

Written evidence submitted by vInspired (BYC043)

About vInspired

vInspired is the UK's leading volunteering and social action charity for 14 - 30 year olds. We provide and connect young people with volunteering opportunities that matter to them, helping them gain the skills and experiences that will make them and their communities thrive.

This response to the Youth Select Committee's inquiry on work experience draws on over a decade of experience of ensuring that young people have the chance to engage in volunteering and social action, and that they, and their future employers and education providers, understand and recognise the skills and experience that they have gained through doing so. We provide volunteering and social action programmes direct to young people, we connect young people to volunteering opportunities across more than 7,000 charities and community groups through our digital service and deliver NCS as the Regional Delivery Partner for the North East.

This response omits some questions that are not relevant to our experience or expertise.

General

1. What does "good quality work experience" look like? What do young people and businesses expect to get from it?

1.1 Work experience – as a time-limited placement that a young person undertakes with an employer while in full-time study – can lead to positive outcomes around skills, career-decision making and understanding of the workplace. High quality work experience, therefore, as a means for preparing young people for the workplace and supporting their transitions into adulthood should be widely supported and promoted. Volunteering – particularly volunteering undertaken by a young person within a work setting whilst in education – should also be considered alongside work experience as a valuable intervention for supporting outcomes that positively benefit young people in the labour market and in adult life.

1.2 Engaging young people with volunteering and social action presents one of the ways in which young people can be helped to negotiate growing complexity and make the transition to adulthood with positive outcomes in life and work. There has been strong public and private sector support for programmes to engage more young people in volunteering and social action - partly with the aim of improving their education and employment outcomes, but also to contribute to wider social benefits. The idea of volunteering as a means to support young people's transitions to adulthood is fundamental to vInspired's work. The youth social action framework, developed and popularised by the Young Foundation (2013) and subsequently refined by the Behavioural Insights Team (2015), combines the sector's understanding of the changes that can occur in young people as a result of participating in volunteering and youth social action, as well as skills the CBI identified that young people require beyond their formal education.

1.3 High quality volunteering should meet the [six principles of quality youth social action](#) developed by the Cabinet Office, Young Foundation and the Institute of Volunteering Research, alongside a range of organisations across the youth, voluntary, education and business communities. These principles are:

- Youth-led – volunteering and social action led, owned and shaped by young people’s needs, ideas and decision making.
- Socially impactful – have a clear intended benefit to a community, cause or social problem.
- Progressive – sustained, and providing links to other activities and opportunities.
- Embedded – accessible to all, and well integrated to existing pathways to become a habit for life.
- Reflective – recognising contributions as well as valuing critical reflection and learning.
- Challenging – stretching and ambitious as well as enjoyable and enabling.

1.4 In reference to what young people expect to get from volunteering, research has put forward two distinct categories of motivation for volunteering: self-oriented motivations and motivations related to the benefit to others. In practice, the motivations for volunteering are likely to often combine elements of self-interest and altruism (Hardill and Baines 2007). Other theoretical frameworks have been used to explain why people volunteer. Mundle et al. (2012) set out role theory – people volunteering to confer on themselves a productive status in society; social integration theory – volunteering as one of multiple social roles that give meaning and purpose in life; and activity theory – volunteering as an activity that provides purpose and a sense of agency in a societal capacity.

1.5 Where there has been research specifically on the likely motivation of young volunteers, this has emphasised social factors (67% would be encouraged to volunteer if they could do so with friends), the ability to try it first to see if it was something they enjoyed, and the opportunity to do so in close proximity to home (vInspired, 2010). Other research, based on a survey of over one thousand 16 to 19 year olds, asked young people what their motivations were based on volunteering they had already completed. This found, as shown in Chart 1, that gaining skills in order to progress in career or employment (63%) was the most important reason, followed by more altruistic motives such as wanting to help the community (48%) and wanting to make a difference (39%) (vInspired, 2015).

