

Research Findings Scotland No 5 June 2004

This Research Findings Scotland is the fifth in a series of bulletins on research into volunteering in Scotland published by Volunteer Development Scotland. The findings are taken from a piece of research into Black and Minority Ethnic diverse volunteering carried out by Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS) in partnership with Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland (BEMIS). The full research document, '*A Way of Life: Black and Minority Ethnic diverse communities as volunteers*' is available from the VDS website on www.vds.org.uk

The research took place across Scotland, between October 2003 and February 2004, using a client based research model, incorporating focus groups, questionnaires and discussions.

Background to the research

The key aim of the research was to increase recognition, knowledge and understanding of the extent and nature of volunteering in urban and rural Black and Minority Ethnic diverse communities across Scotland and to test the thesis that there is a substantial volume of volunteering in BME diverse communities, but that it is of an informal nature and based in and around faith. The findings will inform the work of both VDS and BEMIS to support existing volunteering in Black and Minority Ethnic diverse communities. This research is the first of its kind in that it has engaged with the individuals within Black and Minority Ethnic communities rather than organisations and gatekeepers.

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)

For this research we have taken this term to be representative of all the diverse groups within BME communities, not just those mainstream religious and cultural groups within general awareness.

NOTE: Not all groups who took part identify themselves with the term Black and Minority Ethnic. However, we used it as the most recognised term for all those we consulted.

'Volunteering is done by choice, without monetary reward, and for the benefit of individuals, organisations, communities, society and the environment'
Volunteer Development Scotland 2003

The Concept of Volunteering

Previous research suggested that volunteering as a concept was not prevalent within Black and Minority Ethnic diverse communities, and that indeed 'helping' was the terminology used. This research has found that volunteering is a widely used concept, particularly amongst the younger generations who are more likely to use the terminology of 'helping' when explaining to older generations the details of the role they undertake. One focus group member made the distinction:

'Volunteering is a position and a commitment, helping is doing what you can, when you can'

The thesis for this research was that there is a high volume of volunteering in BME diverse communities but of an informal nature and we found this to be the case even though many do not consider themselves to be volunteers.

Formal volunteering is volunteering that is managed or co-ordinated within an organisational setting.

Volunteer Development Scotland 2004

Where do people volunteer?

This research found that within Black and Minority Ethnic diverse communities, men are more likely than women to give their time regularly to a formalised volunteering opportunity. Of those formal volunteers surveyed, 79% volunteered for a Black and Minority Ethnic organisation. The reasons for this emerged at the focus groups; some people had had bad experiences within white led organisations, others had been put off by hearing of bad experiences while many simply preferred to volunteer in an organisation where their cultural and dietary needs were provided for as a matter of course, rather than having to make special requests.

'Being the odd one out is uncomfortable, if special things have to be done for you'

Informal volunteering is volunteering that is self-managed and usually outwith an organisational setting.

Volunteer Development Scotland 2004

Most of the volunteering that takes place within the Black and Minority Ethnic diverse communities is of an informal nature, which partly explains previous theories that these communities do not volunteer. Women are more likely to volunteering informally than men and are also more likely to give time on a regular basis such as once a week, to any informal volunteering that they undertake.

Dundee Case Study

One of the members of our Dundee focus group had been helping out informally in the local school to raise awareness of different cultures and to encourage the children to integrate. This had included working with the teachers through the teachers group to educate on cultural awareness, from helping the school to celebrate Eid, to translating the names of toys from English to Urdu.

Why do people volunteer?

The motivations for volunteering are very similar across the board, although we found that in Black and Minority Ethnic diverse communities, culture and family values play a bigger role in the decisions of whether or not to volunteer. Many of the people who took part in the research had been brought up in a culture of helping friends and family and as such volunteering had become a way of life. We also found that much of the volunteering that takes place is directly linked to faith groups and cultural settings.

In formal volunteering, many volunteers become involved in an organisation, because a friend or family member is already involved. Within informal volunteering, often people also take the lead from family members in helping out individuals within the community. However, additional motivations such as personal learning and making a difference are still highly relevant.

'I like to do something worthwhile with my time; this project has a nice atmosphere and I am learning'

How are volunteers recruited?

Although recruitment does not take place in informal volunteering in the same way as through organisations, it is important to recognise that recruitment does take place in some form and that this does provide important information on how people are getting involved in helping others.

Fife Case Study

As there is no formal support available for the Chinese community in Fife, some members of the community take on the role of assisting their neighbours, particularly those who are new to the area, in small tasks like making appointments and form filling. Individuals are not recruited to do this and instead took on this role as they saw a need that wasn't being met.

In more formal situations, the most common method of recruitment is by word of mouth. This is indicative of the motivational pull of friends and family being involved, thus people having knowledge of the organisation they are getting involved in. This may also be the reason why high profile recruitment campaigns have not been very successful in attracting Black and Minority Ethnic diverse volunteers.

