

Work Focussed Volunteer Placement Scheme

Between April 2009 and November 2010, BTCV in partnership with CSV, v and Volunteering England introduced over **50,000** people to the concept of volunteering and supported over **20,000** of them to take their first steps as a volunteer. This was achieved through their successful delivery of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Work Focussed Volunteer Placement Scheme across England.

The scheme was launched as part of the government's Recession Action Plan, introduced to counter the expected increase in unemployment. It brokered Jobseekers Allowance customers who had been unemployed for six months into suitable work focussed volunteering placements. Providing people who had recently left the job market with additional support and solutions to maintain and develop their skills until suitable work opportunities became available.

After a short period of consultation between the Office for the Third Sector and key organisations, it was agreed that BTCV, CSV, v and Volunteering England would work together to deliver the programme in England. The partnership then had a matter of weeks to work with DWP to develop the programme from a concept into a viable and beneficial scheme.

Once the contract was awarded, there was a week to implement the programme across England. BTCV's National Programmes Team developed the systems and procedures required to enable the partnership to deliver a national network of dedicated brokers. This meant that on 6 April 2009 every Job Centre in England could refer customers to the programme.

The partnership viewed it as an opportunity to support volunteers and organisations looking at the programme figures that aim has certainly been achieved. We have also been able to support volunteers into training an employment, a benefit never factored into the initial programme design.

The numbers

- 1** week the time from contract award to programme launch
- 4** the number of national partners who delivered the programme
- 6** weeks the time from programme conception to contract award
- 16** the percentage of people identified in DWP research who had moved into employment after engaging with the scheme
- 38** JCP districts supported through the scheme
- 170** broker offices across the country
- 577** JCP offices supported across England
- 8852** number of placement organisations involved

In addition to the programme outcomes we wanted to develop closer relationships between the sector, the Department for Work and Pensions and Job Centres by demonstrating our abilities to deliver large scale national contracts. The programme development, delivery and management skills of the partnership have been praised by DWP and it has been recognised that the voluntary sector is collaborative, creative, efficient and professional.

We have opened the eyes of customers and JCP staff to how volunteering can not only act as a vital stepping stone on peoples' journey back to work, but a huge leap forward into becoming active citizens.



Dominic Martin from Ipswich volunteered with Purple Moments.



"If it wasn't for Dominic we would be further behind in the development of the instruments. Dominic was instrumental in moving the project forward!!"

Gordon Soames – Purple Moments

Cindy Jones from Brighton was placed by CSV at Shelter Charity Shop in Western Road, Brighton.



"This is the best thing that has happened to me. I just wish I had become a volunteer sooner."

Liam Hendery from Hemel Hempstead volunteered with Turning Point.

"An opportunity came up for a full time job as a support worker with Turning Point while I was there and the staff encouraged me to apply for it. I now work full time for Turning Point and really enjoy it. Thanks to the Volunteer Centre for all their help."



"My name is Sarah, I am 21 and I came along to VCS Lincoln in October 2009. I hope to carry on volunteering here and that the valuable volunteering I'm doing will help me in my search for work and that I will be able to pick up some new skills and a reference."

"The scheme has given us the opportunity to support more people on their journey back into paid work, by enabling them to build their confidence and gain new skills through volunteering. It has also helped to cement the already good working relationship we had with our local Job Centre."

Dianne Slapp – Lincoln Broker

Mark Goves from Essex was referred to the programme after being made redundant after a long career in the city.



"I would like to thank all the staff at BTCV for all their help and support throughout and without them I would not be in such a strong position as I am now to achieving my overall goal."

Ian from Enfield took up a volunteer placement with London Action Trust.

"I now have a paid job but I put that I had volunteered on my CV and I think it looked really impressive and gave me something to talk about at interview. I would really recommend it to other people who are in the position that I was."



"Volunteering has given me the opportunity to apply my existing skills. I have gained valuable key skills from volunteering, completed National Awards such as V50, enhanced my CV and helped myself return to the employment sector."

Gillian Adams from Maidstone volunteered at a CSV Make a Difference Day event.

"This was my first time volunteering and I would definitely volunteer again."

"This project has been very beneficial and I would be more than happy to do this again."

Debbie – Walsall Hospice

Sue Came from Finchley had been unemployed for nine months prior to being referred to the programme. She started volunteering as an Administrator for BTCV's Camden Green Gym, which led onto conservation volunteering.



"Volunteering at BTCV firstly amazingly led to a paid position that I loved and secondly opened up conservation for me."

Michael Topping from Atherton volunteered with Heybrook Music and as a result secured a paid position with them.

"It has been a great experience getting back into work and having responsibilities again. The job is perfect for me as a musician and I actually enjoy coming into work. I would like to thank the staff at CSV for finding me the volunteer placement which led to this job."

"When you find the right place for someone and they enjoy it, it is really rewarding!"

Helen Lomax BTCV Broker for Merseyside and Cheshire

"It has a great impact on the project because it could not run without volunteers. BTCV referring volunteers means that new, different people who we would not have reached can get involved and that is brilliant! It isn't easy to contact volunteers and promote what we do so BTCV does that for us!"

Nino Mancini – Congleton Preservation Trust

Tom Flood

BTCV Chief Executive



BTCV is delighted with the success of the scheme. We are delighted that thousands of people have started on their volunteering journey and I believe for many this is the beginning of a lifelong volunteering commitment

As a sector we are committed to embedding the lessons and experiences from the programme into our future

work as individual organisations, as a partnership and in our relationships with national and local government.

It is fantastic, that this is being taken forward by the future government with Jobcentre Plus staff now positive about the benefits of volunteering and considering it an excellent tool to help customers improve their employability. I hope in the future government will support people from all sectors of society to benefit from volunteering and in turn benefit their local communities through the power of voluntary action.

Bill Garland

CSV Deputy Executive Director



CSV has long believed and demonstrated that well designed volunteering opportunities help individuals as well as making an impact upon the community. It is pleasing that through this large scale DWP initiative, JCP customers were able to participate positively in volunteering at a difficult time in their lives. Volunteering has acted as a stepping stone for

many customers as they had the chance to learn or retain both hard and soft skills, search for work and for some, find a job.

Terry Ryall

v Chief Executive



“Unemployment is a massive problem in the UK, affecting millions of people, and wide-ranging solutions are needed. There can be no doubt that volunteering provides a vital lifeline to people, providing them with valuable skills and experience to get into work. Research shows that employers believe those engaged in volunteering are more employable, and demand for

volunteering opportunities from people is high. I am proud of what our brokers, partners and other colleagues have all achieved to assist people in their search for employment.”

Justin Davis Smith

Volunteer England Chief Executive



“The scheme was a great success. It raised the profile of volunteering as a key element of public policy; it enabled unemployed people to access volunteering in a more streamlined and coordinated fashion; and it strengthened the relationship between the local volunteering infrastructure and Jobcentre Plus.

While volunteering is a common activity for many, this scheme has enabled tens of thousands of JCP customers to experience the power of volunteering, often for the first time, and has provided them with an opportunity to learn new skills and better equip them for the labour market.”

A final note of thanks needs to go to the programme managers at each of the partner organisations who have been instrumental in the success of the programme. The quality and effectiveness of the programme management systems implemented as part of the scheme have been noted by all partners and the Department for Work and Pensions contract team.

