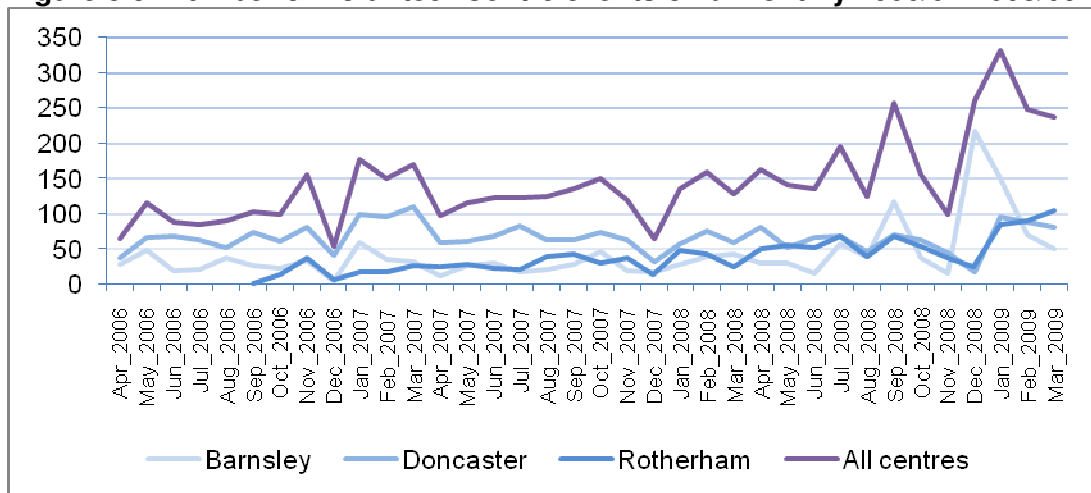
Figure 5.2: Number of Volunteer Centre clients on a quarterly basis 2006/07-2008/09



This shows how between April-June 2006 and April-June 2008 Doncaster dealt with significantly higher levels of clients compared to Barnsley and Rotherham, but that from July -Sept 2008 onwards Barnsley had the largest number of clients - this may be due to the impact of Barnsley's V funding. It also shows how Rotherham's client base steadily improved from July-September 2006 to a peak in July-September 2008, when its client base reached a level comparable to that of Barnsley and Doncaster.

Figure 5.3 provides a monthly breakdown of Volunteer Centre client numbers throughout the SYSIP funding period.

Figure 5.3: Number of Volunteer Centre clients on a monthly 2006/07-2008/09



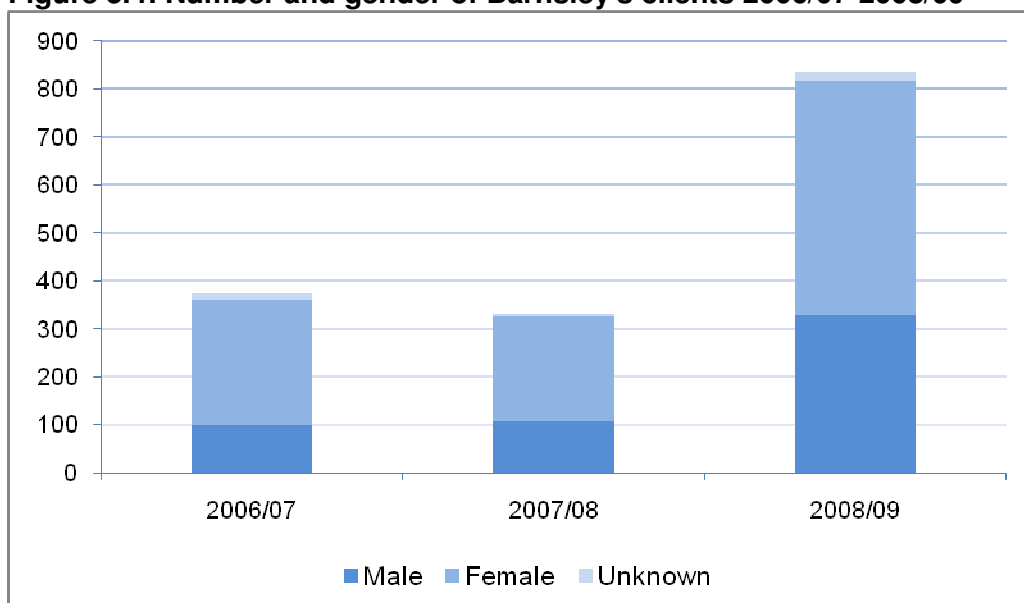
This shows how client numbers varied considerably on a month by month basis, but points to a general upward trend in client numbers, and to the seasonal nature of interest in volunteering. All three centres experienced lower levels of activity toward the end of each year and during the summer holiday periods, followed by renewed levels of interest during the early part of each year and in the autumn. The centres themselves reported that these trends might be explained by New Year's resolutions at the beginning of the year, people seeking opportunities following a summer break, and the start of new school, college and university terms in the autumn.

The following sections consider the client base of each Volunteer Centre in more detail.

5.3. Barnsley

Figure 5.4 provides an overview of the gender of Barnsley's clients during the SYSIP funding period.

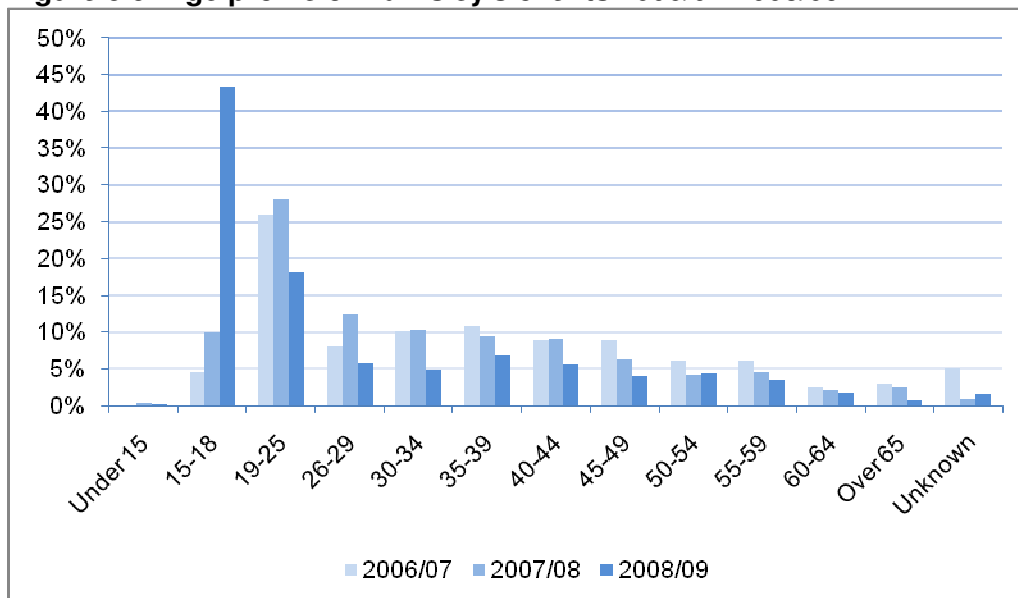
Figure 5.4: Number and gender of Barnsley's clients 2006/07-2008/09



This shows that there was a definite gender bias in Barnsley's client base. In 2006/07 70 per cent were women and 27 per cent were men; in 2007/08 67 per cent were women and 32 per cent were men; and in 2008/09 59 per cent were women and 39 per cent were men.