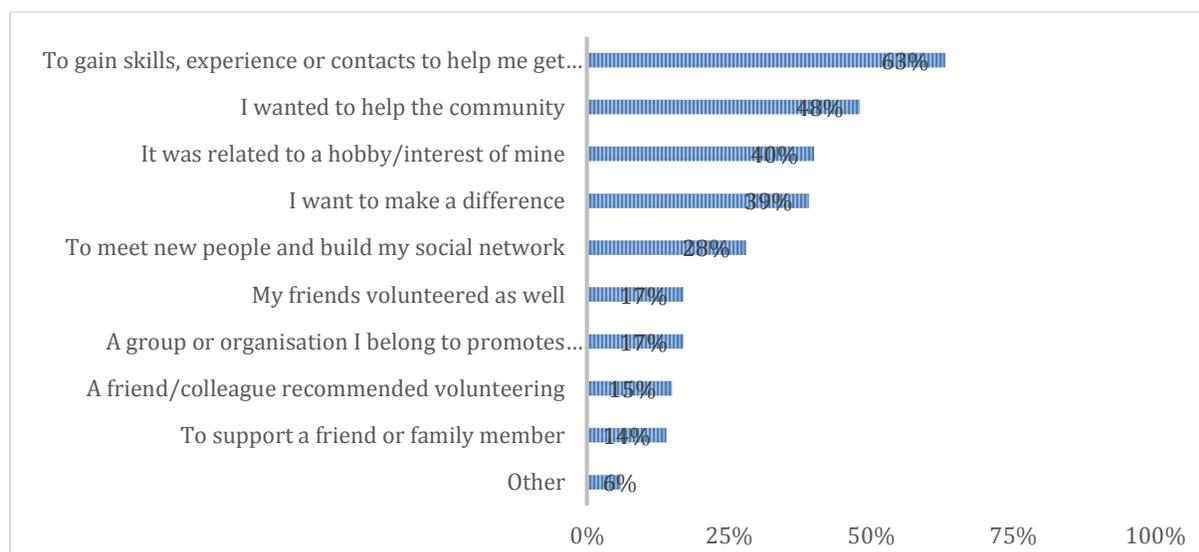


Chart 1: Past motivations - what made you start volunteering?

1.6 A further question on motivations found that the most common motivation for having taken part in volunteering was wanting to gain work experience (73%) and gaining or improving skills (61%). There was also a notable incidence of friends, family and teachers mentioning an opportunity, with an implication that young people need often need a stimulus to take part in volunteering.

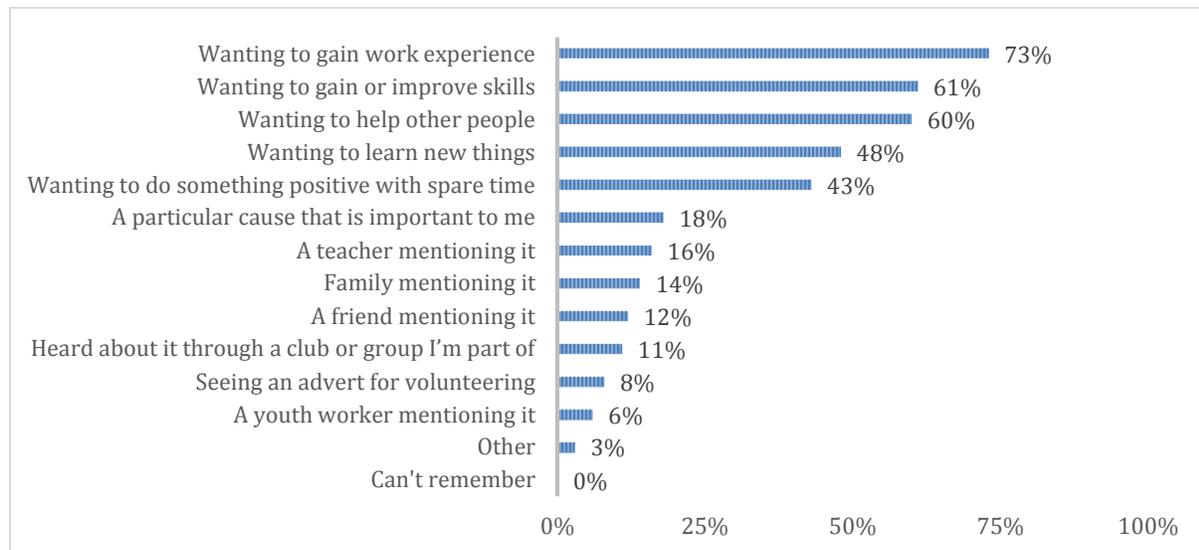


Chart 2: What made you consider volunteering?

