

Mobilising Volunteers

Transport to Involvement and Opportunity

Removing barriers and improving access to transport for volunteers
and volunteer involving organisations & infrastructure
in Greater Manchester

August 2010

Susanne Martikke

David Campbell

for GMCVO and the Greater Manchester Volunteering Champion



The Transport Resource Unit at GMCVO

The Transport Resource Unit (TRU) is hosted by the Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation (GMCVO), funded by Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority, and focuses on transport issues experienced by local communities, groups and voluntary organisations in Greater Manchester.

GMCVO / TRU have strong links with networks of voluntary organisations in both 'front line' and infrastructure / support. This reach offers a gateway into communities, including some of the most disadvantaged. Through these links, TRU can provide a signposting service, and help broker relationships between organisations and groups wishing to target specific communities.

TRU can support communities and groups to be more involved in consultations about transport policy and proposals by distributing information through our network of over 200 voluntary organisations, and by holding focus groups and other events. TRU is also providing support to communities in maintaining access to services, employment and education through the development of the Community Transport (CT) sector.

For more information on the work of TRU please contact David Campbell on 0161 277 1014 or david.campbell@gmcvo.org.uk

GMCVO is the support (infrastructure) organisation for the voluntary sector in Greater Manchester. Our aim is to strengthen the voluntary sector, build bridges with other sectors, and influence local and national policy. Our work is representing, promoting and developing voluntary organisations, working in partnership with other organisations doing similar work.

Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation

St Thomas Centre

Ardwick Green North

Manchester M12 6FZ

Tel. 0161 277 1000

Fax. 0161 273 8296

Website www.gmcvo.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 504542

Company Limited by Guarantee, Registered in England No. 1223344. Registered Office as above

Available in large print on request

Contents

Emergent Issues	4
Key Findings	5
Background	6
Methodology	10
Introduction	13
Volunteer-involving organisations	15
<i>The cost of transport and re-imburement of expenses</i>	16
<i>Transport and recruitment</i>	18
<i>Transport and volunteer-led service delivery</i>	22
<i>Transport and volunteer retention</i>	25
<i>Transport and planning</i>	29
<i>Support needs</i>	31
Infrastructure Organisations	32
<i>The nature of the problem</i>	32
<i>The role of transport in guidance</i>	35
<i>The role of transport in brokerage and follow-up</i>	36
<i>Whose role is support around transport?</i>	39
<i>Special support around transport</i>	40
<i>Support needs</i>	43
Conclusions	44
Recommendations	46

Emergent Issues

The perception of volunteering is changing from an activity pursued out of altruism by those who are in a position to do so to one that has come to the forefront of the policy agenda as a possible solution for bringing people closer to employment. If this is to succeed, transport for volunteers has to be re-thought as one of the key elements of clearing paths to involvement. When thinking about transport as a potential problem for volunteers the first thing that tends to come to mind is the physical existence or absence of transport links, followed by the issue of whether volunteers are reimbursed for their travel cost. However, as this study found, transport is linked to diversity and equality and even in a predominantly well-connected urban conurbation like Greater Manchester transport is an issue when it comes to involving a diversity of volunteers. While the problem can be one of difficulty of physical access (i.e. for those who live in relatively poorly connected areas or for those who cannot rely on public transport due to mobility impairments, old age or disability), equally if not more important is transport as a psychological barrier, rather than one of geographical distance and/or physical lack of access (i.e. prevalence of parochial attitudes, lack of confidence for travelling outside one's area).

Yet, across Greater Manchester transport as an issue for volunteers is not openly acknowledged and rarely addressed systematically in either guidance or operational planning. As a result, volunteer-involving organisations are solving transport problems as they occur in an ad-hoc fashion, but are otherwise largely relying on recruiting the "right volunteers," meaning those that can do what is asked of them without extra need of support. This is an approach that could potentially limit organisations' ability to attract the widest possible range of volunteers and severely limits their ability to leverage volunteer-involvement as a tool to fight social exclusion.

National literature has found that there is great potential for socially excluded groups to benefit from being involved as volunteers. However, evidence from this study suggests that transport is one of the factors that might stand in the path of greater involvement of socially excluded groups in volunteering. A disabled person, for example, might greatly benefit from volunteering to reduce isolation but may find that the cost of travel on appropriate transport is not reimbursed by most organisations that involve volunteers. For someone living in a deprived neighbourhood volunteering could mean a stepping stone into employment and/or simply building confidence. However, there is evidence that such a person might not access volunteering opportunities, not because there is no bus connection, but because the prospect of getting on that bus is too intimidating in the first place. As the findings from this research show, when volunteer-involvement and brokerage take such issues on board, there is potential for volunteering to become a more inclusive activity.

Supportive brokerage, which is about working in a person-centred way with prospective volunteers and supporting them into volunteering by addressing various practical and psychological issues including transport, holds much promise for involving non-traditional groups in volunteering. Likewise, when a volunteer-involving organisation budgets for the cost accessible transport options incur, it can involve volunteers who will bring different life experiences to their task, thus benefiting the organisation, its service users and the volunteer. There is an indication that in order to make volunteering more inclusive in this regard, it would be useful to make the respective responsibilities of infrastructure versus volunteer-involving organisations more explicit.

The high degree to which volunteers enable volunteer-involving organisations to provide certain services to the community and the value of a diverse pool of volunteers for these services should be recognised and provide impetus for finding ways of resolving existing or potential transport issues for volunteers. This would enable organisations to involve the right volunteers, not only in terms of ease and/or ability of access, but also in terms of the life experience they bring.

Key Findings

- Awareness of how transport issues affect volunteers initially appeared to be fairly limited among both volunteer-involving and infrastructure organisations, but interviews demonstrated that transport was crucial for service delivery by volunteers and played a role in brokerage. However, transport issues are not formally acknowledged by either taking them into account when planning volunteering opportunities or by inclusion in volunteer centres' guidance to volunteer-involving organisations.
- Infrastructure organisations that offered targeted support for prospective volunteers from certain groups were more likely to see transport as an issue.
- Whether or not transport becomes an issue appears to be related to the motivation of the prospective volunteer. The more focused candidates are on a particular opportunity or a specific benefit of volunteering, the less likely that transport will be a barrier.
- There is no consensus on whose role it is to provide transport-related support to volunteers.
- An organisation's base is not the main determinant of whether its volunteers will face transport issues. Instead, it is the nature of organisations' services that will bring transport issues to the fore.
- Although the existence of a few areas with bad transport links was mentioned, geography can sometimes be more of a psychological than a practical barrier.
- Although volunteers are clearly crucial to service delivery, volunteers are still sometimes seen as incidental to the third sector's identity rather than an integral part. In other words, organisations are seen as being set up to provide a service, not provide volunteering opportunities.
- The likelihood of transport problems being recognised and addressed increases when a relationship between an individual volunteer and the organisation has formed. Strategies included adjusting the timing, the location and nature of assignments, offering the ability to work remotely, as well as grouping assignments together to make travel more worthwhile. Only a few organisations were willing to consider paying for demand-responsive transport on a regular basis and a few organisations reported having lost volunteers due to transport issues.

- The cost of transport is the barrier most frequently acknowledged. Whilst organisations seemed to have a good track record of reimbursing their volunteers' travel expenses and were quite flexible about the arrangements to accommodate individual needs, these tended to preclude reimbursement for special needs transport.
- Cost-controlling measures such as recruiting volunteers close to assignments were not always easy and sometimes conflicted with other operational restraints, such as confidentiality issues and other criteria the volunteer had to meet in order to be considered a good match for the assignment.
- Most of the volunteer-involving organisations were not aware of transport hampering their recruitment; however there is a realisation that those with transport issues might drop out as part of the recruitment process. Volunteer brokers generally did not have sufficient resources to follow up the success of their brokerage, implying that transport issues as a barrier to a prospective candidate being placed generally did not become known to them.
- With one exception, none of the organisations interviewed believed that the way they portray their volunteering opportunities in terms of transport might influence how many applications they receive and from whom.
- Volunteer-involving organisations largely leave the involvement of groups of volunteers who might be particularly prone to encountering transport issues to coincidence.
- It is very difficult to recruit volunteer drivers due to the combination of driving skills, own transport and needed attitude to service users.
- Many volunteer roles require a lot of flexibility with regard to travel. The more flexibility and unpredictability is involved the more heavily transport issues weigh. The types of locations also play a role in making transport more or less of an issue: for example travelling to a public space tends to be more straight forward than to a private residence. What is more, the need to adhere to scheduled appointments would add another layer of complication.
- The use of community transport and Ring and Ride for volunteering journeys appears to be limited. Although awareness of Ring and Ride was better than that of community transport, the service tended to be seen as unsuitable for volunteering purposes, due to the booking arrangements and eligibility rules.

- Although extraordinarily committed volunteers who are literally willing to go the extra mile for the organisation they serve do exist, much reference was made to the changing nature of volunteering. Most brokers acknowledged the changing nature of volunteering, making the likelihood of volunteers not having their own car higher than it used to be.
- Transport problems faced by volunteers can occasionally lead to an organisation changing the service it offers.
- Transport issues can arise as a result of organisational growth and can likewise influence an organisation's ability to expand into new areas of work.