Figure 5.5 provides an overview of the age profile of Barnsley's clients during the SYSIP funding period.

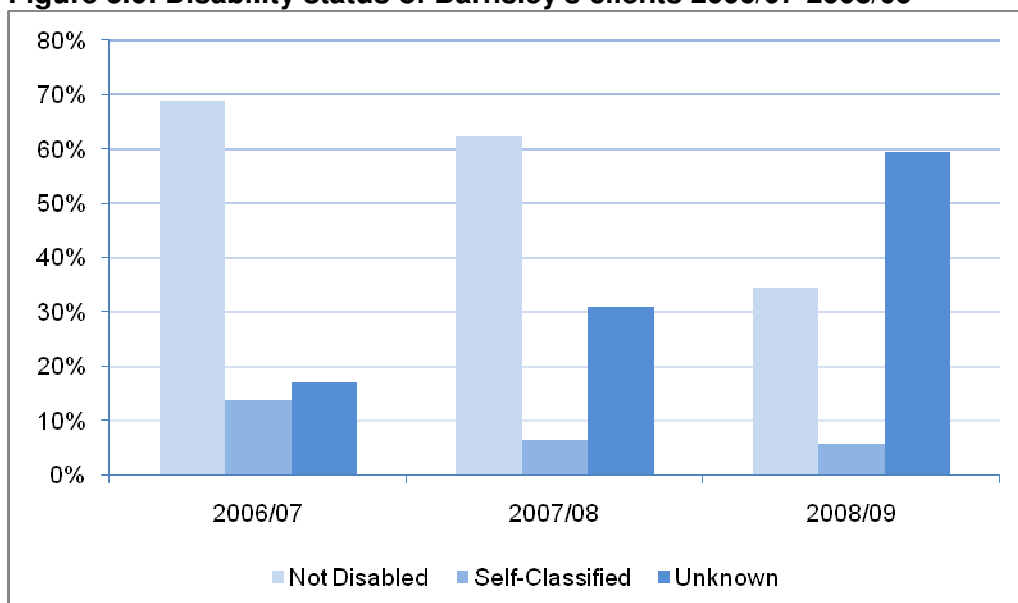
Figure 5.5: Age profile of Barnsley's clients 2006/07-2008/09



This shows that in 2006/07 and 2007/08 the largest proportion of clients (around a quarter) were aged between 19 and 25 but that in 2008/09 the largest proportion of clients (43 per cent) were aged between 15 and 18. This is likely to be a reflection of Barnsley's V funding, which has targeted young people from local schools and colleges.

Figure 5.6 provides an overview of Barnsley's clients disability status during the SYSIP period.

Figure 5.6: Disability status of Barnsley's clients 2006/07-2008/09



This shows that the majority of Barnsleys clients did not classify themselves as disabled. In 2006/07 69 per cent reported no disability compared to 14 per cent who did. In 2007/08 62 per cent reported no disability compared to 7 per cent who did. However, the 2008/09 figures contained a high proportion of clients with an unknown disability status, so are more difficult to interpret.

Support from Voluntary Action Barnsley Volunteer Centre

Case 1: Barnsley Chruches Drugs Project

The organisation has been in operation for seven years. It provides drop-in sessions to drug users where they are given food and drink and have an environment to talk about their needs and problems in an environment outside that provided statutory providers.

The organisation relies heavily on volunteers. It currently has 22 volunteers who have mainly been referred by VAB. Volunteers are encouraged to attend a drug awareness course as part of their training. Food hygiene and first aid training is also provided. The organisation relies of small grant funding (e.g. from J Paul Getty Charitable Trust, Barnsley Building Society and the Church and Community Fund).

The organisation responded positively as to the support it had received from VAB, and not just on volunteering. Support included: legal and governance advice; quality systems (PQASSO); attendance of networking meetings and other events; and support with promotion.

Case 2: Action Space Mobile

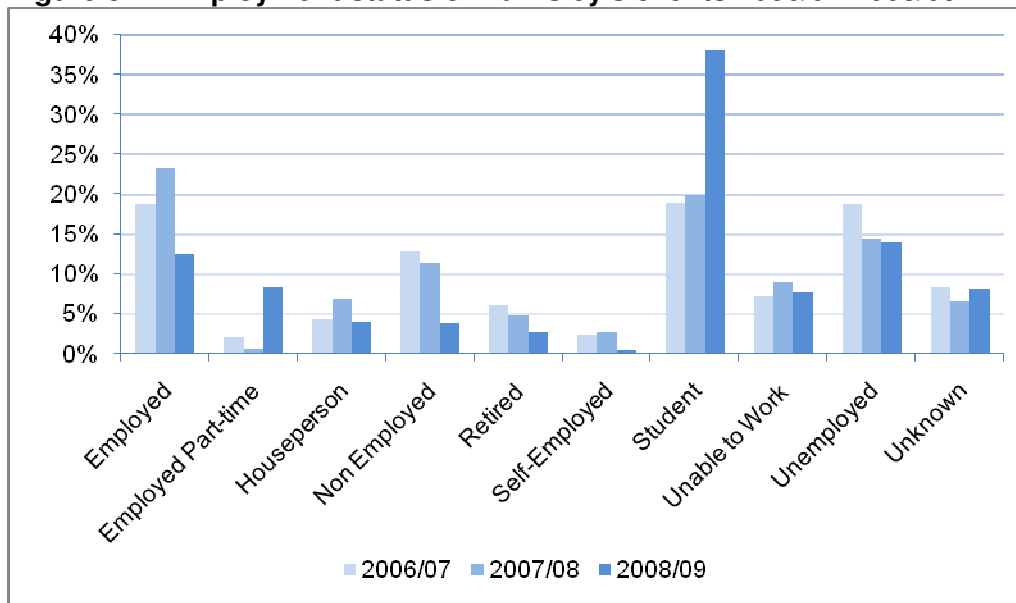
ASM is a registered charity and community arts organisation based in Barnsley, working locally, nationally and internationally. ASM pioneered community arts projects for disabled groups and has broadened its client base to include the following areas: work with people with special needs; lifelong learning; community development and regeneration; artist training and development; national and international programmes of advocacy.