1.7 There are various theories of volunteer motivation, but one that is frequently applied is the Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI). This provides a typology of motivations for volunteering, which seeks to recognise that volunteers engage in voluntary work to satisfy personal goals, that different people may do similar things for different reasons, and that any one individual may be motivated by more than one need or goal (Clary and Snyder, 1999). The scale of motivations is divided into six separate functional factors, of which one is the career function – the volunteer has the goal of gaining career-related experience through volunteering.

1.8 In summary, the research on volunteer motivations suggests a multitude of reasons, some of which are altruistic in terms of the benefit to others, communities and society and some that benefit the individual, with findings broadly suggesting more weighting to the former. Volunteering motivation is multifaceted and complex and is likely to be highly personal. The literature does point to some established patterns of what motivates young volunteers. Young people are motivated to volunteer by both “outward reasons (a desire to help people and improve things or to contribute to an important cause) and inward reasons (to learn new skills, support employability or to feel good)” (Hutin, 2008). Enhancing skills and employability and wanting to meet people and make friends are important for young volunteers.

2. How important is good quality work experience to a successful industrial strategy?

2.1 It is increasingly accepted that since the 1970s the transitional period between childhood and adulthood has extended, in terms of the move from education to employment, the path to home ownership, and starting a family (Calvert, 2010). Youth transitions have become increasingly complex and non-linear (Thompson, 2011). A number of factors have been involved in this change, including a restructuring of the labour market; the extension and expansion of education and, more recently, increasingly restricted access to the housing market. Youth transitions have subsequently become more ‘risky’, particularly for young people in disadvantaged circumstances (France, 2008). Those with the least resources, for example,

young people lacking in parental and peer support or poorly qualified, are likely to be the least able to deal with the inherent risks posed by more lengthy and complex transitions (McDonald and Marsh, 2001).

2.2 The increasing complexity young people face in making the transition from childhood to adulthood places even greater importance on the support they receive and the experiences they are afforded during this transitional period. The concept of 'emerging adulthood', developed by Arnett (2000), describes the transition ranging from early-teens to mid-late twenties which captures key life course transitions such as leaving the family home; starting university; beginning of working life; starting a family; buying or renting a new property. This is a crucial life stage, and one where young people may be faced with challenges and opportunities.

2.3 In this regard, recent years have seen greater consideration given to a broader set of skills that might benefit young people in this transitional period, and also potentially support labour market outcomes. Organisations and institutions are thereby engaging with non-cognitive skills or socio-emotional skills to equip young people with more than just cognitive skills related to traditional educational attainment. Non-cognitive skills are seen as being important given their potential to level the playing field for individuals, particularly where social capital is unevenly distributed and when socio-economic factors and background may unfairly impede young people. Opportunities to develop these non-cognitive skills are frequently seen to arise through extra-curricular activities, internships and volunteering. This seemingly reflects the practical and learning-by-doing nature of these activities; individuals need to be placed in situations where they need to develop and demonstrate certain characteristics. The interest in non-cognitive skills and character development also represents a shift away from the traditional focus on standardised achievement as measured in exams or tests.

2.4 Non-cognitive skills refer to qualities such as resilience, problem-solving, confidence and teamwork. This shift in the conception of human capital beyond educational attainment to include a broader set of non-cognitive skills has inevitably led to examination of the economic pay offs. An OECD (2015) report, defining non-cognitive skills as 'personality traits, goals, character, motivations and preferences that are valued in the labour market, in school, and in many other domains', stated that:

- Non-cognitive skills are valuable in education and the labour market;
- Reliable measures of non-cognitive skills are available and;
- Individual skills are stable at a point in time, but can be shaped in the early years of life.