Background

A consultation carried out by GMCVO's Transport Resource Unit (TRU) in connection with a proposed congestion charge for Greater Manchester resulted in anecdotal evidence that transport issues influenced the ability of third sector organisations to involve volunteers. In 2010, TRU and the GMCVO-based Greater Manchester Volunteering Champion project decided to look further into this aspect of volunteer involvement to explore the following questions:

- Are there barriers to volunteering caused by transport?
- Do volunteering agencies take transport into account when designing volunteering opportunities?
- How can organisations support volunteers to overcome any transport barriers?

The aims of the research project were to shape future work plans of the TRU and, where possible, develop good practice guidelines for those organisations supporting volunteering in Greater Manchester.

Methodology

A qualitative methodology of semi-structured interviews was adopted as most suited for the exploratory nature of the project. Interviews followed a set of general questions to trigger a conversation around the issue of volunteering and transport that left enough room for research participants to raise unforeseen aspects of the overall theme, as well as dwelling more on certain aspects than others. Given GMCVO's remit of securing better outcomes for individuals by supporting organisations, the inquiry focused on organisations, with the possibility of widening the inquiry to individual volunteers at a later stage if this appeared promising and feasible.

Initially, the project interviewed staff from 12 organisations that were involved in volunteer development and volunteer brokerage. For the most part, these were the local volunteer centres, but also included organisations that were delivering a discrete volunteer brokerage project as part of their overall work. Whilst most of the 12 research participants operated volunteer brokerage for a certain geographical area, a few served specialised audiences, such as young people or the unemployed. Interviews took place in the period January - April 2010.

The project then interviewed staff tasked with volunteer coordination and management roles within 11 frontline organisations. The organisations were selected to reflect a reasonably broad spread of experiences in terms of organisational location, size and focus. Some organisations were identified during the interviews with infrastructure organisations or based on prior knowledge from previous projects, others self-identified for participation in the project in response to a call for interviewees that had been published on the GMCVO website and distributed through the volunteering infrastructure.

The table below gives a breakdown of which types of volunteer-involving organisations participated.

Figure 1: Volunteer-involving organisations interviewed for the study

	Working in	Based in	Type	Volunteers	Staff
A	Manchester and Trafford	Hulme, Manchester	Environmental	120+	8
B	Stockport	Hazel Grove, Stockport	Community transport	7	13 (incl. drivers)
C	Greater Manchester (NW)	Ardwick, Manchester	HIV/AIDS	120	15
D	Bury and Bolton	Radcliffe, Bury	Environmental	31	N/A
E	Bury	Bury	Children and families	56	4
F	Partington, Trafford	Partington, Trafford	Mental health	15	2
G	Salford	Eccles and Ordsall	Health	30	2
H	Wigan	Wigan	Refugees/asylum seekers	30	2
I	Trafford	Urmston, Trafford	Older people	100+	35
J	Greater Manchester	Manchester city centre	BME	50	39
K	Wigan	Leigh, Wigan	Older people	33	9

The findings of this research suggest the existence of barriers to volunteering that are caused by transport, but they also suggest that it is difficult to identify these barriers and their extent; firstly, because of the lack of monitoring around transport issues in both frontline and infrastructure organisations and, secondly, because the problem of transport might result in individuals just staying away from engaging in a dialogue about potential volunteering. If individuals simply dismiss outright the prospect of volunteering based on their transport situation, then volunteering infrastructure or frontline organisations never find out about these issues. In other words, in order to identify whether transport is an issue that prevents individuals from embarking on the volunteering journey, one would either need to speak to those who are not volunteering or organisations would have to know more about those candidates who ended up not being placed in a volunteering opportunity. The first task would be very difficult, whereas the second exceeds the capacity of most organisations.

Therefore, the following will mainly be an account of the many ways in which transport is handled in volunteer-involving organisations, as well as how transport issues influence the retention and management of volunteers. How transport issues affect brokerage and recruitment will also be highlighted, but unfortunately, there are very few concrete examples of how the ability to recruit and find placements for prospective volunteers has directly been affected by transport issues.

Introduction

Although there do not appear to be any in-depth studies solely devoted to exploring transport issues as they relate to volunteering, much of the literature on volunteering does make brief references to transport as a barrier to volunteering and participation in the broader sense. Transport is mentioned as one of the practical barriers that individuals have to overcome in order to participate, either because of lack of access, lack of appropriateness or cost of transport, as well as because of timing of opportunities. Transport issues have typically been associated with specific, physically inaccessible, volunteering opportunities, such as conservation activities and volunteering in rural areas.¹ However, particular groups of prospective volunteers, such as those with mobility impairments or those suffering from social exclusion have also been highlighted as being prone to encountering transport as a barrier to volunteering and to participation in general.² In addition, Rochester notes that the cost of travel posed an obstacle to involvement for young people, as well as older people, those from a BME background, disabled people and ex-offenders.³

Transport barriers to volunteering thus appear to be very much associated with diversity in volunteering. Although there may be volunteer-involving organisations that would encounter difficulties in volunteer recruitment because of the physical inaccessibility of where they are based or where they work, it appears that the inability to recruit volunteers from diverse audiences would affect organisations wherever they are located, including in urban areas like Greater Manchester, where transport may appear a less obvious practical barrier. Especially in light of the recession's effect on galvanising political support for a concept of volunteering that provides a pathway into employment, rather than just being seen as a form of altruism, reaching into diverse audiences of potential volunteers is becoming more important. It is in this way that the two-fold effect of volunteering on reducing social exclusion can be harnessed: volunteers benefiting the community by delivering vital services to those who are in need on the one hand and volunteers themselves reducing their own social exclusion by breaking out of isolation, gaining new skills and more self confidence.

¹ O'Brien, L.; Townsend, M. and Ebdon, M. (2008) *Environmental Volunteering: motivations, barriers and benefits*, Edinburgh: Forestry Commission.

² Brodie, E., Cowling, E., and Nissen, N.(2009) *Understanding participation: a literature review*, London: NCVO. Institute for Volunteering Research (2004) *Volunteering for all? Exploring the link between volunteering and social exclusion*, London.

³ Rochester, C. (2006) *Making sense of volunteering – a literature review*, London: Commission on the Future of Volunteering, p.15.

However, striving for diversity, whilst very much of the rhetoric surrounding volunteering, might not always be at the heart of volunteer-involving organisations' day-to-day business. A survey by the Network of National Volunteer-Involving Agencies of its member organisations "found little evidence ... that any focused efforts to reach or recruit volunteers from any excluded groups were being made ... respondents looked to a standard equal opportunities statement such as 'we welcome everyone who comes forward.'"⁴ Our own findings suggest that, by and large, as long as an organisation is able to attract a sufficient number of volunteers, the potential of transport issues to limit the diversity of the volunteer pool is not necessarily recognised as a problem.

⁴ National Network of Volunteer-Involving Agencies (2009) *Overcoming Barriers to Volunteering*, London, p. 11.

Volunteer-Involving Organisations

Initially, the awareness of how transport issues affect volunteers appeared to be fairly limited among most of the volunteer-involving organisations we interviewed. Although participants had agreed to the interview, most interviews began with a sense that there really is no problem. It was only as the conversation evolved and touched on various aspects of involving volunteers that it emerged that for most organisations the ability of volunteers to access transport was quite crucial for service delivery and therefore influenced organisations' work. However, transport largely appeared to be taken for granted as something that would fall in place when needed, rather than being thought about systematically. For the most part, as long as an organisation was able to attract a sufficient number of volunteers, transport implications were not given too much thought and, with only a few exceptions, it did not seem as though transport was taken seriously into account when designing volunteering opportunities. The readiness to recognise and cater for transport needs/difficulties of individual volunteers varied from organisation to organisation, but seemed to increase when a relationship had developed between the organisation and the volunteer.

As the following table shows, the organisations that were part of the study involved volunteers in a variety of different ways that required not only travel to the organisation's base and back but also travel as part of volunteering itself, mostly in the form of outreach, but sometimes in the form of volunteer driving. The need for volunteers to travel to training that has been organised for them was also highlighted.

Figure 2: How transport issues affect volunteer roles

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Organisation based in a bad location	X		X			X					X
All volunteers are office-based											
Some volunteers are office-based	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X
Volunteers perceive travel to their assignments/to the organisation as unsafe	X		X							X	
Volunteers do outreach to multiple locations			X	X	X		X	X		X	X
Volunteers do outreach in a single location						X	X	X		X	X
Volunteers deliver driving services		X	X				X				X
Volunteers have to travel to attend events/meetings on behalf of the organisation	X		X	X				X	X		X
Volunteers have to travel to attend training	X		X		X		X		X		

Please note: This table is based on the types of roles that were covered during the interviews, therefore it might not give a comprehensive idea of each organisation's involvement of volunteers

The cost of transport and reimbursement of expenses

Transport was often predominantly thought about in terms of cost. From this, it did appear that most of our interviewees saw the cost of transport as the most significant issue and reimbursement of travel expenses for their volunteers as one of the most important ways of preventing transport from posing a barrier. All the organisations in the study reimbursed volunteers' travel expenses. This is interesting, given national evidence of organisations' reluctance to reimburse expenses. According to data from the *Helping Out* survey, 20 percent of respondents said the organisations they volunteer for do not reimburse expenses. In the same survey, some respondents said they consider the expenses they incur as a form of donation to the organisation and this also appeared to be the case with some of the volunteers that were involved in the organisations in our study.