Most volunteers are recruited through VAB's Volunteer Centre. Volunteers have provided support with accountancy and book keeping, as well as an Barzilian who worked as a factory shift worker, but was a trained guitarist, provided IT support and generally contributed artistically to ASM.

The organisation had one full time worker and reported that funding was harder to secure. They had received a wide range of support from VAB and spoke positively about the report received. The support had made a real difference to sustainability.

Figure 5.7 provides an overview of the employment status of Barnsley's clients during the SYSIP funding period.

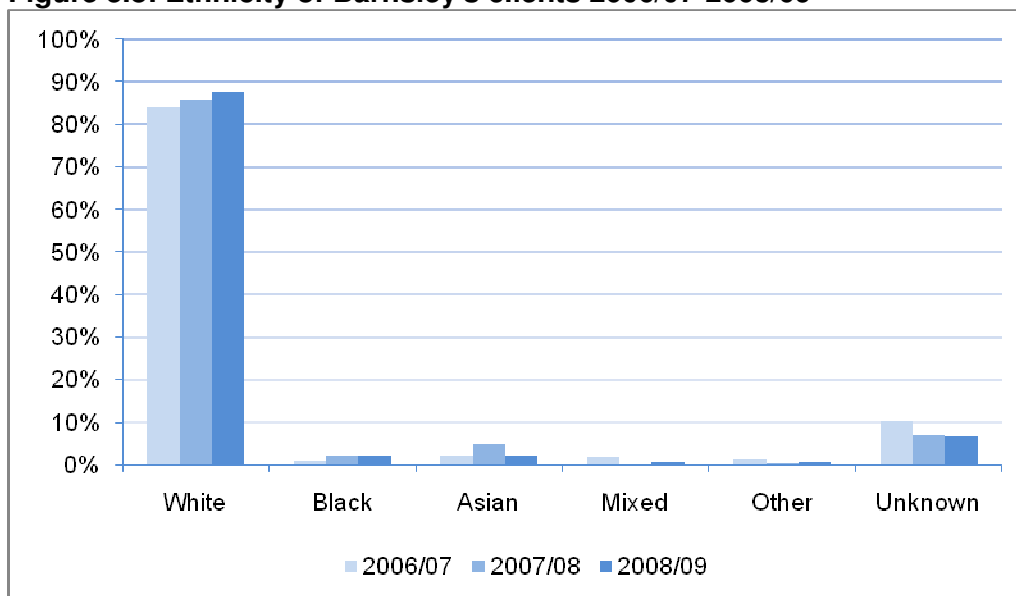
Figure 5.7: Employment status of Barnsley's clients 2006/07-2008/09



This shows that in 2006/07 and 2007/08 the largest proportion (around a quarter) of Barnsley's clients were employed (including part-time and self-employed) but that in 2008/09 the largest proportion (38 per cent) were students - probably another reflection of V funding. However, if the 'out of employment' (i.e. unemployed, non employed and unable to work) categories are combined, they also represent a significant proportion of Barnsley's clients. In 2006/07 39 per cent were 'out of employment' compared to 35 per cent on 2007/08 and 26 per cent in 2008/09.

Figure 5.8 outlines the ethnicity of Barnsley's clients during the SYSIP period

Figure 5.8: Ethnicity of Barnsley's clients 2006/07-2008/09

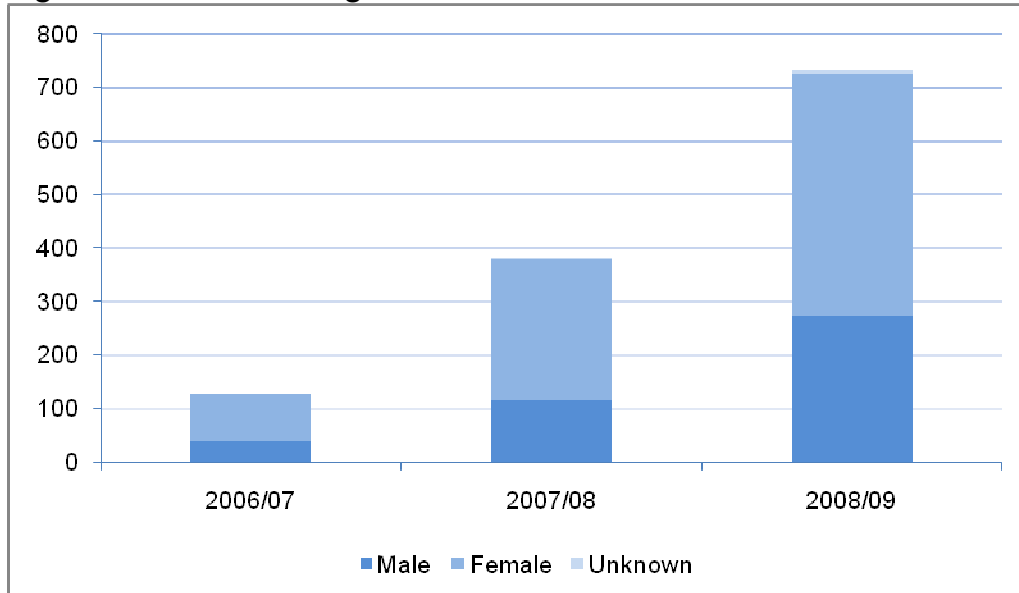


This shows that the largest proportion of Barnsley's clients during this period were white but that people from minority ethnic communities did access the centre, accounting for 6 per cent of clients in 2006/07 and 2008/09, and 7 per cent of clients in 2007/08 - in 2006 Barnsley had a minority ethnic community population (i.e non white-British residents) of 4 per cent.

5.4. Rotherham

Figure 5.9 provides an overview of the gender of Rotherham's clients during the SYSIP funding period.