2.5 Other studies have shown strong positive associations between non-cognitive skills and economic success and wellbeing, as well as supporting the notion that these skills appear to be malleable early in life (Heckman and Kautz, 2012). Volunteering, consequently, should be seen as an effective intervention for developing a broad range of skills that are associated with positive outcomes for young people, both in education and employment. Volunteering should therefore be embedded into easily accessible pathways to ensure that young people benefit from a broad and balanced skills curriculum. A CIPD survey found that 67% of employers reported that entry-level candidates who had voluntary experience demonstrated more employability skills, whilst a CBI survey of employers found that 85% prioritise character and attitude over academic results (CIPD, 2015; CBI/Pearson, 2015). Demands for these broader range of skills will likely grow as the economy and labour market needs evolve.

2.6 Volunteering can also play a role in preparing young people for technical study programmes and placements such as T-Levels. Volunteering can improve people's hard and soft skills, and prepare young people for the next phase of their education. Through our volunteering brokerage service, vInspired is working to better identify the skills that young

people will gain from volunteering roles. We are adopting *Enabling Enterprise's* Skills Builder framework as a taxonomy to map the essential non-cognitive skills that young people can develop through volunteering and social action. The skills featured in this framework include: listening, presenting, creativity, problem-solving, teamwork, leadership, staying positive and aiming high. We are also working in partnership with the Careers & Enterprise Company, with a view to testing a measurement tool to identify several key outcomes of individual change for young people taking part in career-related interventions.

3. What evidence is there that work experience boosts social mobility?

3.1 There are a number of factors that affect social mobility and life outcomes of young people in the transition from youth into adulthood. Certain types of social action and volunteering could contribute to mobility for young people. This could be particularly relevant for young people aged 14-24 who are not, who do not intend to follow, or who did not follow the A-Level to Higher Education pathway. There is a growing body of evidence to demonstrate that the types of skills developed through youth social action offers a range of advantages to young people, in improving academic attainment and access to jobs. The pivotal years in determining prospects for mobility occur when children are relatively young. Levels of social capital and local civic engagement are also important, which youth social action facilitates. Youth social action develops character and resilience in young people. There is an established link between these non-cognitive attributes / socio-emotional skills and a range of desirable life outcomes. The influence and importance of these socio-emotional skills has increased in recent years; but young people from less affluent backgrounds are less likely than their peers to develop these skills.

General Comments

- ESRC briefings on social mobility indicate that it can be advanced through:
Early years education;
Better schools, teachers and educational resources;
Wider access to professional employment;
Improving health services in poor areas; and
Higher education.
- Recent policy has emphasised volunteering for employability, especially for young people. The Russell Commission recommended that volunteering should be encouraged in order to develop young peoples' skills and increase their employability (Russell, 2005). The 'V' initiative was launched in 2006 to promote the skills, experience and confidence that can be gained through volunteering to all young people in England to 'solidify and galvanise the relationship between volunteering and employment' (Hill et al, 2009, p 2).
- Low rates of social mobility leads to a waste of talent – a study carried out by the Boston Consulting Group for the Sutton Trust estimated that encouraging school underachievers to reach average secondary attainment and subsequent employment would add approximately 4 percentage points to UK GDP.
- The Casey Review commented on the importance of social mixing among young people from different backgrounds and the positive impact this can have on society.
- Social action has the potential to develop non-cognitive skills in a non-formal learning setting – these 'life skills' are valued by employers and correlate to positive outcomes in adult life, as acknowledged in the Casey Review.
- Social action and volunteering can support higher levels of trust and social mixing, with participants more willing to ask for help from people different to themselves. Volunteering can also increase wellbeing and reduce anxiety.

- A formative evaluation of vInspired activities in 2011 found that a key impact for volunteers was the development of aspirations. In a grant recipient survey, it was reported by 94 per cent of respondents that their volunteering opportunities had increased young people's aspirations. Young peoples' involvement in volunteering provided an environment where they could consider their career direction and be inspired to develop future career paths. They could also come into contact with new 'trusted adults' that could assist them to understand the current opportunities available.
- Certain types of volunteer experience are valuable for CV-building and gaining labour market skills.
- It is important to recognise and understand the contexts of locality, social networks and social justice, as opposed to solely relying on an individualistic set of explanations relating to volunteering outcomes.

