

**STEP TOGETHER**

**Step Together Volunteering**

**Greater Manchester Project  
for disadvantaged young women  
& girls aged 16-25**

**Evaluation Report**

**November 2020**

# STEP TOGETHER

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## Introduction

Step Together Volunteering's mission is to enable people to change their lives through active involvement in their community<sup>1</sup>. Step Together works closely with local council leaving care teams, family intervention projects, probation services, local charities, community groups and support groups, and larger charities such as the Princes Trust. The organisation uses a model of one to one coaching and mentoring support to help marginalised and vulnerable people find volunteering placements that meet their needs and interests.

Step Together focuses on the benefits that volunteering itself can bring to volunteers: building self-belief and confidence, employability skills, developing positive social networks and being involved in the local community. This can result in improved mental and physical well-being and increased transition to education and employment opportunities.

In 2017, Step Together was awarded a grant of £133,394 from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) from the Tampon Tax Fund to undertake a three year project to improve the lives of disadvantaged women and girls in Greater Manchester.

An external evaluation was commissioned during the final year of the project and this report presents the findings. The evaluation ran from December 2019 to November 2020.

## Structure of the report

The report is presented in eight sections:

- Section 1: Project aims, objectives and evaluation method
- Section 2: The context and need for the project in Greater Manchester
- Section 3: Results - targets and outputs
- Section 4: Project outcomes for clients
- Section 5: Strengths and challenges of the support process
- Section 6: Outcomes for other stakeholders
- Section 7: Conclusion and recommendations
- Section 8: Appendices

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.step-together.org.uk/pages/11-our-strategy>

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## Section 1: Aims and objectives

The objectives of the project, as set out in the DCMS Grant Offer Letter, were to work with 40-60 disadvantaged young women annually to support them into volunteering placements to help improve their lives and offer them a more positive future. The young women were aged 16-25, with multiple and complex needs, including leaving care, recovering from drug and alcohol misuse, experience of domestic violence and abuse, neglect, depression and other mental health issues. Although the backgrounds and situations of young clients can be very different, they face similar challenges. These include:

- poor educational outcomes;
- inadequate support mechanisms;
- low aspirations / lack of motivation;
- low self-esteem / lack of confidence.<sup>2</sup>

Step Together believes in the power of volunteering to transform lives – not only for the hugely valuable work that is done by volunteers in their communities, but for the positive impact that volunteering can have on the individual who volunteers. There is evidence that volunteering can support individuals in:

1. Gaining employability skills;
2. Improving overall health;
3. Reducing stress;
4. Supporting personal development;
5. Increasing happiness;
6. Making friends and expanding networks; and
7. Strengthening communities.

The project was delivered through an outreach post based in Greater Manchester and two part time staff members were recruited. The role of the Volunteering Project Managers (VPM) involved<sup>3</sup>:

- Providing one to one support, helping young clients to build confidence and self-belief; explore individual skills, interests, aspirations; identify a future path; develop skills such as completing application forms, updating CVs and by attending interviews;
- Researching and brokering tailored individual volunteering placements that respond to the beneficiaries' needs, interests and ambitions; that challenge negative self-perceptions and support personal growth; that help to develop aspirations; and that help clients to build positive relationships with the communities in which they live;

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.step-together.org.uk/pages/16-supporting-young-people>

<sup>3</sup> Taken from DCMS Tampon Tax Grant Offer Letter 11/10/2017. Annex 1 Project Description/and Eligible Expenditure

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- Providing coaching and mentoring support post-placement, supporting clients into education or employment, or helping clients more generally to move forward in their lives.

## Intended outcomes

**For clients**, the project set out some intended outcomes of the intervention. These were for disadvantaged young women to have:

- Improved self-belief, motivation and self-esteem, leading to more positive attitudes and behaviours;
- Improved, positive, social networks leading to increased integration into the community and increased resilience;
- Improved relevant skills, experience and focus, leading to increased long-term employment prospects;
- A more positive attitude, more confidence, and greater sense of responsibility as a member of their community, leading to more informed lifestyle choices.

As well as the outcomes for clients, we surmised there would also be supplementary outcomes for other stakeholders and partners in the process, even if they had not been formally set out as part of the grant offer. To this end, the evaluation also explored the outcomes of the intervention for a) referral organisations and b) organisations/settings where volunteers were placed.