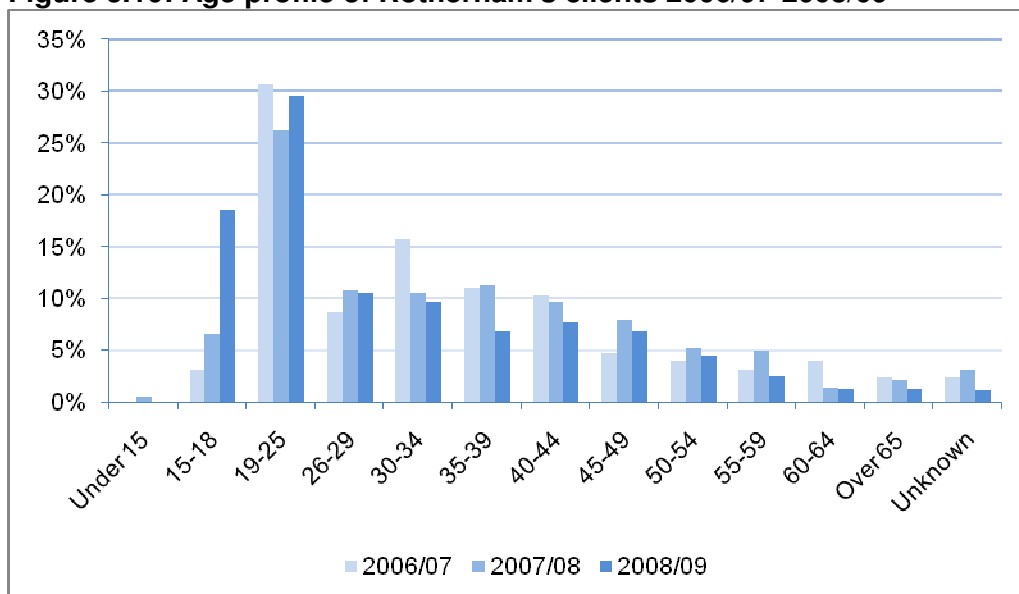
Figure 5.9: Number and gender of Rotherham's clients 2006/07-2008/09



This shows that there was a gender bias in Rotherham's client base. In 2006/07 and 2007/08 69 per cent were women and 31 per cent were men and in 2008/09 62 per cent were women and 37 per cent were men.

Figure 5.10 provides an overview of the age profile of Rotherham's clients during the SYSIP funding period.

Figure 5.10: Age profile of Rotherham's clients 2006/07-2008/09

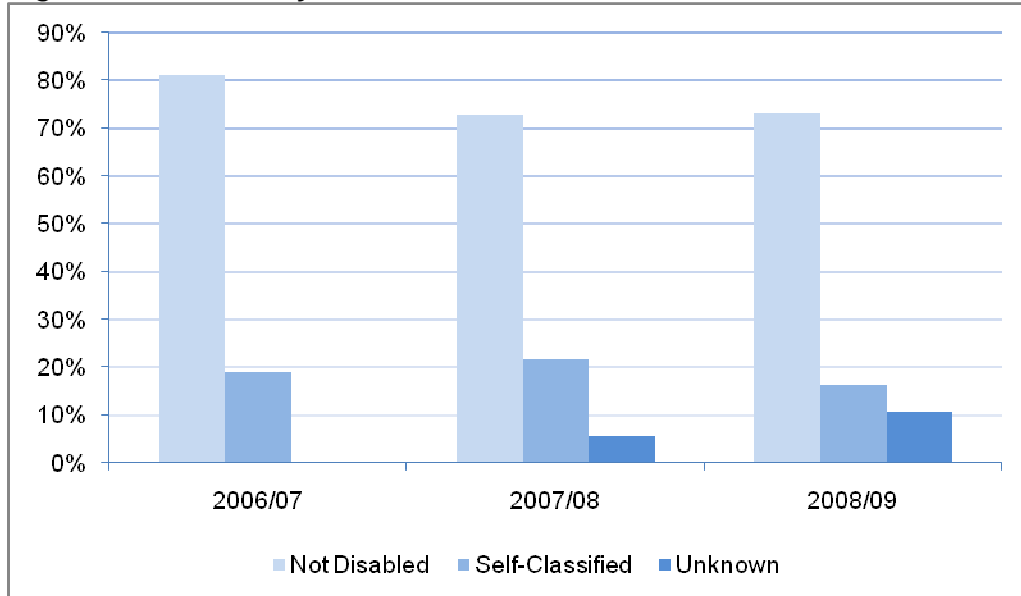


This shows that in each of the three years the largest proportion of Rotherham's clients, between 26 per cent and 31 per cent, were aged between 19 and 25. It also shows that the proportion of 15 to 18 year olds accessing the centre increased from 3 per cent in 2006/07 and 7 per cent in 2007/08 to 19 per cent in 2008/09. This is

probably a reflection of V funding which targeted an increase in volunteers from local schools and colleges.

Figure 5.11 provides an overview of Rotherham's clients during the SYSIP period according to their disability status.

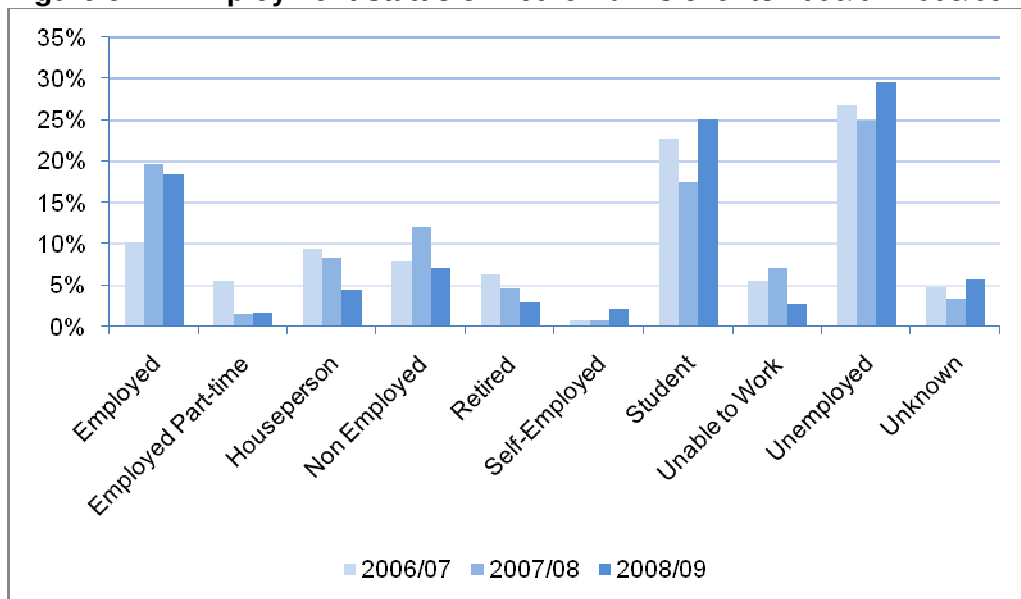
Figure 5.11: Disability status of Rotherham's clients 2006/07-2008/09



This shows that the largest proportion of clients during the three year period, 81 per cent in 2006/07 and 72 per cent in 2007/08 and 2008/09, did not classify themselves as disabled.