Evidence

vInspired Get Active for Good Cashpoint

- Cashpoint Award Holders demonstrated increases across all the character strength outcomes: the biggest increases were across co-operation (23 per cent), leadership (22 per cent) and communication (21 per cent).
- There were also improvements for secondary volunteers in all the character strengths, especially related to social skills like communication: communication increased by 29 per cent, grit by 26 per cent, leadership by 24 per cent and creativity by 20 per cent.
- For both Award Holders and secondary volunteers, the biggest increases in character capabilities were clustered around achievement and intellectual strengths such as communication, creativity, grit and leadership. These findings give emphasis to the youth-led nature of Cashpoint social action projects and the beneficial experience of young people designing and running their own projects.
- Social trust is an important indicator of the strength and quality of a society and community; both Award Holders and volunteers reported a high level of trust in others. Ninety-three per cent of Award Holders said that either many people or some people can be trusted, whilst the equivalent for secondary volunteers was 90 per cent.
- In terms of social capital and, specifically, the trust and shared norms participants felt they identified with their community, the findings were very positive for Award Holders. Eighty-nine per cent of Award Holders strongly agreed or agreed that they understood the organisations and people that influence their local area. As a measure of community cohesion, 81 per cent of Award Holders felt that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.
- On social mixing and social integration, the findings suggest both Award Holders and volunteers had meaningful interactions with people differentiated by age, ethnicity, religion and level of education. Ninety-two percent of Award Holders mixed with people from different age groups more than once on their project.

vInspired Cashpoint

- In May 2012 an independent consortium led by the Institute for Volunteering Research (part of NCVO), in partnership with the Third Sector Research Centre and Volunteer Scotland, were commissioned by vInspired to undertake an evaluation of the *Cashpoint* programme from the re-launch in 2012 up to the end of December 2013.
- Award Holders and volunteers were from diverse backgrounds. More Award Holders were female and most were from diverse ethnic backgrounds: over half of Award Holders and volunteers were from non-White British backgrounds.
- A large proportion of Award Holders came from the most deprived neighbourhoods.
- Networking and social capital – at the start of their projects, 47% of Award Holders said they hoped to make new friends and social contacts. By the time they had completed their

projects, 82% of Award Holders said they had developed their networks in this way. This included making links with organisations and agencies connected to the project as well as with volunteers and beneficiaries.

- Before starting their projects, 51% of Award Holders said they hoped to enhance their employment prospects and 37% that they hoped to gain access to training and resources. Expectations were exceeded. At the end of the projects, 61% said their employment prospects had been enhanced, 41% that their access to training and resources had increased.
- The key impacts discussed by volunteers were similar to those for Award Holders, although tended to be less intensive. The development of new skills was cited by 68% of Volunteers in the online survey. Typically, Volunteers described gaining skills in the area of leadership, interpersonal and communication, teaching, and teamwork.
- Positive impacts were also seen around progression to employment, with just over one-third (36%) of volunteer respondents reporting that it had enhanced their employment prospects.
- Like Award Holders, Volunteers made new friends and social contacts as a result of participating in the project (55% citing this in the survey).

vInspired Talent

- A key aim of Talent is to increase young people's employability, and to lead to outcomes that support this overarching goal, such as improving progression into education or training as well as into employment, and improving young people's wellbeing and personal effectiveness and their social capital.
- Summary findings of evaluation data taken from 2013/14 and 2014/15 shows that *Talent* engages with many young people in challenging circumstances. Across both years, 26% considered themselves to have a disability; 49% reported having no qualifications or fewer than five GCSEs grade A*-C; 4% were lone parents; 6% were ex-offenders and 9% were in care or had previously been in care.
- Programme impact on young people's personal development was measured across the outcome areas cooperation; communication; and grit. Overall, survey findings from Cabinet Office-funded participants showed improvement across all these areas while survey findings from local authorities and further education college participants showed a significant improvement across a small number of areas only.
- Future plans, aspirations and employment – participants showed a significant improvement in the extent to which they know what they want to do with their career across both surveys. Further to this, Cabinet Office participants were much more likely to agree that a range of different career options are open to them after the programme than at the start, with a 117% increase in average score.
- Survey participants feel more confident in their ability to gain paid employment, a significant increase was found in both surveys.
- In summary, *Talent* has an excellent track record of achieving impact. An independent evaluation of the programme has demonstrated that it supports young people into their chosen career by developing real world skills and experience:
 - 83% of graduates believed that they had gained the skills required for the job they wanted;
 - 83% of graduates completed a Level 2 qualification; and
 - 90% of graduates progressed into education, employment or training.