## Method

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach to understand whether and how these targets and outcomes were reached through the project. This involved:

- A **planning and preparation stage** in December 2019 to January 2020, resulting in an inception report and logic model (Appendix A) for use in the evaluation, along with the development of privacy notices and consent forms (Appendix B). Research tools were prepared - including a semi-structured interview topic guide for different stakeholders and young people (Appendix C) and an online questionnaire as an alternative option for clients who preferred not to be interviewed (Appendix D).
- A **fieldwork phase** that ran from February to October 2020, involving observation and site visits initially, followed by interviews with clients and partner organisations;
- An **analysis and reporting phase** from July 2020 to November 2020.

## Adaptations to the method

In the final quarter of the delivery stage of the project, the Covid-19 pandemic affected working practices and delivery of services. In March 2020, Step Together staff had to stop providing face to face services to clients and stakeholders and subsequently, staff members

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were furloughed. Staff in partner organisations were also affected, meaning it was difficult to contact representatives who referred clients or those working in volunteering settings. We were also keenly aware that requests for evaluation feedback should not place individuals and organisations under further strain in a time of great uncertainty. The first UK-wide lockdown in March 2020 affected the project's collection of outcome data in the final quarter and the planned approach to the evaluation was reviewed. The proposed method of site visits with staff, visits to volunteering placements and face to face interviews was replaced by telephone interviews and email questionnaires. Client feedback was gathered by telephone interview if the client felt comfortable and confident enough, or by text and email for those who preferred to send feedback in this way.

Fieldwork was originally due to be completed in July 2020 but was extended through to October, to undertake interviews with referral agencies and volunteer placement representatives who had been unable to participate earlier due to their changed circumstances. Details of the full method and the logic model are shown in Appendix A.

## Section 2: The context and need for the project

### *Contribution to wider policy agendas and strategies*

Greater Manchester Combined Authority Children and Young People's Plan<sup>4</sup> reports that Greater Manchester is home to 898,000 children and young people under the age of 25 and this number is growing. The under 25s cohort is larger than the England average by two per cent, or 18,700 children. This population is forecast to rise to a plateau of 945,000 in 2032, which equates to a 5.6% increase, or 50,000 more children, compared to 2018.

There is a clear need for the type of support that can be provided through the project. Children growing up in Greater Manchester are from diverse backgrounds and communities and face many challenges. Some of the comparisons made to the UK in the Children and Young People's plan include:

- Children growing up in Greater Manchester have a lower life expectancy than the national average;
- More children in Greater Manchester live in poverty;
- Children have worse health outcomes including more children with obesity and more children with asthma;
- There are increasing numbers of looked after children in Greater Manchester;
- The average Attainment 8 (A8) score for Greater Manchester Key Stage 4 pupils is below the average score for the state-funded sector in England;
- A higher proportion of 16-17 year-olds in Greater Manchester are not in education, employment and training compared with the national average;

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/2115/gmca-children-young-peoples-plan-2019-2022.pdf>

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- A higher proportion of 16-19 year-olds in Greater Manchester are unemployed, compared with the national average.

Despite this difficult start point, skill levels across the region have been improving, although 1 in 10 had no qualifications at all in 2018. Manchester City Council's 'Our Manchester Youth Offer Strategy 2020-23'<sup>5</sup>, and in particular, its Theme 2: Highly Skilled Young People focusses on addressing this gap. The strategy covers young people up to the age of 25 and notes that "Preparing young people for adulthood with broad horizons and realising aspirations is essential...Ensuring young people have the information, advice, guidance, employability skills, resilience, and independent learning skills is vital for young people to lead productive and successful lives" (p14). Manchester City Council proposes to:

1. Create youth-offer opportunities that support young people to succeed in education and employment.
2. Work with youth-offer service providers to embed the Skills For Life programme across youth-offer service delivery plans.
3. Ensure young people have access to youth-offer provision within their neighbourhoods, which provides opportunities to develop the Skills For Life they need to succeed.
4. Adopt a neighbourhood focus to developing youth-offer provision that enables young people to prosper from the regeneration and economic growth of local communities.
5. Champion the development and promotion of volunteering opportunities for young people to make positive contributions, alongside developing new skills and gaining experience.

The Step Together project's use of volunteering can play a part in each of these five aims, helping young people gain experience and skills for employment, particularly those in need of specialised support. All of Step Together's clients *"can be described as having complex needs. We define complex needs as 'two or more issues affecting physical, mental, social or financial wellbeing'. These may include mental ill-health, problematic substance or alcohol misuse, current/historical offending, long-term unemployment, critical injury and trauma; experience of domestic violence and abuse; and problems finding and maintaining housing"*<sup>6</sup>.