Figure 5.12 provides an overview of the employment status of Rotherham's clients during the SYSIP funding period.

Figure 5.12: Employment status of Rotherham's clients 2006/07-2008/09



This shows that the largest proportion of Rotherham's clients in each of the three years were unemployed. If the three 'out of employment' categories (i.e. unemployed, non employed, unable to work) categories it shows that 'out of employment' people accounted for 40 per cent of clients in 2006/07, 54 per cent of

clients in 2007/08 and 62 per cent of clients in 2008/09. It also shows that students made up a large proportion of clients, accounting for 23 per cent in 2006/07, 18 per cent in 2007/08 and 25 per cent on 2008/09. It is interesting to note that V funding did not have a significant impact on student client proportions in 2008/09. This may be because V targets young people 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) as well as school and college students.

Voluntary Action Rotherham Volunteer Centre

Case Study: Condition Management Programme

CMP is part of Jobcentre Plus' Pathways to Work. It has been rolled out nationally from January 2008 but delivery varies between areas. The programme is delivered in groups of 8-10 people with various health conditions which may limit participation in the labour market. Clients attend for 8 weeks, four hours once a week, from 10-2.

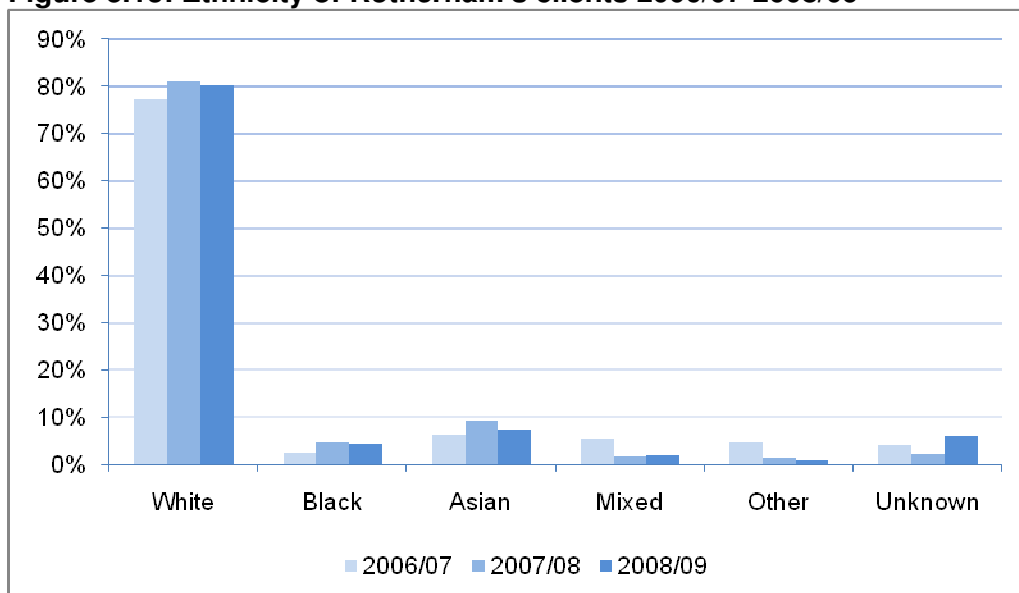
Tasks include, for example: problem solving; relaxation; rational thinking; anxiety management; mood management; and assertion skills.

The Volunteer Centre supports CMP and supports one session. This focuses on volunteering as a supported route to return to the labour market. CMP participants (on Incapacity Benefit) can be supported to become volunteers. Of 56 people supported in the programme in 2008, seven took up volunteer opportunities at VAR. Of these four subsequently took up employment. Volunteer opportunities were carefully matched to individual conditions and interests.

The benefits of volunteering as part of the CMP were that it provided opportunities for vocational development and to test out skills learnt on the course in a non-confrontational environment.

Figure 5.13 outlines the ethnicity of Rotherham's clients during the SYSIP period.

Figure 5.13: Ethnicity of Rotherham's clients 2006/07-2008/09

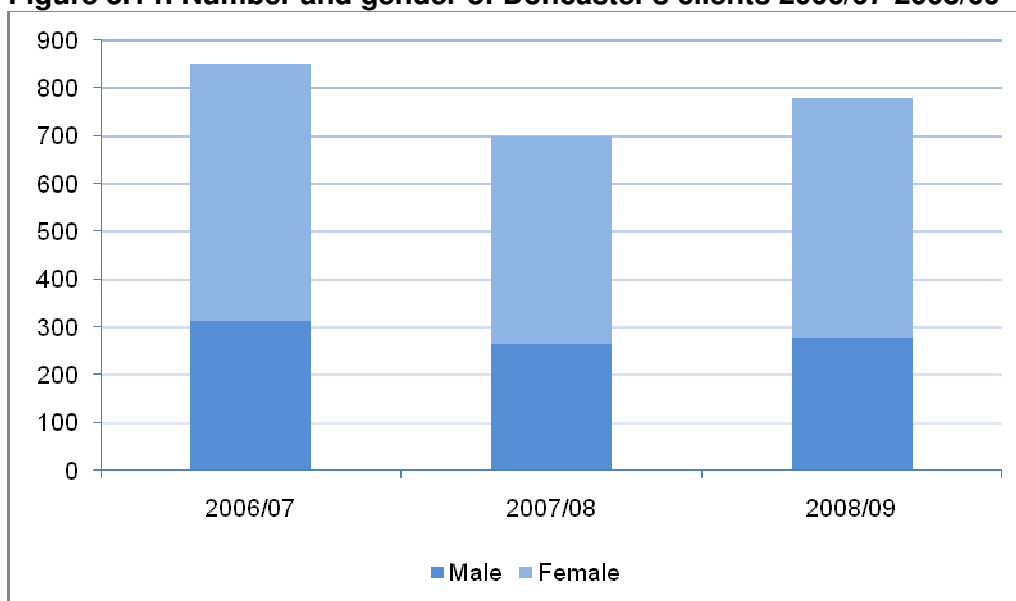


This shows that the largest proportion of Rotherham's clients during this period were white but that people from minority ethnic communities did access the centre in considerable numbers, accounting for 19 per cent of clients in 2006/07, 17 per cent in 2008/09 and 14 per cent in 2007/08 - in 2006 Rotherham had a minority ethnic population (i.e non white-British residents) of 6 per cent.

5.5. Doncaster

Figure 5.14 provides an overview of the gender of Doncaster's clients during the SYSIP funding period.