What training do volunteers receive?

This section deals specifically with formalised volunteering.

Within Black and Minority Ethnic volunteer involving organisations, training provision varies between groups. Our questionnaires found that 75% of formal volunteers do not receive training for the roles, which they undertake. The reasons for this were discussed at the focus groups and the most common reason is lack of funding for training. For those groups who do provide training, this can range from basic induction through to counselling training. Some groups also provide peer training where more experienced volunteers pass on their knowledge to new recruits.

Glasgow Case Study

One of the projects that took part in our focus groups was a group who support Muslim women in Glasgow and the West of Scotland. This project provides a telephone advice line and counselling, amongst other things, and all volunteers are given training to provide all of these services. This has created a good atmosphere within the project, as all volunteers feel empowered in their volunteering role.

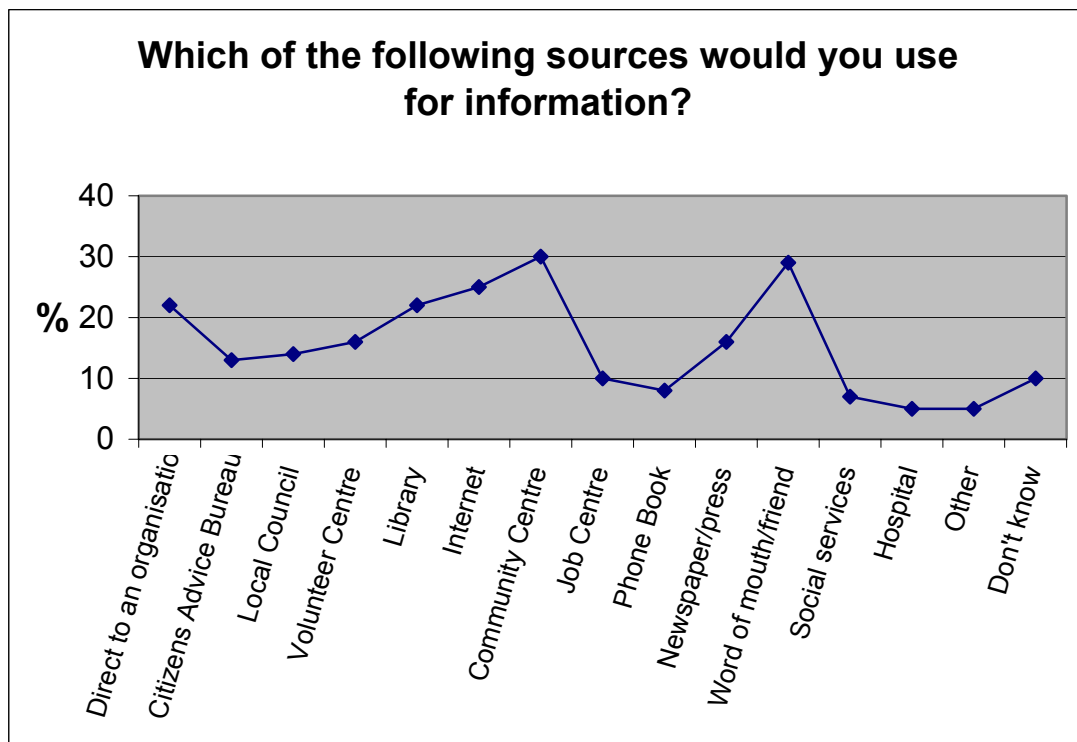
Previous volunteers

Of those people surveyed who do not volunteer currently, half used to volunteer in the past. Research into volunteering suggests that those who volunteer earlier in life are more likely to volunteer long-term and so this indicates an untapped potential of volunteers within BME diverse communities in Scotland. In addition to this, most of the reasons for stopping volunteering were a change in circumstances such as moving house or changing job rather than being unhappy as a volunteer. Indeed some people did not allow a change in circumstances stop them from volunteering.

'I will continue to volunteer wherever I am, if it is not already there then I will start it up'

Information sources

It is evident that the will to volunteer exists for many people in the BME diverse communities but where would they go for information on a formal volunteering experience:



As can be seen from the graph, word of mouth again is a key route into volunteering. However, the use of community centres, libraries and volunteer centres is encouraging in terms of people utilising local resources for information. In addition, the use of the internet may be reflective of the launch last year of the Volunteer Scotland website www.volunteerscotland.org.uk particularly since some of the groups

that we contacted had made use of this site to advertise their volunteering opportunities.

Summary of the Research Findings

- Volunteering exists as a concept within BME diverse communities in Scotland although most volunteering is of an informal nature
- The motivations of BME diverse people to volunteer are most likely to be linked to faith, culture and family values
- The availability of training, funding and resources to BME diverse volunteering groups needs to be improved
- There are barriers to volunteering for BME diverse people due to circumstances of faith, culture and family values