However, a few of the organisations we spoke to actively encouraged volunteers to claim their expenses. Volunteers could then choose to donate the money back to the charity. One organisation that had such a policy in place noted the advantages of this for budgeting. Because expenses claims leave a clear paper trail, the organisation has a better guide to follow when putting volunteer expenses in their budgets for bids.

Most organisations were rather flexible about the way they reimbursed travel expenses. The standard procedure is for volunteers to claim their expenses monthly, but organisations usually made allowances for those who needed the money on a weekly basis or, when necessary, even up front. It appeared to be widely recognised that volunteers on certain types of benefits might easily find themselves out of pocket if they were asked to wait to be reimbursed, so in those cases organisations had a facility in place to pay their expenses immediately from petty cash. Organisation E's initial interview with volunteers covers whether the volunteer would be able to wait for reimbursement, or whether up-front cash payments are needed. One of the groups of volunteers for whom transport has particular cost implications is that of asylum seekers and refugees, many of whom do not have any cash at their disposal. One organisation also noted that some of its volunteers, due to anxiety of losing benefits, prefer cash payments to avoid an unexplained stream of income showing up on their bank statements.

Free travel can be obtained by many volunteers, keeping costs down for organisations that involve them, if they travel by public transport. Organisations employed various strategies for keeping transport costs to a minimum, such as recruiting volunteers from the same borough only or restricting the means of transport volunteers were able to use in order to be reimbursed. By and large, organisations routinely reimbursed travel by car or public transport only. Organisation C, in order to encourage volunteers using the cheapest possible transport option, had two mileage rates in place.

The first rate applied to distances mostly covered by its Greater Manchester core service area and this was supplemented by a second, lower, rate that kicked in once a journey exceeded this distance. According to the organisation's volunteer coordinator, this is supposed to ensure that volunteers coming from further afield choose the cheaper transport option, which would likely be the train, rather than the car.

On the other hand, the senior project coordinator of an organisation whose volunteers give support to families pointed out that there is a limit to how much the organisation can save on transport expenses by carefully matching volunteers to service users based on transport considerations. The main criterion for matching volunteers to those they support is guided by the question whether the match appears mutually beneficial to the service user and the volunteer, not by how far they have to travel.

Moreover, using geographical matching in order to keep transport costs down clearly relies on organisations' ability to recruit volunteers from the right areas and this is not always easy.

There are a few examples of organisations having transport policies in place that are based on ethical grounds, rather than pure cost savings. For example, organisation A, an environmental organisation, restricts reimbursement of travel expenses to journeys by public transport and/or cycle. Not surprisingly, the other environmental organisation in the sample also has a policy to encourage its volunteers and staff to travel by public transport where possible and to car pool where travel by car seems inevitable. The travel for the whole organisation is then added up and informs the calculation of its environmental footprint.

Transport and recruitment

As mentioned above, there is little evidence of volunteer-involving organisations being aware of transport hampering their recruitment. One of the reasons may be that at the time of interview the overwhelming majority of organisations were actually full and did not need additional volunteers, with many of them attributing that fact to the recession. Therefore, the number of volunteers an organisation is able to recruit was not really an issue at the time.

Significantly, the only exception to this was environmental organisation A, whose capacity of involving volunteers is not limited to a specific number, because of the way volunteers work and because they only receive in-depth support for the first six months of their tenure with the organisation. Therefore, organisation A continued to be keen to expand its pool of volunteers but viewed its location and the concomitant transport situation as a stumbling block for that. Despite being located in close proximity to Manchester city centre, volunteers who are based at the organisation or who need to access it for training or supervision need to take two buses at a minimum.

The organisation's volunteer coordinator observed that "taking more than one bus is off-putting to people." In addition, the organisation's policy not to reimburse journeys made by car might also impinge on its ability to attract a diverse group of volunteers, namely those who need their travel expenses reimbursed but don't consider public transport an appropriate option at all times.

For example, this could include people with disabilities, female volunteers (many of whom have highlighted safety concerns about travelling at night on behalf of the organisation), or those with caring responsibilities (for whom public transport is too time-intensive). Another organisation, which requires volunteers for gardening tasks with a lot of travel to different places involved, finds that its group of volunteers is dominated by men.

Although the coordinator of this project thought that women might not be equally attracted to the type of work, she also thought it was likely that female volunteers were put off by the need to travel from place to place to volunteer for this project.

A few organisations commented that those with transport issues might drop out as part of the recruitment process. According to organisation C's volunteer coordinator "volunteers sort of self-select out as they go through the volunteer recruitment and induction process, during which they have to get to our offices for an information session, an interview and an induction." Organisation J's volunteer coordinator echoed this view: "When they come to be interviewed, candidates are already prepared to work here." Therefore, there is reason to believe that in most cases, organisations do not even become aware of transport issues that might exist and how much they affect recruitment.

There is also the perception that those who decide to volunteer are generally altruistic individuals and are more willing to overcome physical obstacles such as transport difficulties. As organisation F put it, "as a volunteer you are usually willing to go the extra mile." This is borne out by the experience of many of our interviewees who were able to tell stories of extraordinarily committed volunteers for whom transport considerations really did not matter and who were indeed willing to travel the extra mile. However, the changing nature of volunteering, with the altruistic model of volunteering having been supplemented by other motivations for becoming a volunteer, in line with volunteering having gained more prominence of being a potential stepping stone to gainful employment, means that this view might not hold. There is some evidence that the ease of travel does influence volunteer's willingness to become involved with an organisation. Two research participants whose organisations are based in Manchester but have a sub-regional remit noted that they have difficulties in attracting volunteers the further away from the city centre they live. There seems to be somewhat of a consensus that any volunteering journey that involves changing buses will prove too onerous for most volunteers to take on.

Other geographical aspects also play a role. In some boroughs, there are areas where there is a common perception that public transport cannot be relied upon. A charity operating in Trafford observed not having any volunteers from Partington, one of the areas in the borough which is perceived as rather poorly connected. However, sometimes geography is relevant in psychological terms rather than in physical terms. For example, a Leigh-based charity has found it hard to shake off the image of being a charity associated with Leigh and to recruit volunteers from other areas of Wigan borough.

A few organisations also acknowledged that transport might produce recruitment difficulties when volunteers with appropriate skills cannot be recruited in the immediate local area. Organisation I generally refrains from recruiting outside of the borough it works in to keep down transport costs but makes an exception when it needs to fill a vacancy which requires a lot of skill and commitment.

Apart from one organisation, none of the research participants seemed to believe that the way they portray their volunteering opportunities in terms of transport might influence how many applications they receive. Organisation B, a community transport operator, routinely gives rides to volunteers with transport issues but does not appear to mention this in adverts for volunteers, despite the fact that the organisation has a hard time recruiting and that this might encourage additional candidates to apply. By contrast, organisation E acknowledged that the self-selection process starts before someone even decides to apply. Whenever possible, organisation E's adverts for volunteers explicitly state that "transport is not an issue" in order to attract the largest possible pool of volunteers, as well as a diverse group of people. This is in recognition of the fact that prospective volunteers who are aware of the organisation's service, which is solely based on outreach and therefore reliant on travel, might be discouraged from applying because they think that they need their own car in order to be a volunteer. In order to offer a service that can take into account all types of backgrounds and situations, the organisation is very interested in diversifying its pool of volunteers.

A group that it was keen on involving and had had some experiences with at the time of the interview were asylum seekers and refugees. The organisation's senior project coordinator specifically pointed out that transport issues needed to be resolved for this group, in light of the fact that they typically do not dispose of their own cash. In order to take public transport, the organisation would have to supply these volunteers with their expenses up front.

Another strategy was to match volunteers from this group as close to home as possible in order to eliminate the need for transport altogether. Asylum seekers and refugees are among the groups of individuals who are hardest to reach for volunteering and according to what our interviewees told us, transport plays a role in this. Among the few organisations that are in a position to overcome any transport barriers are those that count asylum seekers and refugees among their client group. For example, organisation H supports asylum seekers and refugees and recruits most of its volunteers from among its service users. This has the advantage that prospective volunteers have already accessed the organisation in order to use its services, therefore eliminating transport as one of the barriers. However, whereas most clients accessed the organisation on foot, as volunteers they were eligible to a day ticket for the bus for their volunteering journeys.

For individuals who normally do not have the necessary cash to access public transport being reimbursed for the journey thus formed an incentive for volunteering. According to the organisation's volunteer coordinator, recruiting volunteers from among this group would pose a challenge for any organisation that is not already serving this client group and transport would play a part in this.