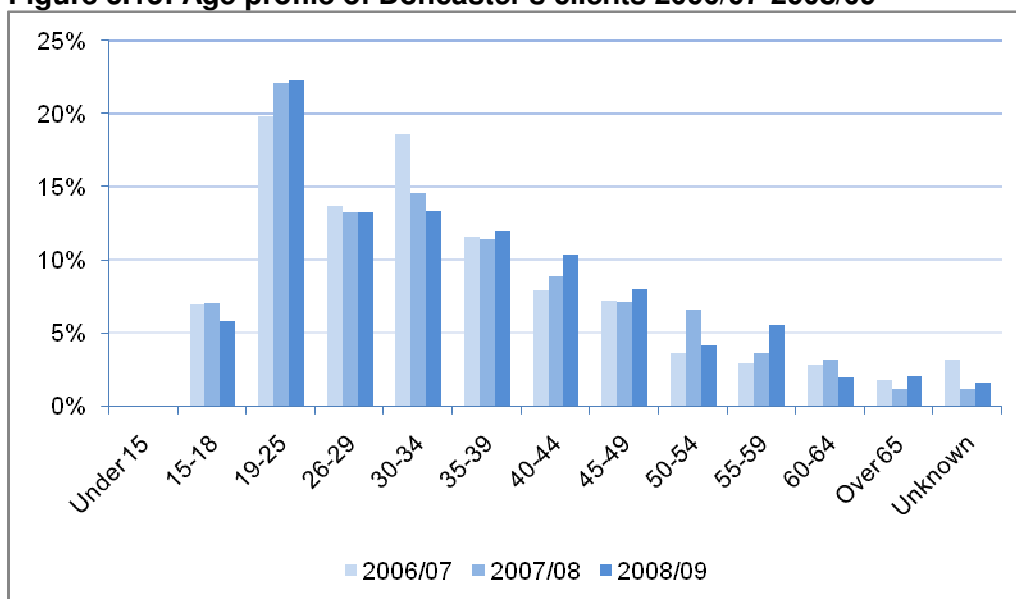
Figure 5.14: Number and gender of Doncaster's clients 2006/07-2008/09



This indicates that there was a gender bias in Doncaster's client base. In 2006/07 63 per cent were women and 37 per cent were men, in 2007/08 62 per cent were women and 38 per cent were men, and in 2008/09 64 per cent were women and 36 per cent were men.

Figure 5.15 outlines the age profile of Doncaster's client base during the SYSIP funding period.

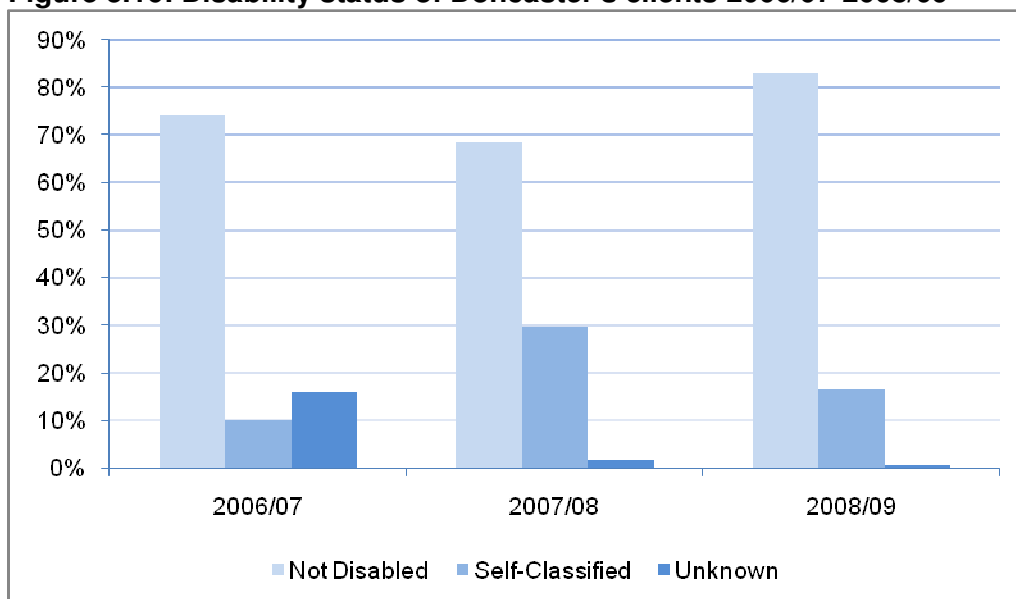
Figure 5.15: Age profile of Doncaster's clients 2006/07-2008/09



This shows that in each of the three years the largest proportion of clients were aged between 19 and 25. It also indicates that the age profile of the centre's clients remained relatively stable over the three year period, particularly when compared to the changes observed in the age profiles of Barnsley and Rotherham's client bases.

Figure 5.16 provides an overview of the disability status of Doncaster's clients during the SYSIP funding period.

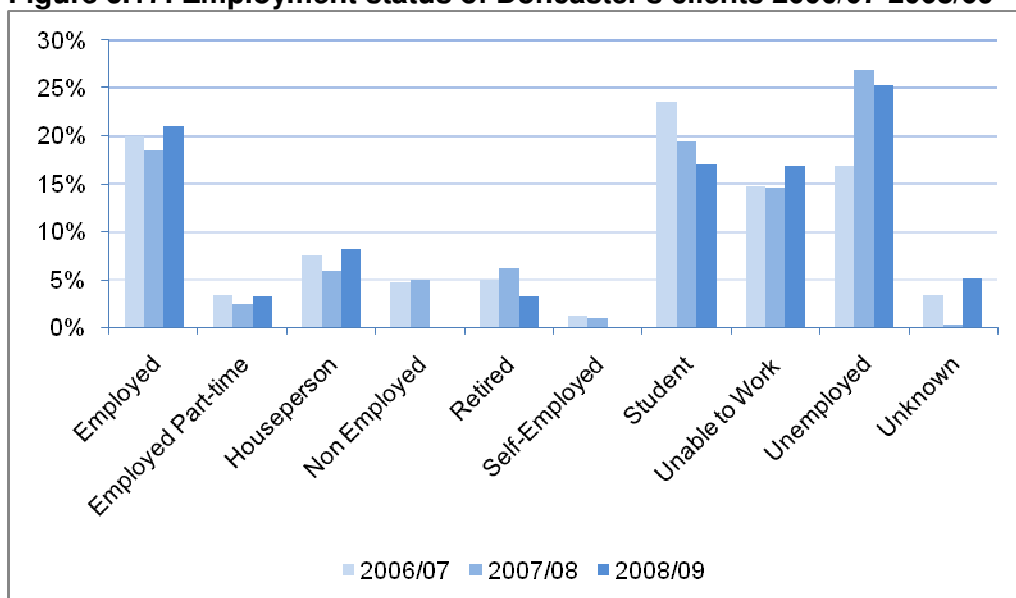
Figure 5.16: Disability status of Doncaster's clients 2006/07-2008/09



This shows that in each of the three years the largest proportion of Doncaster's clients - 74 per cent in 2006/07, 69 per cent in 2007/08, and 83 per cent in 2008/09 - did not identify themselves as disabled.

