

“Volunteers in the Criminal Justice System”
Keele University, Staffordshire June 28, 2011

DECONSTRUCTING THE PANACEA

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DON'T GET ME WRONG

- 30 years experience as volunteer
- believe in homo voluntas
- want to understand how volunteering fits into the society we live in

WHAT CAN GO WRONG?

- misconduct of volunteers
- misconduct of volunteer involving organisations
- negative impacts of volunteering
- the benefit fallacy
- the service delivery conundrum

WHAT IS THE RELEVANCE FOR POLICY MAKING

MISCONDUCT OF VOLUNTEERS

- persistently bad timekeeping;
- taking on tasks which go outside the agreed remit;
- failure to respect clients/customers confidentiality; dignity, independence and individuality;
- breach of health and safety regulations or agreements;
- misuse of the organisations equipment or facilities;
- theft;
- discrimination on grounds of disability/ race/gender;

MISCONDUCT OF VOLUNTEERS

- abuse, or other offensive behaviour;
- arriving for work under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or other substance abuse;
- *“I have even come across groups of volunteers who have actually bullied staff or other volunteers into leaving.”*
- 74% of 547 organisations surveyed had procedures for disciplining volunteers

MISCONDUCT OF VOLUNTEER INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS

- *“I was continually harassed, bullied, and worn down.”*
- *“While working as a volunteer I was verbally abused.”*
- *“I have been left physically and mentally in pieces.”*

MISCONDUCT OF VOLUNTEER INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS

John Stoker presented his report of a review of the York Citizens Advice Bureau. He had found that

*“Breaches of the procedures were pervasive and serious and involved detriment and unfairness”
(Stoker 2008: p13)*

NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF VOLUNTEERING

- Burnout

Ross M.W. Greenfield S. A. and Bennett L. (1999) 'Predictors of dropout and burnout in AIDS volunteers: a longitudinal study' *AIDS Care*, 11(6), pp.723-731.

- Posttraumatic Stress

Bryant, R.A., and Harvey, A.G. (1996) 'Posttraumatic stress reactions in volunteer firefighters', *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 9(1), pp 51-62.

- Death

778 volunteers are commemorated on the RNLI Memorial who have lost their own lives trying to save others [<http://www.rnli.org.uk>].

BENEFIT FALLACY

The Criminal Records Bureau uses the following definition from **The Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002** of a volunteer as

"a person engaged in an activity which involves spending time, unpaid (except for travel and other approved out-of-pocket expenses), doing something which aims to benefit some third party other than or in addition to a close relative".

Statutory Instrument 2002 No. 233, regulation 2.

BENEFIT FALLACY

“perhaps doing volunteer work is less important for well-being than the particular conditions of the work that is done”

Thoits, P.A. and Hewitt, L.N. (2001) ‘Volunteer Work and Well-Being’, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 42(2), pp. 115-131.

“Evidence about adverse effects from social programs is hard to find in part because of a strong bias against reporting adverse effects of social programs. Authors of studies that fail to produce evidence of beneficial outcomes sometimes do not bother to submit their reports for publication.”

McCord, J (2003) ‘Cures That Harm: Unanticipated Outcomes of Crime Prevention Programs’, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 587, pp. 16-30.

SERVICE DELIVERY CONUNDRUM

The voluntary service delivery conundrum is posed by the need to manage the performance of volunteers to meet certain service standards set contractually yet having no agreed or binding means to do so.

QUESTIONS

- Could current government policy while in support of volunteering actually damage it in the long term,
- is action needed to protect volunteers from the effects of misconduct,
- what is and what isn't included in the concept of volunteering?

THANK YOU!

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