Four of the research participants were organisations with some volunteer roles that involved driving. Except for one organisation, a community transport operator, this meant that volunteers had to have their own transport. All of the organisations had trouble recruiting volunteers for these roles. The coordinator of the project within organisation K that requires volunteer drivers said: "If we receive a volunteer application form that indicates that the person drives, it's thumbs-up immediately." The main difficulty was that the typical volunteer for these organisations tended to rely on public transport, rather than their own vehicle. Moreover, the timing of volunteer opportunities usually meant that someone would have to be free during the day and therefore less likely to have a car. In addition, the people attracted to driving opportunities were not necessarily the right types of people to interact with these charities' audiences and/or drawn to the causes they represent. The volunteer coordinator of organisation C noted that "we don't typically attract well-heeled retired people as an HIV charity." For organisation G, the driving part of the assignment was so incidental that it would not appeal to a volunteer whose main aim was to act as a driver and "heart patients don't elicit the same level of sympathy as cancer victims or sick children." The community transport operator in the sample also had recruiting difficulties, mainly because not only do volunteers need a category D driving license and make a commitment to go through intense training, but they also need to be open towards working with the operator's client group, many of whom are disabled.

Transport and volunteer-led service delivery

The organisations in our study involved volunteers in a variety of roles. The roles that were discussed during the interviews for this study are listed below.

Figure 3: Volunteer roles in participant organisations

Organising local groups / projects on behalf of an organisation	Press and media volunteers
Sustainable Business Advisors	Advisors for schools
Office volunteers	Minibus drivers
Volunteer drivers	One-to-one support to residents
Counsellors	Training, recruiting and mentoring volunteers
Attending events / consultations on behalf of organisations	Delivering awareness raising talks on behalf of an organisation
Gardening	Volunteer befrienders
Health mentors	Information and advice
Tutors	Support organisation in activities (luncheon club, crèche etc)

Whereas some of these roles are based at the organisation's head office or at permanent outreach locations, many of these roles involve travelling to changing destinations. It should be noted that finding volunteers who are able and willing to travel to deliver support in varying locations was quite crucial for most organisations' work and their ability to deliver certain services to their service users. As table 2 above shows, more than half of the organisations we spoke to involved volunteers in roles that required them to travel to changing destinations in order to deliver services on behalf of the organisations in question.

The extent of flexibility that these assignments demanded from volunteers in terms of travel varied from one extreme, in which volunteers had to travel to three different locations during a single assignment to volunteers travelling to the same location for an extended period of time, such as six months. Clearly, transport issues would weigh more heavily the more flexibility is required. For example, if a volunteer can predict that they will travel to the same location for an extended period of time, once this journey has been planned, travelling can just become routine. If, on the other hand, volunteering involves travel to changing locations that are announced at relatively short notice, journey planning is a constant feature of the volunteering experience.

The extent to which transport is likely to pose a difficulty would also be determined by the type of location volunteers need to reach. Whilst some assignments required accessing public spaces, the majority of those delivering individual support within the community, required accessing private residences. The problem was further complicated if, once the volunteer had arrived at the residence, the assignment involved further travel as part of the type of support that was being delivered. For example, organisation E relies on volunteers to deliver support to service users in the community. Part and parcel of this support is to break down isolation and encourage users to get out into the community. The intention is to do this in a way that can be sustained by the service user once they are on their own. This means that, although volunteers might use their own car to get to the service user, any further travel needs to be done by public transport. Another example is organisation K's involvement of volunteers to support senior citizens who are going through a difficult time. Volunteers have to travel to individual homes and the support service often involves taking users shopping. Because most volunteers are seniors themselves and in order to prevent them from carrying heavy loads, the organisation does not encourage them to do such support with shopping on public transport. So, the service hinges on recruiting enough volunteers with cars – something which has proven difficult. In the case of organisation E, on the other hand, the service hinges on regular public transport being available. According to the senior project coordinator, the organisation currently has half a dozen prospective users on their list whom they cannot at present physically support, due to the absence of good transport links in the location where they live.

Another factor that influences whether transport is more or less of a headache is the timing of the assignment. Whilst some volunteering is not tied to a fixed schedule and can be flexible to accommodate individual transport needs, most forms of volunteering we encountered during this study did require volunteers to be at a certain place at a certain time, with very little flexibility to accommodate any delays due to travelling.

For example, organisation F's location is difficult to access by public transport and notorious for being quite isolated from the rest of the borough. At the same time, the organisation considers its location quite important in order to fulfil its purpose of serving that particular community. Nearly all of the counselling is delivered by volunteers who are counselling students. Relying on public transport to get to the assignment is perceived as quite tricky. Reportedly, there is only one bus per hour and that has the reputation of occasionally passing by waiting passengers or not showing up at all. Because of the nature of the work, turning up late for an appointment would have seriously negative effects on service users who are already vulnerable due to poor mental health. Delivering this service clearly depends on the ability to recruit a sufficient number of volunteers who have their own transport or those who are willing to meet the punctuality requirements whilst using a bus connection that is perceived as unreliable. Luckily for the organisation, it is difficult for counselling students to find placements, making recruitment slightly easier than it would be otherwise.

A situation where transport makes volunteer involvement more problematic is the ratio between the time spent on transport and the time spent volunteering. Although within Greater Manchester it is theoretically possible to get public transport to most places if one is able and willing to walk in addition, it tends to be seen as quite problematic if the time spent on public transport outweighs the time spent volunteering. However, this does not mean that there are not many volunteers out there who are willing to spend quite a lot of time on the bus in order to get to their assignments. Organisations frequently gave examples of the extraordinary commitment of their volunteers. Organisation K gave an example of a volunteer who regularly travels from Garswood to Leigh in order to help out at the organisation's offices. This is despite the fact that there is only one bus per hour into Wigan and then this volunteer needs to change buses to get to Leigh. According to the project coordinator, "she takes a long time to get here but she doesn't complain about it."

Organisations developed ways to prevent transport issues from interfering with their service delivery; however this was with varying rates of success and not without concomitant compromises. The most common way of trying to nip any transport difficulties volunteers may encounter in the bud is by targeted recruitment. This was possible whenever the location of service delivery through a volunteer was predictable. For example, organisation I delivered an IT tutoring service from several libraries in the borough. Based on the assumption that library users were already finding ways of getting there, adverts for volunteer tutors were posted on the library bulletin boards. Similarly, organisation H recruits its volunteers from amongst service users and thus a group of people who are already accessing the location.

Where the locations volunteers would have to travel to were dependent on service user demand, organisations tried their best to match volunteers to service users based on geographical proximity or ease of access. However, this was not without its limitations, such as confidentiality issues. Organisation E noted that involving refugees and asylum seekers as volunteers, all of whom are dependent on public transport, meant “bending the rules a little” by placing volunteers with service users in relative geographic proximity whilst ensuring that it is still impossible for service users to know where the volunteer lives and that respective children do not attend the same schools. Organisation C’s ability of placing volunteers in closer proximity to their residence, in order to circumvent transport problems was also limited in light of confidentiality considerations. The organisation has therefore moved most of its community support to an arrangement where volunteers and service users meet up in public, mutually accessible places wherever possible, making home visits the exception. Therefore, the transport problem has led organisation C to alter the service it offers. Similarly, organisation G had to restrict the eligibility criteria for a certain service involving volunteer drivers. Because drivers were hard to recruit and in light of the fact that their main role is to offer emotional support in addition to driving, the organisation had to restrict the use of volunteer driving services to clients whose problems exceeded the mere difficulty of getting from A to B.

In light of the above, matching volunteers to assignments is clearly a rather complicated process, in which transport issues play quite a significant role. The extent to which an organisation is able to avoid transport issues from playing a role in their volunteer-led service delivery is limited, depending on the exact nature of the work involved. As organisation J pointed out volunteers need to get along with the person they visit and this means that matching volunteers to service users cannot be solely based on ease of access.

Transport and Volunteer Retention

Although only very few cases have come to our attention where transport was cited by a volunteer as a reason for discontinuing volunteering, there are still indirect connections between volunteer retention and transport. To begin with, one could argue that the degree of responsiveness of an organisation to its volunteers’ needs, which may include transport needs, is part and parcel of an overall package that makes volunteering worthwhile for individuals and that makes them feel that their contribution is appreciated.

In a way this is linked to the perception organisations have of their volunteers: Do they see them as replaceable or do they value them for their unique contribution to the organisation’s success? Also, to what extent is the free time they give appreciated as an asset to the organisation and thus being worth making an extra effort to retain?

Almost all organisations we spoke to displayed a certain willingness to try to accommodate volunteers' specific transport-related needs, although this was nearly always restricted by financial or human capacity. There were, however, very few organisations that saw the free time their volunteers gave to the organisation as a way of justifying extra expenses for special transport needs.

As mentioned, there were a few examples where transport problems ended volunteers' involvement with an organisation. Organisation G lost a long-time volunteer because of a change in the bus route she used. For some time the volunteer tried to uphold her engagement by getting lifts and accepting the fact that she would occasionally be late, but eventually gave up. The organisation's volunteer coordinator commented that this particular volunteer might have been "looking for an excuse to give up her volunteering and that public transport was the catalyst for making that decision." When organisation D relocated to a different location within the borough, although accessible by public transport, it lost one of its long-time volunteers, because this person was not willing to travel to the new location.

Conversely, organisations have found ways of retaining volunteers whose engagement was threatened by transport problems. A volunteer who was working on a temporary consultation project with residents of sheltered accommodation for organisation I became unable to use public transport during the project. The organisation solved the problem by sending her to locations close to her place of residence and paying for taxi fares. Organisation K related the story of one of its long-time volunteers whose health deteriorated to a point where she could no longer access her assignment at the organisation on her own. The organisation was able to offer her a role that did not involve travelling on her own and she also makes phone calls to clients from home on behalf of the organisation.