Figure 5.17 outlines the employment status of Doncaster's clients during the SYSIP funding period.

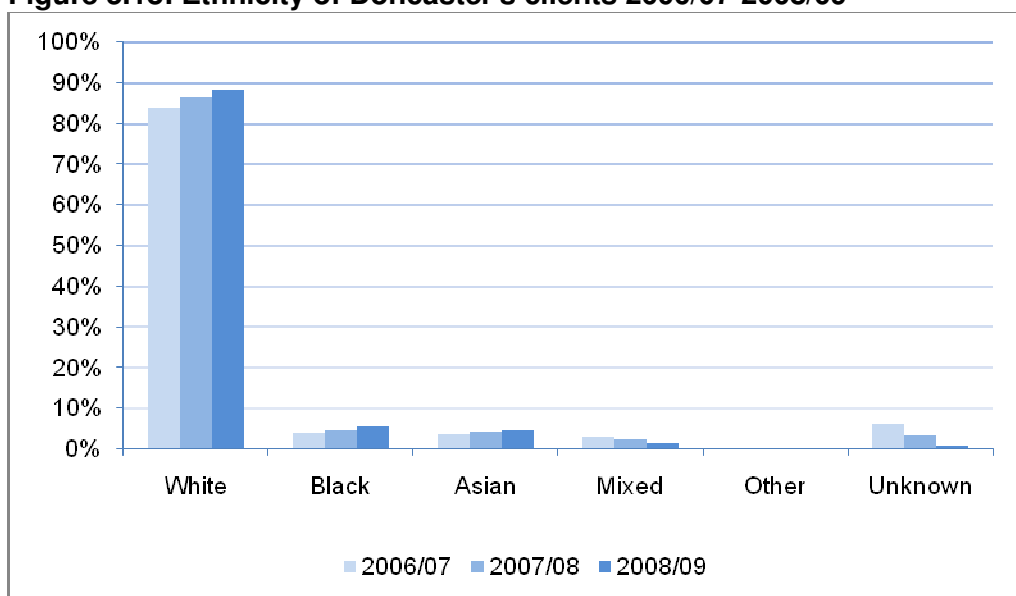
Figure 5.17: Employment status of Doncaster's clients 2006/07-2008/09



This shows that in 2006/07 the largest proportion of clients were students, but that in 2007/08 and 2008/09 the largest proportion were unemployed. It also shows that if the three 'out of employment' categories (unemployed, non employed, unable to work) are combined, 'out of employment' people accounted for 36 per cent of clients in 2006/07, 46 per cent in 2007/08, and 42 per cent in 2008/09.

Figure 5.18 outlines the ethnicity of Doncaster's clients during the SYSIP period.

Figure 5.18: Ethnicity of Doncaster's clients 2006/07-2008/09



This shows that the largest proportion of Doncaster's clients during this period were white but that people from minority ethnic communities did access the centre, accounting for 10 per cent of clients in 2006/07, 11 per cent in 2008/09 and 10 per cent in 2007/08 - in 2006 Doncaster had a minority ethnic community population (i.e non white-British residents) of 6 per cent.

5.6. Conclusion

The most striking finding from this section is the dramatic increase in the clientele of the volunteer centres from 2006 to 2009: from around 75 to almost 240 per month. Interviews with the centre managers suggested that this increase was unprecedented, that the increase was due to a complex of factors (including uncertainty in the labour market, the welfare reform agenda and more generally the wider profile of volunteering).

From the data above other patterns and trends regarding the clientele of the three Volunteer Centres can be identified:

- **gender:** women are accessing the Volunteer Centres in larger proportions than men. Over the three years and across the three centres the proportion of women clients ranged from between 59 per cent and 70 per cent. This reflects national patterns of volunteering in which 53 per cent of women report that they volunteer at least once a month compared to 42 per cent of men², and sub-region research which suggests that 59 per cent of South Yorkshire's voluntary and community sector volunteers are women³
- **age:** young people appear to access the Volunteer Centres in larger numbers than others. Over the three years and across the three centres the largest proportion of clients were from either the 15-18 or 19-25 age categories. This is a departure from national volunteering figures which suggest that formal volunteering is highest among people in the 35-44 and 55-64 age brackets⁴. It

² Communities and Local Government (2007), 'Citizenship Survey Statistical Release'

³ Macmillan, R (2006), 'Part of the Picture - The voluntary and community sector across South Yorkshire'

⁴ Office of the Third Sector (2007), 'Helping Out - A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving'

is important note the impact the V funding appears to have in increasing the numbers of young people accessing the centres in Barnsley and Rotherham

- **disability:** over the three years and across the three centres the majority of clients, between 62 per cent and 83 per cent, reported not having a disability
- **employment:** there are fewer obvious patterns in relation to the employment status of the Volunteer Centre's clients. But what is clear is that students and people 'out of employment' (either unemployed, non employed or unable to work) make-up a significant proportion of each centre's client base
- **ethnicity:** over the the three years and across the three Volunteer Centres the largest proportion of clients were white, reflecting the predominantly white make-up of each population. However, people from minority ethnic communities did access the centres in proportions which were more than representative of their distribution within local populations.

6. Sustainability and Strategic Added Value

6.1. Sustainability

Each volunteer centre is situated within its local CVS, and these are committed to continue volunteer centre provision. The volunteer centres have become Volunteering England accredited centres and operate quality and client management processes in accordance with this accreditation. Much of this in Rotherham, where the Volunteer Centre was created using the SYSIP funding, can be attributed to this intervention. However, it has since been successful in attracting other funding (from local agencies and through V).

The sustainability plans for the volunteer centres were found to focus on funding being sought from the local authority and securing national volunteer funds. Local funding will increasingly be tied to the delivery of joint activities and commitment to LAA targets. However, progress in securing funding appeared to vary. In Rotherham it appeared furthest forward with a joint project funded by V (youth volunteering) which would also lead to a secondment of an officer from the Youth Service. In Doncaster, the volunteer centre was highly integrated into Doncaster CVS and it was noted that SYSIP support had provided funding for a part time post. In 2008 in Barnsley, we found that the move to VAB's new premises had given a higher profile to volunteering. This move also coincided with an reorganisation of volunteer support and the integration of youth and general volunteer support.