3.2 Summary [evidence on employment and skills](#) collated by the *#iwill Campaign* demonstrates that there is positive evidence on young people's development of employability skills, personal networks and confidence in their ability to find work as a result of participating in volunteering and social action. Recent reviews undertaken by the Careers & Enterprise Company found that there is a lot of formative evidence to suggest that work experience is a 'potentially effective' activity for young people to undertake (a 2 on the Early Intervention Foundation evidence scale), whilst volunteering was found to be 'effective' in supporting transitions (a 3 on the Early Intervention Foundation evidence scale).

Young people

4. How do differences between young people (e.g. geographic location, socioeconomic background, ethnicity, disability) affect the work experience opportunities they people have?

4.1 Explanations for why people volunteer relate to a number of different factors. Important reasons identified in the literature include socio-economic status, the opportunity and availability to do so, personal motivation, and cultural and legacy influences. Socio-economic factors typically focus on demographics and the effect of gender, age, education and employment status on volunteering, with individual characteristics such as gender, age and education having been found to be important in determining voluntary participation.

4.2 Access to different types of volunteering can vary by socio-economic status – formal, organised, structured and certified volunteering likely to be accessed by people with higher income, education and occupation levels. The Youth Social Action 2017 Survey carried out by Ipsos MORI found that there continues to be a gap in meaningful social action participation between the most and least affluent young people (51% vs 32%). Young people from less affluent backgrounds, particularly those aged 16-20, take part significantly less than in 2016, contributing to the slight decline in participation overall in 2017. This is significant in improving young people's human, cultural and economic capital as the survey reveals that those participating in meaningful social action are more likely to feel a range of benefits, reporting they do more sport and exercise, have higher life satisfaction and perceive that they have improved job prospects. This is in addition to the direct benefits to the people and environments young people are helping.

4.3 The most recent findings on the demographics of volunteering nationally, taken from the Community Life Survey 2016-17, show involvement in volunteering based on gender, age, ethnicity, region and employment status. In terms of regular formal volunteering, defined as volunteering that takes place through a group, club or organisations, rates vary little between men and women. In the last 12 months, 35% of men took part in formal volunteering at least once, compared with 39% of women. Broadly equal proportions reported volunteering at least once per month – 22% of men and 23% of women. Slightly more pronounced differences can be found in terms of informal volunteering; volunteering that takes place independently of a group or organisation and on a one-to-one basis, where more women (55%) volunteered in the last 12 months than men (49%) (NCVO, 2018). Recent figures on rates of formal volunteering across age groups suggest greater variance for this characteristic (NCVO, 2018). The rate of formal volunteering at least once a year for 16-25 year olds is 37%, with 20% of this age group volunteering at least once a month.

4.4 Data from 2016/17 Community Life Survey shows that the greatest differences in volunteering rates concern socio-economic status and education level: people in higher social classes and with a higher level of education are more likely to get involved in any form of

volunteering. Rates of volunteering also vary according to where people live. Rates of volunteering are higher in rural areas – 21% of those living in urban areas volunteered formally on a monthly basis, compared with 30% of those in rural areas. Regional data on rates is available for 2016/17; rates of formal volunteering were highest in the South West, with 43% of people volunteering irregularly and 29% regularly, while lowest in the North East with 26% and 15% respectively. The Community Life Survey data also demonstrates that people in more deprived areas are less likely to volunteer formally: 14% volunteer regularly in the most deprived areas of England (i.e. in the 10% most deprived Lower Super Output Areas) compared with 31% in the least deprived.

5. How could resources to help young people find out about and access work experience be improved?

5.1 Key stakeholders need to facilitate better engagement with volunteering for young people and to remove key barriers. Young people who want to volunteer often face many challenges accessing volunteering and social action projects. Volunteering roles are frequently aimed at those who have been working for some time or who are retired. Young people find that roles are not well suited to their experience and they are not always able to identify the opportunities that might attract them the most. It can be difficult to find roles that will provide the skills they want and the support they need; also, they often don't understand or find it hard to articulate the skills they do gain from volunteering. Employers need help to understand what young people can learn and how they develop when they volunteer in local communities. Despite 67% of employers recognising that entry-level candidates who have volunteering experience demonstrate more employability skills, only 16% ask about it at application stage and only 33% at interview.