Organisations also managed to work around specific transport issues their volunteers had by adjusting the timing and nature of their assignment. Organisation J reported accommodating volunteers from further away by giving them tasks that are very suitable to their interests and take place over a full day, in order to make travel worthwhile. Other volunteers of this organisation might find that certain days are easier for them to commit to, because they can use the family car or obtain a lift on those days rather than using public transport. Organisation F also tried to make travel worthwhile for its volunteer counsellors by ensuring that they see a number of clients on one occasion. Organisation A offered volunteers from further afield the opportunity to contribute remotely, using the Internet. A volunteer for organisation D with multiple disabilities seemed "remarkably independent" when she first joined the organisation. However, it soon became evident that travelling to the changing locations her volunteering required was too much and she kept getting lost. As a result, her involvement had to be adjusted to include only locations that she is already familiar with.

Few organisations had had concrete experiences of involving volunteers with disabilities or other health conditions that impaired their physical mobility and thus their ability to travel. Two organisations directly provided or funded travel for volunteers with special needs. It should be noted that the organisation that provided transport for a special needs volunteer was a community transport provider. The other organisation pays taxi fares for these volunteers, because there are so few of them that this is financially feasible. One organisation's training and development officer felt so positive about the value that a disabled volunteer brings to the organisation that she said a solution would be found to retain her if she were no longer able to obtain rides with her mother: "She is an asset to the organisation." Organisation F when approached by a disabled candidate decided to apply for a grant in order to cover her transport cost. "She has the same right as anybody else to get this experience." Some organisations spoke to us about what they would do in situations that would require a volunteer to travel by taxi on a regular basis and whether this would be an obstacle for involving this person. It appeared that if the person were already involved with and known to the organisation, then most would be willing to find some solution. Although this was subject to cost considerations (i.e. comparing the mileage the volunteer would accrue if travelling by car to the cost incurred for taxis), these seemed to play more of a role with new recruits.

Organisations accounted for certain transport issues routinely. These included a concern for their volunteers' safety when travelling at night, covering taxi fares in exceptional circumstances, and adjusting the timing and format of collective events, such as training. One organisation's trustees provided rides to volunteers when they had to travel to a location that was inaccessible. Surprisingly, only a few organisations supplied their volunteers with travel-related information in order to reach their assignments.

Organisations tend to encourage car pooling and offering lifts among their volunteers in order to address concerns about lone travelling at night. Where this was not possible, it was quite common for organisations to pay for taxis, but this was usually just for one-off events and/or situations. For this situation, some organisations had set up accounts with taxi firms, so volunteers could just charge their fare to this account, rather than paying up front. Organisation C plans events for volunteers at times when access by public transport is easier for participants and organisation G tries to hold training events for volunteers from locations that are not well-connected to public transport in those locations. Whenever it is beneficial to bring people from different locations together, the organisation would organise transport for participants. The importance of volunteers being able to attend training and other events that are put on for them was stressed.

One organisation said that its investment in training resulted in good retention rates and a few others mentioned training and social events in the context of retention. Organisation A, which has difficulty getting its volunteers to attend training events due to transport, commented on how this negatively affected retention. “Face to face contact is key in retaining and motivating volunteers and training is one of the ways in which this is accomplished.” The organisation typically invites 30 people, but only between three and eight of them turn up. By contrast, it held one recent training event at a location that is quite close to its offices but better connected to public transport and there was full attendance.

A community transport provider was in the privileged position to provide rides to volunteers who were facing transport problems. “We can’t be an organisation offering transport and not find a way to get our volunteers here,” said one of the organisation’s managers. The organisation also addresses transport difficulties that arise from travelling extremely early or late at night by giving drivers the option of taking the vehicle they drive as a volunteer home. This way they can go straight home from a late journey and/or begin a particularly early journey from home, rather than coming to the organisation first.

Awareness of transport issues did not always translate into solving them and the main reason stated for this was usually financial capacity. As organisation K’s senior project coordinator noted, “The volunteers help us and we want to help them as well, but ultimately, it’s about working within your limitations and the organisation’s.” Organisation C’s volunteer coordinator, whilst wanting to “apply our way of working in a person-centred way to any issues our volunteers are encountering, including travel,” also acknowledged that the organisation “cannot be responsible for coordinating people’s transport.” Organisation D’s project officer for a project that disproportionately involves volunteers with physical and mental health issues commented on her sense of helplessness and frustration at what little support she can provide to her volunteers in terms of transport, despite the acknowledgment that “travel is always an issue with volunteers.” Unfortunately, she lacks the time and resources that would be needed in order to give additional support. She had looked into the potential for using Ring and Ride in order to offer transport to her volunteers, however, “ultimately it all comes down to cost.”

The use of community transport and Ring and Ride for volunteer-related transport appears to be limited, although a number of organisations used Ring and Ride for their service users. Ring and Ride was generally better known than other local community transport providers. Some organisations had a vague idea of their existence but had not located enough information to decide whether or not to use them.

However, many organisations that were aware of the Ring and Ride service dismissed it as an unsuitable means of transport for volunteering purposes, both because of eligibility (i.e. for groups to use the service) and because of the inability to book further than one day ahead. Only three organisations appeared to be confident in their use of demand-responsive transport and made use of it for their volunteers.

It should be noted that in one case this depended on negotiating directly with Ring and Ride and obtaining a more favourable booking arrangement to increase suitability for volunteering journeys. In one case, an organisation made one of its disabled volunteers aware of the existence of Ring and Ride, which she is now using on a regular basis. Another organisation routinely makes its volunteers aware of the existence of a community transport scheme that could help them find solutions to their transport concerns. There is anecdotal evidence that some volunteers use community transport providers and/or volunteer car schemes in order to access their volunteering assignments, but this is not systematically tracked by community transport operators, making it impossible to assess the extent to which community transport is used by volunteers.

Transport and planning

Although transport is clearly something organisations are forced to consider and grapple with on a regular basis, it appears that often, it is not sufficiently considered when it comes to planning a project and the involvement of volunteers in it. With a few exceptions, where organisations explicitly stated their desire to do so, it also appears that the involvement of groups of volunteers who might be particularly prone to encountering transport barriers is largely left to coincidence, rather than organisations having planned for it. Otherwise, organisations, most of which seemingly do budget for volunteer expenses, could factor in higher transport costs in order to involve disabled people or extra support for those wanting to access volunteering opportunities from disadvantaged communities. As far as thinking about which volunteers might be most suitable for the project and how to target these volunteers, the prevailing attitude seems to be aptly paraphrased by one of the research participants: “You just hope you will be able to recruit the right volunteers.”

As has been outlined in the section about recruitment, some organisations do take a systematic approach to recruitment that minimises transport issues for volunteers, but this is not the norm. Sometimes, organisations that were keen on involving specific groups of volunteers found that their policies and procedures with regard to transport were not always appropriate to facilitate this involvement. For example, organisation D involved many volunteers with physical and mental health issues and the nature of the assignment required quite a lot of travel from volunteers.

The project's volunteer coordinator told us that she frequently had problems with volunteers getting lost on their way to the assignment, particularly those with learning difficulties. "This can be a real worry, especially because I have to stay to supervise the other volunteers and so cannot help those who have got lost."

There is a learning curve for most volunteers, who eventually become familiar enough with certain locations to travel there with more ease and part of the point of the project is to encourage volunteers' independence through enabling them to find their own way to the volunteering assignment. However, it appears that potential problems with this approach might have not been taken into account during the planning stage for the project and no particular allowance made in the budget to resolve such issues.

The example of Organisation A shows that sometimes these problems can arise within the context of an organisation's growth. The organisation's environmentally-minded reimbursement policy, which stipulated that volunteers cannot claim the cost for journeys by car, unwittingly created unfair conditions for those who do not have a choice about which transport to use. The organisation currently has a small number of disabled volunteers who drive but are not reimbursed for it. According to the organisation's volunteer coordinator, the policy probably needs to be revisited in order to address situations in which volunteers are unable to use public transport or cycle. Otherwise it might interfere with organisation A's desire to reach into as many communities as possible. The volunteer coordinator noted that this has come up as an issue as the organisation's volunteer involvement has grown rapidly.

The study found a few other examples of how organisational growth can have implications for transport and raise issues that hit the organisation unprepared. Growth within organisation K meant that it was suddenly faced with a transport issue with regard to its volunteer involvement. The organisation moved from delivering all of its services from its offices towards incorporating more outreach, which meant that its model for recruiting volunteers was no longer viable. Whilst the organisation was easily able to recruit volunteers close to its offices, it proved harder to recruit those close to the outreach locations, as well as those with cars. According to the volunteer coordinator, transport is factored into budgets in terms of expenses, but how transport issues might affect volunteer recruitment is an issue that is not addressed systematically. In the case of organisation H, finding a solution for transport issues might actually influence whether the organisation is able to expand into a new area of work. It is currently piloting a project of refugees and asylum seekers speaking to school pupils about their experiences. This involves a group of volunteers travelling to schools and appearing in a total of six classes over three days. Because the organisation could not afford to hire taxis, trustees and the volunteer coordinator stepped in to provide rides to the volunteers in their own cars.