Interviews in Doncaster and Rotherham revealed that statutory agencies can play a key part in supporting volunteering. Whilst SYSIP funding was reported to have helped the volunteer centres be seen as 'equal partners', it was noted that statutory agencies did not budget sufficiently to support their own volunteering activities. Doncaster VC used four volunteers to staff its volunteer centre (although during 2008 and 2009 staffing levels had fallen). Rotherham was using a rolling cohort of volunteers, who it trained and supported to work in the volunteer centre but who would also be helped to find paid employment (see case study). Interviews with the Rotherham MBC noted that the establishment of the Rotherham Volunteer Centre was a true highlight of the programme and a genuine outcome of partnership working.

Ultimately infrastructure organisations require public funding to be sustained. VCs may achieve some scale economies through being fully embedded in their CVS. They may also mitigate some problems through recruiting volunteers to support the VC. However, ultimately they require a core group of paid staff. The rationale for continued funding can be on different grounds:

- volunteering benefits are wide ranging and to some extent 'immeasurable' in terms of their wider economic and societal benefit. Numbers of volunteers is largely an interim measure
- volunteering can bring a narrower group of economic and social benefits. These may include displacing costs which would otherwise be incurred (e.g. volunteers in hospitals or hospices) and in terms of employment benefits.

VCs attempt to capture both sets of benefits: they can work with all Volunteer Involving Organisations; but they also target support.

The three Volunteer Centres appeared to be responding to the roll out of Welfare Reform in different ways. The Volunteer Centre in Rotherham had sought to actively engage with this agenda. It was a member of the Rotherham Work and Skills Provider Group, which engaged it in discussions with training and employment agencies including A4e, Best, CTS Training and Jobcentre Plus. Through this work it had entered into discussions to act as a sub-contractor to provide volunteer support services to JSA claimants and sickness related benefit claimants. Some would be supported volunteers others involved on work placements. It noted that this work was outside the traditional remit of volunteer centres, but it had brought new service contract funding opportunities.

A final issue concerned capacity. Volunteer enquiries had risen many fold in each Volunteer Centre, but at a time when grant income had declined. This has resulted in consideration of how support was provided: notably support to volunteer involving organisations was squeezed. Increasing volunteer worker support had helped to alleviate some problems, but was not viable model for providing the core functions of the volunteer centre. Volunteer centres also noted that volunteer opportunities were not necessarily increasing to meet the new supply of volunteers.

6.2. Strategic Added Value

The evaluation was required to assess the *Strategic Added Value* (SAV) of the SYSIP support. SAV is assessed using the categories outlined below to capture some of the wider benefits of Regional Development Agency interventions. It should be stressed that the funding going to the volunteer centres is relatively small compared to SYSIP as a whole.

Table 5.4: Volunteering and Strategic Added Value of Yorkshire Forward

| Dimension of Strategic Added Value | Assessment |
|---|---|
| Strategic Leadership and Catalyst | Yorkshire Forward influence quite limited with the exception of Rotherham which was a new project. The stipulation that the centres achieve Volunteering England accreditation is positive although is likely to have occurred anyway. |
| Strategic Influence | Again, the direct influence of Yorkshire Forward is quite limited. However, it was reported that all three VCs (Rotherham and Doncaster in particular) are now seen much more as equal partners with statutory agencies – a good example of capacity built to achieve this. It was noted that greater support may be required in the future. |
| Leverage | The level of direct leverage is quite limited (mainly the matched Objective 1 funding or NRF resources). This has provided subsequent benefits in enabling organisations to seek additional funding, for instance from V. |
| Synergy | The three volunteer centres operate in different ways: Doncaster VC is highly integrated into the CVS and draws in other support functions (as with Rotherham to some extent); Rotherham VC was established using the SYSIP funding and a key aim has been to develop the VC as the coordinating centre in the district; and in Barnsley, the VC is part of VAB and has been more fully integrated into the CVS as part of its move to new premises. Both Rotherham and Barnsley reported potential benefits in the future from being based in new buildings – and improve internal coordination and synergy. |
| Engagement | Rotherham VC was found to have greatest emphasis on targeting disadvantaged communities – this was also a condition of its NRF funding. The other centres tended to have a more general volunteer coordination remit. |

Volunteer Centre has not been a traditional core remit of regional development agencies. The funding appears to have sustained the volunteer centres at a time of funding withdrawal from the sector and of considerable change. There is some evidence that the volunteer centres and their 'parent' CVSs are now seen more as partners alongside local agencies. However, there were inconsistencies here and it was noted that LAA targets for volunteering and related involvement activities had not necessarily been translated into support from agencies, most notably local authorities. However, it should be stressed that the pattern across South Yorkshire was uneven.

7. Conclusion: Good Practice and Recommendations

7.1. Introduction

This report presents findings from the evaluation of SYSIP support in three volunteer centres. The support was of a relatively small scale (equating to between one and two posts in Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham). Nonetheless the funding was deemed to be timely as it coincided with a period of considerable change, in terms of funding, the policy significance accorded to volunteering, and unprecedented increases in volunteer enquiry numbers.

The research is positive with regard the operation of the three volunteer centres and all appeared to have progressed in terms of their organisational development during the course of the evaluation.

7.2. Good Practice

Good practice in the Volunteer Centres is evident in:

- the establishment (Rotherham) and development (all) of volunteering infrastructure which is Volunteering England accredited
- the development of Volunteer Centres as 'equal partners' in some areas of joint working with statutory agencies. A notable case here is Rotherham volunteer centre's work with the PCT/JC+ Condition Management Programme
- the commitment to improve volunteering infrastructure as a means to achieving sustainability
- the establishment of systems to capture and use data for performance management.

7.3. Recommendations

There are very few recommendations to make. **The volunteer centres are embedded within their local infrastructure organisations** and as such there are few transferable lessons. The centres have faced pressure on staffing and this continues in Barnsley and Donaster. Additional volunteers can help improve their sustainability but are only a partial solution. All the centres Volunteering England accredited – if this were not the case, it would have been the central recommendation.

A general recommendation is that the LSP, local authority and other agency commitment to volunteer centres is vital to their long term sustainability. This calls for a recognition of where the centres can contribute most (in providing a focal point for volunteers and support to VIOs – public and third sector), in addressing existing deficits (for instance agreeing to volunteering codes of conduct and paying volunteering expenses) and recognising the appropriate contribution of volunteering to agendas such as welfare to work. This final area appears of central importance to securing service contract income in the future – although engaging in this agenda needs to be a strategic decision of the Volunteer Centre and its supporting LIO.

Within LIOs, **there appears some scope for the further integration of volunteer centre activities.** Other developments in SYSIP, the construction of new buildings and support for sustainability have helped bring these changes.