5.2 Jobcentre advisers do not always recognise that young jobseekers who volunteer are developing skills and experience, even though the Youth Obligation allows for a 50% reduction in the time spent actively seeking work to qualify for financial support if a young person is engaged in full-time volunteering. A challenge for charities and community groups is to make sure their roles reflect the different reasons why young people volunteer. Supporting an entry-level system that helps young people to receive messaging about volunteering that they may not otherwise receive, and encouraging a volunteering and social action journey along a long-term pathway tailored to an individual's needs and motivations, would allow people to identify and take up the opportunities that are right for them. Much of the expertise and infrastructure needed to do this already exists, and so better utilisation, investment and support of this would lead to positive outcomes, over and above creating new bodies or programmes.

5.3 The Youth Social Action Survey, commissioned by the #iwill Campaign and administered by Ipsos MORI, has found a persistent underlying gap in participation between the most and least affluent young people ('less affluent' young people are defined as those in social grade groups D and E, and 'more affluent' young people are defined as those in social grade groups A and B). Resources are needed that require new ways of engaging and motivating young people from less affluent backgrounds, including opportunities to participate with friends.

Other services and organisations

12. What role should the Government have in ensuring young people have access to quality work experience?

12.1 Volunteering should be considered alongside work experience as a meaningful intervention for developing skills and understanding of work-place settings in young people. Volunteering develops a broad range of skills that are valued by employers, and which evidence shows has a positive association with successful outcomes in the labour market and adult life. Government should be supporting the process of making it easier and more rewarding for young people to volunteer. In particular, government should consider mechanisms to address barriers to youth volunteering for those groups that typically participate less. Government can also make it easier for young people to recognise volunteering has a potential pathway to employment by encouraging all schools to promote the benefits and to support young people in taking part, and ensuring that institutions such as Jobcentre Plus are clear on the rules and eligibility for volunteering.

13. Should the Government invest in resources to help young people find work experience independently? What would these resources ideally look like?

13.1 A key role played by civil society organisations is providing the digital and offline infrastructure that allows the sector to deliver opportunities for young people to independently search and participate in volunteering and for people and communities to benefit from the services that they offer. Clearer guidance could be provided to young people on where and how to search for volunteering opportunities, whilst there is a difficulty in recruiting and retaining volunteers that is shared by organisations of all sizes and interests. However, few funders are prepared to invest in this area as the impact it delivers is less immediately visible than frontline services, programmes or projects. There is a real risk that some longstanding infrastructure organisations that support tens of thousands of charities, community groups and individuals, could cease to become viable unless the approach to funding them changes. A key way to take this forward would be through working in partnership to create a cross-funder, cross-organisation and cross-government strategic approach to funding the sector's infrastructure. A sensible, sustainable, collaborative and coherent approach to investment in this area is required in order that young people from all backgrounds can find volunteer placements in work-related settings.

14. How could private and third sector organisations be better supported and encouraged to help young people access quality work experience?

14.1 Partnerships across sectors are key to supporting and encouraging young people to access quality work experience and volunteering opportunities. We rely on charities and community organisations to use our digital service to make roles available to the over 330,000 young people who are registered to use it, and we work in partnership with these organisations to help them find the right volunteers and to offer the right support to them. We also work with charities and community organisations as Rewards Partners, to offer young people personal development experiences such as skills masterclasses or work experience. Working with the private sector in this way is also essential, and there is much greater scope for them to partner with V•Inspired in order to provide discounts available through the Inspired Card to help us reach young people who may not be considering taking part in volunteering and social action but for whom an introduction to the contribution they can make and the benefits they can reap sets them on a lifelong path of success and social contribution.

For further information about anything contained within this submission, or about the work of vInspired, please contact Robert Burley, Director of Public Affairs, Strategy & Partnerships, on 020 7960 7046 or at Robert.Burley@vinspired.com

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