Ring and Ride was considered as an option, but the organisation was told that groups were not eligible for the service. It is clear that if the organisation wants to offer this service permanently, it will have to come up with a more long-term solution to transport issues that might arise. This in turn will affect the organisation's ability to tap into new funding and thus be quite important for its future.

We spoke to one organisation whose experience shed some light on how transport can be taken into account when planning new projects. The project development manager stated that transport was not high on the agenda at all during project planning, but it appeared that the organisation's approach to planning a new project was flexible enough to account for transport difficulties. Although the basic idea for the service existed, it seemed that different models of service delivery are considered possible and that this would largely be shaped by the types of volunteers that the organisation would be able to recruit and what these volunteers are able and willing to do.

Support Needs

The following support needs were identified during the interviews with frontline organisations:

- Information on community transport providers (eligibility, prices, booking procedures)
- Information on travel subsidies
- Train the trainer on travel training
- Information on Ring and Ride (eligibility, prices, booking procedures)
- Comprehensive leaflet with useful information resources on transport and journey planning, as well as support and services that are available to hand out to volunteers
- Information on minibus hire and/or operating one's own minibus
- Help with identifying opportunities for partnership working and/or pooling of resources

Infrastructure Organisations

Interestingly, our conversations with infrastructure organisations mirrored the experience of interviewing frontline organisations in terms of awareness of transport issues. Similar to staff at volunteer-involving organisations, the brokers at infrastructure organisations began each interview with a sense that transport and volunteering is a non-issue. However, as the conversation progressed, interviewees did begin to mention various aspects of transport as they relate to volunteering.

Apart from this general pattern, it is possible to say that the organisations that offered some form of specialised support to specific groups of prospective volunteers almost always thought that transport was an issue for prospective volunteers, whereas those that only offered general brokerage almost never thought that it was. However, it should be noted that most infrastructure organisations we spoke to offered some form of specialised support, either instead of or in addition to a geographical remit. The following types of brokerage were covered:

- long-term unemployed
- short-term unemployed
- individuals from deprived/regeneration areas
- young people
- deprived young people
- disabled young people

The nature of the problem

Although our research included providers of brokerage in districts that contained rural fringe areas, it appeared that transport was more acknowledged as a potential or real issue when it came to involving particular groups of people as volunteers, rather than being determined by geography. One of the reasons for this may be that the volunteer-involving organisations that are located in rural fringe areas were not engaged with the volunteering infrastructure to the same extent as those located in the town centres, therefore not bringing any issues with recruiting volunteers due to transport to the volunteer centres' attention.

However, as became apparent with the volunteer-involving organisations, an organisation's base was not usually the main determinant of whether transport issues existed or not. Instead, it largely depended on the nature of services whether transport came into play. Of course, it is also highly likely that volunteer-involving organisations in the rural areas might recruit their volunteers locally, therefore not bringing transport up as much as expected.

Although the geographical dimension played a role in how brokers saw transport's relevance to volunteering, this was not necessarily along urban/rural lines but depended more on the number of changes a journey required, with the concomitant effects on the time spent on transport versus the time spent volunteering. Most of our participants appeared to agree that whenever journeys involved taking more than one bus, things began to become difficult for volunteers and that certainly there needed to be a reasonable relationship between the length of time volunteers spent on transport compared to the time they spent volunteering. One broker working in a district with rural areas commented that transport had actually come up as more of an issue for those living in poor town centre areas and never for those living in the more rural areas, a circumstance she put down to the degree of affluence and general availability of resources in those areas. People might be in a better position to get a lift, for example.

There was some comment on the changing nature of volunteering, possibly changing the extent to which transport issues affect volunteers. According to one interviewee: "We are no longer dealing with the sort of benevolent volunteers who are older retired people who don't claim travel expenses because they don't want to be a burden on the organisation." Firstly, the likelihood of prospective volunteers not having their own transport is higher and many of them depend not only on having travel expenses reimbursed, but getting paid up front. Another interviewee seconded this by noting that the majority of volunteers her centre had attracted in recent years have been on limited incomes.

It appears that the demand for volunteering opportunities from those trying to benefit their career has become significant. As one broker commented, the general promotion of volunteering in the media and through policy has led to more awareness of the broad spectrum of opportunities volunteering offers. "It's no longer thought of as something that takes place in a charity shop." This change in the nature of volunteering is having repercussions for transport. As would be the case in the first example, where volunteers do not have their own transport and are quite dependent on being reimbursed or even paid in advance for transport, transport might be more of a challenge, whereas brokers usually noted that for the latter group of career-minded volunteers transport was less of a hurdle.

The findings from our interviews suggest that the motivation of a person to volunteer does determine to an extent how willing they are to overcome any transport barriers. Almost all the brokers we interviewed pointed out that there are volunteers who do not want to travel at all, because their main motivation is to benefit the community they live in. Research participants from some districts also mentioned that prevailing parochial attitudes make people reluctant to venture outside of their area and that this can be particularly true for residents of deprived areas. Generally speaking, where the motivation for volunteering is low to begin with, any practical obstacles that are encountered, including transport barriers, could serve as further discouragement. The coordinator of a project that works with very hard-to-reach young people commented: “If someone is on a low income and has a chaotic background it becomes quite clear that sorting out a one-hour bus journey is not an option – least of all for a volunteering opportunity.”

Conversely, there appeared to be a consensus that, the more focused candidates are on a specific opportunity or a specific benefit of volunteering, the less likely it is that transport will be a barrier for them. This could take the shape of a type of opportunity being so rare that it necessitates travel outside of one’s local area and/or district. As one of the interviewees noted “If you live in H. and you want to volunteer in mental health, then you’ll need to travel to A., because such opportunities are simply not available in H.” Also, where a particular candidate has a clear idea of what they want to achieve by volunteering, the likelihood of that person to consider travelling further is high: “If they have a burning desire to achieve a certain goal travelling poses less of an obstacle.” As mentioned above, volunteers who are keen on an opportunity in order to enhance their CV tend to be least discouraged by the need for travelling.

In terms of the awareness of volunteer-involving organisations with regard to transport issues, our interviewees from infrastructure organisations were not usually able to pinpoint any organisations that were facing difficulties with volunteer recruitment or retention due to transport. According to one broker, organisations are not aware of the transport dimension of what they do and helping them to think about transport in different ways would raise their awareness. However, a few reasons were mentioned why volunteer-involving organisations might not be sensitive to transport issues when it comes to their volunteers. One set of reasons, ironically, had to do with an apparent under-appreciation of how crucial volunteers could be to any given organisation in delivering its services. One research participant flatly stated “Organisations are not set up to provide volunteer opportunities, but to deliver a service. Volunteers are secondary to that.” This was echoed by the view that transport would be thought of as an issue that affects service users, rather than volunteers.

Additionally, there was the perception that organisations do not worry about transport for their volunteers as long as they are able to get volunteers. However, one interviewee seemed to suggest that transport issues might get lost in organisations' general reluctance to face up to any problems that keep them from recruiting or retaining volunteers and tendency to blame volunteers for them. Interestingly, there was only one person in our sample who believed that most organisations that want volunteers tend to be quite flexible when it comes to working around transport issues.

The role of transport in guidance

Despite the awareness of a range of problems and concerns with regard to transport that the conversations with staff involved in volunteer brokerage brought up, this awareness is not reflected at all in published guidance for volunteer-involving organisations. Therefore, it appears that transport issues have not been conceptualised sufficiently in order to be able to formulate practical advice about them. The only consistent exception to this is the topic of travel expenses, which was routinely covered in all guidance to volunteer-involving organisations. Only one organisation had issued guidance about another transport-related issue and this concerned the need for taking responsibility for getting young volunteers home safely if their volunteering ends at night. Another organisation's guidance to prospective volunteers included the advice "Know WHERE you want to volunteer. How far do you want to travel?"

Although the degree to which the different brokers saw the reimbursement of expenses as crucial varied, all of the volunteer centres and projects tried to encourage organisations on their roster to reimburse expenses. However, none of them made this mandatory, in acknowledgment of the tight financial circumstances of some organisations, especially smaller ones. Volunteer centre staff pointed out that whilst some organisations have a genuine resource issue, making them unable to pay expenses, others try to get away without reimbursing their volunteers properly. As one broker noted, some organisations do not want to publicise the fact that they pay expenses, but instead leave the onus on volunteers to request to be reimbursed. "We have an ongoing battle with organisations about paying expenses." It was also highlighted that resource issues sometimes occur because of poor planning with regard to transport. One example was given where an otherwise very well-resourced organisation was found not to reimburse volunteers for their expenses because it had not put that into the budget. One interviewee pointed out that for some organisations this can be a matter of organisational development and helping the organisation to locate funds for reimbursing volunteer expenses.

Another expense-related problem is the procedures associated with volunteers claiming back their expenses. It was often pointed out, for example, that reimbursement might not be enough for volunteers on low incomes, but that advance payments were needed in order to involve these individuals. According to the volunteering development officer of a project that specialised in placing the unemployed as volunteers, most organisations are not receptive to the idea of making payments from petty cash to fund volunteers' travel, because they need an audit trail and because of the risk associated with giving cash to someone, especially if that person is still new to the organisation. This officer also encouraged organisations to pay for taxis if the volunteer cannot access the organisation in any other way, keeping in mind that the organisation still saves money on balance: "Nobody would consider paying me for my expenses for getting to work here, but when you are a volunteer the organisation is already getting your work for free, so should be slightly more flexible."

The research participants from volunteer infrastructure organisations appeared generally open towards including paragraphs on transport in their guidance and training materials to organisations and individuals if they were provided to them. Again, this seems to indicate that transport, whilst being so fundamental for everyday practical matters, is a tricky issue to conceptualise and package into hard and fast recommendations and/or guidance.

The role of transport in brokerage and follow-up

Successful brokerage depends on interested volunteers being able to access the volunteer centre, although most volunteer centres now also offer brokerage via the Do-it website and by responding to email and phone inquiries. However, when it comes to walk-in clients, this will be influenced by where the volunteer centre is and what its opening hours are. This means that transport issues already affect who can access the in-depth brokerage service volunteer centres offer to those who walk into their offices. In light of the fact that volunteer centres do not deal with all prospective volunteers, because volunteers find their opportunities through many other channels as well, it is perhaps not surprising that transport has not come up as one of the most pressing issues.

A few of the infrastructure organisations we spoke to have taken into account that transport issues might exist for those wanting advice on volunteering. A few of them operate outreach sessions in more accessible locations and the provision of a local brokerage service was seen to be of particular importance for prospective volunteers from deprived neighbourhoods. One volunteer centre uses volunteer champions to make volunteering opportunities more accessible to deprived communities than they would be from a central location.

Staff from a project whose aim is to encourage residents of a regeneration area to volunteer noted that its location within the community was crucial to attracting interested candidates: “Having to pay to go into town to speak to someone about volunteering wouldn’t be an option for most local residents.” Some evidence points to the possibility that the ability of accessing the brokerage service might be an indicator of a person’s ability to access volunteering opportunities as well. One interviewee noted, for example, that even with disabled volunteers, she had not come across any transport issues and that this was probably because these candidates tended to come in with a support worker or relative, meaning that transport is already sorted. Another interviewee pointed out that disabled people needed to get around on a daily basis, and therefore would usually have figured out how to do this and that this ability would then enable them to access volunteering opportunities as well. However, as was highlighted by a third interviewee, even if disabled candidates are able to access the location where the volunteer brokerage takes place, this still does not mean that there won’t be a problem when they try to access volunteering opportunities in light of the reimbursement of travel expenses. For example, if they had accessed the volunteer centre by taxi, this does not mean that a volunteer-involving organisation would be willing to reimburse them for taxis.

The registration forms volunteering infrastructure organisations use almost never cover transport issues beyond those relating to the potential of the applicant to offer driving services. Only one exception has come to our attention, where a form asks how far a prospective volunteer would want to travel and whether there are any places that they would not want to travel to. As a result, brokers appear to have a fairly good idea of how many of the candidates they have seen have a drivers license and/or their own car, but there is no information about the specifics of candidates’ reliance on public transport or their preferences or problems as far as transport is concerned. However, as a result of our conversations, some interviewees became quite interested to include questions about transport in their registration forms.

In light of the above, it is perhaps surprising that the brokerage interviews we were told about predominantly appeared to include a transport dimension. However, this just shows that the discourse on transport is not very formalised, but that the nature of the activity of matching prospective volunteers to opportunities means that one usually cannot get away from discussing it. Still, roughly a third of those we spoke to said that transport is only covered if it is brought up by candidates as a particular problem. Where it was left to candidates to bring up any transport issues they tended not to come up very often. Brokers thought that these sorts of practical issues would be raised later on, once candidates had approached the organisation that they want to volunteer for.

Most often any potential transport problems were addressed by matching candidates to opportunities as close to home as possible. Brokers did not usually have any problems achieving this, except when candidates had very specific ideas about the type of opportunity they wanted. However, as mentioned above, individuals who are very keen on specific opportunities also tend to be more willing to travel in order to get there. Reportedly, transport has not made major compromise necessary, or frustrated an individual's aspirations to volunteer completely. As one participant put it: "I wouldn't want people to compromise too much, because the whole idea is to meet their passion," an attitude that was echoed by a colleague who said, "I would be disappointed if our staff sent someone to an opportunity that they couldn't access."

Many staff at volunteering infrastructure organisations routinely offered low-key support on transport when needed. This included help with finding directions online, reading timetables, maps, driving directions and journey planning. One broker told us that she has information about Ring and Ride on hand and also points people towards other support that may be available to them, such as travel grants or free bus passes. It appears that there have been cases where this advice has actually led to an individual becoming aware of being eligible for a free bus pass.

Follow-up on the success of brokerage is generally very limited because of resource implications. This means that information about the extent to which transport issues play a role in preventing successful placement of those who have been provided opportunities by volunteer centres is non-existent. Firstly, follow-up is patchy, because of the reluctance of organisations to respond to any such inquiries from the volunteering infrastructure and because of the difficulty of tracking prospective volunteers once they have gone through the initial brokerage conversation. Secondly, most surveys that are designed for that purpose do not tend to contain questions on transport. However, infrastructure staff's predominant sense was that the main reason for not placing volunteers was that the frontline organisation did not respond to their initial enquiry.

As such, there is no indication that transport affects candidates' ability to be placed in a volunteering opportunity successfully. As one interviewee put it, "Just because transport does not usually come up as an issue does not mean that it isn't. You don't know what you don't know."

Whose role is support around transport?

Given that there are three parties to the volunteering relationship, the volunteer, the volunteer-involving organisation and the volunteering infrastructure and that the latter has an intermediary role, we were interested to know staff's thoughts on whose responsibility it was to facilitate volunteers' improved access to volunteering opportunities with regard to transport. Whilst many of the providers of brokerage were already demonstrating their own commitment to take a certain degree of responsibility for addressing transport issues that prospective volunteers encountered and had acquired resources that enabled them to do that, many others commented on where they thought the line was between where infrastructure's responsibility ended and frontline organisations' began.

The spectrum ranged from those thinking that the responsibility is squarely with the frontline organisations to those who thought that infrastructure has a potentially significant role to play. There was also one example that showed that lack of clarity on this division of labour necessitated ongoing negotiation between infrastructure and frontline organisations on what each other's role is.

We have already seen that many brokerage sessions address transport by carefully matching individuals to opportunities. Two interviewees specifically commented on this strategy and said that it was the infrastructure organisation's responsibility to ensure that the opportunities individuals are provided with match their requirements, including those around transport. One of these went further by saying that infrastructure also could have a role in trying to resolve any transport issues that stand in the way of individual candidates making their first contact with the organisation they want to give their time to. The second one, however, placed responsibility squarely on individuals once they have been given an opportunity: "People constantly have to figure out how to get from A to B and for volunteers this is no different." One interviewee saw the broker's role as monitoring transport-related issues and lobbying on behalf of certain groups of prospective volunteers who have trouble accessing opportunities in order to identify solutions.

Staff from a project that works with young volunteers mentioned an ongoing internal discussion within the organisation about the appropriateness of assisting volunteers with transport: "After all, you don't want to cuddle people too much instead of encouraging them to be independent." This organisation was also facing a struggle with the volunteer-involving organisations it dealt with on late-night-transport for volunteers.

Because of the nature of the project, some infrastructure staff tended to be present at such events and were frequently approached by volunteers for rides. The organisation now has had to issue guidance pointing out that it is the volunteer-involving organisation's responsibility to sort out transport for their volunteers and that infrastructure staff are only permitted to provide transport in emergencies.

Special support around transport

Volunteer infrastructure staff were aware of certain groups who have trouble accessing volunteering opportunities and two-thirds of the organisations we spoke to offer some specialised support to such groups. Others commented that they would like to offer additional support but could not because of resource constraints. For example, one organisation used to have funding to provide volunteers affected by learning disabilities with travel training. Whilst organisation staff still saw it as important to help such candidates as much as possible, this was restricted by how much time staff could spend on individual cases. Another volunteer brokerage coordinator had offered a volunteer with learning disabilities help with reading bus timetables and locating a suitable route to the opportunity, but noted that current demand did not justify offering more in-depth support, such as taking people to their first appointment with the volunteer-involving organisation.

Most of these schemes employ a model of supportive brokerage. The prospective volunteer is not simply handed a print-out with an opportunity and directions to the volunteer-involving organisation, but is supported further in order to ensure that the organisation and the volunteer can come to an arrangement. This seemed to serve the infrastructure organisation in the sense that it could increase its ability to generate placements, but it also benefited the frontline organisation, because it knew that the volunteer came with some additional support that the organisation did not have to provide itself. For a project whose goal is to address deprivation through volunteering, supportive brokerage has led to a 50% placement rate. The manager of the project described lack of confidence as a main barrier to volunteering in the area where the project works. According to him it is already a huge step for individuals with low confidence to go to a brokerage service; so taking the second step to the host organisation on their own can be too daunting for some of them, especially if it involves travel outside of the immediate area. To address this problem project staff accompany prospective volunteers to their host organisation until agreement has been reached. A project that develops opportunities for young volunteers has involved a special needs school in order to increase the number of placements of young people with learning disabilities. It is planning to recruit peer supporters whose role might involve accompanying the volunteer to and staying with the volunteer at the host organisation to help them settle in and keep the burden on the organisation low.

The following table shows various existing and prospective ways of providing extra support on transport-related issues that were mentioned during the interviews.

Figure 4: Existing and prospective ways of providing extra support on transport

Special support need	Ways of addressing it
Individuals with learning disabilities have a difficult time travelling to volunteering opportunities on public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing travel training ▪ Providing assistance with reading timetables and finding a suitable transport route ▪ Recruitment of peer supporters in order to provide support, including accompanying volunteers to their host organisation
Unemployed individuals: the cost of travelling to the volunteer brokerage scheme and to the host organisation is an issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Travel cost to the initial interview is reimbursed ▪ Brokerage is offered locally, thus largely eliminating the need for transport ▪ Broker ensures that volunteers are only placed with organisations that reimburse expenses. Where this is not possible, the broker provides reimbursement and/or helps the organisation access appropriate funds to be able to do so
Individuals from deprived areas have confidence issues that make them reluctant to travel outside their immediate neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brokerage is offered locally and local opportunities are developed ▪ First interview with the host organisation/taster day is arranged by the broker ensuring that the volunteer has a way of getting there ▪ Volunteer mentors assist with identifying an appropriate transport route to the host organisation and, if needed, go along with the volunteer at least once, but where needed more often

Individuals from deprived areas don't access centralised brokerage service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Broker recruits volunteering champions to promote the benefits of volunteering in these areas and to help access the services of the volunteer centre
Individuals with special needs have difficulties or are unable to use public transport, making it difficult to access volunteering opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Broker to work with referral agency to sort out transport issues ▪ Broker locates other VCS groups that could help with transport ▪ Broker advocates for host organisations to reimburse cost of taxis and/or Ring and Ride, where appropriate ▪ Broker administers Access to Volunteering funds that host organisations can bid for to fund solving transport issues (among other issues) for disabled volunteers
Young people who are unused to public transport have safety concerns about accessing host organisations by public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For one-off group volunteering events, staff from the brokerage organisation meet volunteers at the tram stop ▪ For permanent placements, staff accompanies volunteers to the host organisation a few times
Hard-to-reach young people do not access volunteering opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Broker arranges taster sessions for them, making special arrangements for all practical issues, including provision of transport

As the above table suggests, it appears to be widely recognised that specific types of volunteers face transport problems of various descriptions. As one interviewee put it: “If you are able-bodied without additional support needs and really want to volunteer, you’ll find a way of doing it, but for those who are not that highly motivated anything could be a stumbling block, including not knowing how to get to an opportunity without further research.” There is some evidence that supportive brokerage, including addressing transport barriers, can have positive effects on the take-up of volunteering opportunities among these groups.

However, there are indications that addressing practical barriers such as transport is not a panacea. One example is a project for hard-to-reach young people, which was intended to move them closer to employment through volunteering. The project set up volunteering taster sessions and had transport built in. For example, young parents were picked up from their homes, accompanied to drop off their children at the childcare provision that had been arranged for this occasion and then taken to the taster session. However, although opportunities were thus “presented on a silver platter,” as one of the staff put it, take-up rates were far from spectacular. Reportedly, out of 100 young people the project made contact with, no more than 20 actually attended the taster sessions. Yet, it is possible that take-up would have been even more modest had transport not been provided.

Support needs

The following support needs around transport were highlighted by our interviewees:

- Advice on setting up and managing volunteer car schemes
- Information about the services offered by community transport operators, and Ring and Ride.
- Clarification on the remit and eligibility criteria of Ring and Ride
- Information about transport-related funding for people with disabilities
- More structured guidelines on transport as a factor in volunteer-involvement (brokerage, monitoring and follow-up)
- Leaflet on alternative transport and travel support for specific groups of clients

The most commonly formulated support need concerned more information about alternative transport, such as community transport and Ring and Ride. Some interviewees thought that finding out more about alternative transport provision might enable them to find less costly solutions for volunteers facing transport issues than that presented by the use of taxis. Whilst there was general awareness of Ring and Ride, brokers were often unclear about the precise eligibility criteria and booking procedures. Although some brokers referred individuals interested in volunteering to these services, others did not feel that they knew enough about them to do so. It was also pointed out that Ring and Ride would be inappropriate for the use of volunteers because of the requirement to book one day in advance.

Conclusions

The findings of this research suggest that transport poses a barrier to volunteering, particularly but not exclusively among certain groups. However, at present, the nature and extent of transport issues are difficult to identify due to the absence of monitoring and because of self-selection: those who are facing the barrier might self-select out and not become known to brokers and/or volunteer-involving organisations in the first place.

We found that volunteer-involving organisations do have to deal with transport issues, because much of volunteer-led service delivery depends on the recruitment of volunteers who have access to suitable forms of transport and are willing to be quite flexible about travelling. Despite this, transport did not seem to be a subject that organisations were taking into account when planning services that involved volunteers.

The only transport issue that was explicitly acknowledged both in guidance issued by volunteering infrastructure and at the policy level within frontline organisations is that of reimbursement of expenses. Contrary to the perception the volunteering infrastructure had of volunteer-involving organisations, the organisations in our sample all reimbursed expenses and proved to be quite flexible when individual circumstances necessitated payments up front. However, since expenses were usually capped, they precluded travelling by taxi and sometimes other demand-responsive transport, therefore excluding groups of volunteers who might be reliant on such modes of transport and on limited incomes.

Whilst some organisations held the view that volunteers giving their time for free added so much value to the organisation that this even warranted paying volunteers for regular taxi rides, most organisations were constrained by limited resources. This appears to indicate that a conscious decision on what types of volunteers one might want to involve and budgeting for their specific transport needs is not made by most organisations. Instead, it is currently deemed sufficient to budget under the assumption that volunteers will be able to use their own car or public transport.

Awareness of how transport might affect recruitment is low. Although some organisations employed targeted recruitment techniques based on geographical factors and brokers tried to match prospective volunteers to opportunities as close to home as possible, it does not appear that transport considerations are made explicit in adverts for volunteering opportunities, with a few exceptions. Some may think that volunteers tend to be highly motivated individuals who do not mind going the extra mile, quite literally.

However, among the research participants there was a sense that the nature of volunteering was changing, in line with government policy highlighting the benefits of volunteering to address unemployment. Where this change brings volunteers into the picture who might not be as motivated and/or not motivated by the same altruistic principles, this means that in terms of transport the situation might shift towards transport becoming more of a barrier.

The support that organisations were willing to give to volunteers facing transport problems covered a spectrum from the fairly routine adjustment of reimbursement procedures to paying regular taxi fares for disabled volunteers, or finding ways of retaining volunteers who have become unable to use public transport. Once organisations had a relationship with their volunteer they were more likely to think about ways of accommodating needs created by transport. In this, community transport provision and Ring and Ride were not used as much as one would expect, either because of lack of awareness about these services or, in the case of Ring and Ride, because it was seen as too inflexible to respond to the needs of volunteers. This is mirrored by volunteer centres' typical lack of awareness and their concerns about the appropriateness of this type of demand responsive transport for volunteers.

Most brokers covered transport in their interviews with candidates and were willing to offer low-key support with journey planning when needed. Those that were offering special support to specific target groups also offered transport-related support as part of the overall package. However, despite this, none of the infrastructure organisations took note of transport issues at any formal level, for example by including transport-related advice (apart from that about expenses) in their guidance, or by including questions on transport in their registration and follow-up forms. Brokers are therefore not in a position to monitor issues related to transport and at present there is no consensus about whose responsibility it should be to support prospective volunteers around transport.

In conclusion, transport is an underlying aspect of volunteer brokerage and involvement, and there is a certain awareness of how this issue might affect various groups of volunteers. However, the extent to which this awareness is translated into planning and/or systematic action to broaden access to volunteering is still limited and ad-hoc.

Recommendations

- Include transport considerations in planning – which volunteers do I want to recruit and what does this mean for transport/the budget?
- Include transport information in adverts for volunteering opportunities to ensure that volunteers know exactly what to expect and candidates without transport do not immediately shy away from opportunities.
- Encourage diversity by making budgetary allowance for reimbursing special needs transport for a number of volunteers, rather than capping cost at public transport.
- Raise awareness of the significance of transport considerations beyond cost.
- Clarify whose responsibility transport in volunteering is. What's the broker's role? What's the volunteer-involving organisation's role?
- Improve monitoring of transport concerns in order to build an evidence base for targeted interventions.
- Improve follow-up to volunteer brokerage and make resources available to build this into the process.
- Improve guidance on transport to volunteer-involving organisations.
- Improve awareness of alternative forms of transport and their cost.
- Improve awareness of help with travel costs & sources of transport-related information.
- Highlight supportive brokerage's role in increasing take-up of volunteering opportunities among excluded groups.
- Raise awareness within volunteer-involving organisations of their role in combating social exclusion. Increasing ability to travel among volunteers could reduce overall social exclusion, whilst limiting involvement to those who do not face transport problems defies this goal.
- Explore possible arrangements with community transport operators on providing transport for volunteers.