A representative who referred clients described the young women who were being supported through the project: *"Unsure of what they would like to do as a career, lacking in confidence, mental health difficulties, lack of work experience to put on application forms or talk about in interviews. I would refer those who are not ready to access employment, education and training straight away...those who need some hand holding to access opportunities"*. The project's recognition of volunteering both for its own sake and as a mechanism for achieving wider aims<sup>7</sup> is an important service that has the potential to contribute to local and regional strategic goals.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/directory\\_record/261572/our\\_manchester\\_youth\\_offer\\_strategy/category/1479/childrens\\_services](https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/directory_record/261572/our_manchester_youth_offer_strategy/category/1479/childrens_services)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.step-together.org.uk/pages/2-our-work>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.step-together.org.uk/pages/25-the-power-of-volunteering>

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## Current levels of volunteering

The Community Life Survey for 2018/19 notes that The Office for Civil Society (OCS) within DCMS sees volunteering as one element of its core remit of social action: the process of people coming together to help improve their lives and solve the problems that are important in their communities<sup>8</sup>. The Community Life Survey for 2018/19 reports that 38% of adults aged 16+ took part in any volunteering at least once a month and 62% took part in any volunteering at least once in the last year. While the yearly percentage has fallen from 70% since 2013/14, regular volunteering (at least once a month) has remained more stable.

Data is also available from the Taking Part Survey<sup>9</sup> for 2018/19 and a joint report of the results of both surveys has been compiled. Both surveys show that females are more likely to volunteer than males, and both the 16-24 age group and older adults aged 65-74 are groups with higher levels of volunteering activity. However, the Taking Part survey also shows there are clear regional differences and volunteering levels are affected by the level of deprivation in an area. Figure 1 shows how volunteering rates can be affected by these factors.

Figure 1: % of adults aged 16+ volunteering in the last 12 months by region and level of deprivation



Manchester City Council's website notes the high levels of deprivation in the city. In the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), Manchester ranks 6<sup>th</sup> out of 326 local authorities

<sup>8</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/820610/Community\\_Life\\_Survey\\_2018-19\\_report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/820610/Community_Life_Survey_2018-19_report.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taking-part-201819-statistical-release> The surveys cannot be directly compared as they use a different methodology: the Community Life Survey uses a self-completion questionnaire, delivered online or on paper, while the Taking Part Survey is conducted face-to-face. See [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/828832/Focus\\_on\\_volunteering\\_by\\_age\\_and\\_gender\\_Community\\_Life\\_Survey\\_and\\_Taking\\_Part\\_Survey\\_-\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/828832/Focus_on_volunteering_by_age_and_gender_Community_Life_Survey_and_Taking_Part_Survey_-_Report.pdf)



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in England, where 1 is the most deprived<sup>10</sup>. People in the North West are least likely to volunteer compared to other areas in England and volunteering levels are adversely affected by the level of deprivation here. Step Together's project is therefore targeting an area where volunteering is far less prevalent and efforts to increase the number of volunteers could benefit these communities.

## Section 3: Results

### *Targets and outcomes*

In this section, we assess the progress made over three years towards meeting the outputs and outcomes as set out in the grant application and progress monitoring procedures.

**Quarterly targets.** The project was required to provide DCMS with quarterly progress monitoring updates. A number of specific progress targets were measured and reported by the project team to the funder. These were:

- 1-1 In depth support for 12 clients over a 3 month reporting period.
- 90% of clients report improvements in wellbeing.
- 85% clients report improvements in employability.

**Annual target numbers** were for at least 40 clients to be supported in the first full year of the project (2018) and at least 40 clients in the second year. The project hoped to have supported 100 clients in all by March 2020.

Targets earlier in the timeline of the project (up to June 2018) also included the development of referral routes, with up to six new routes to be in place. In the final year, targets also included commissioning and undertaking this evaluation.

Project monitoring information was collated in Step Together's existing case management system (IIZUKA) to manage the programme. This data was exported and analysed to assess the numbers of clients supported and their progress against the project targets.

By March 2020, the project had supported 94 clients, slightly short of a final target set at the project outset for 100 clients directly supported. In the last month of the period covered by the DCMS grant, the provision of services became affected by Covid-19 and organisations across the network had to furlough staff members. However, client cases were not closed, and as restrictions were lifted over the summer direct support for clients resumed, using online meetings, telephone calls, texts and emails.

47 clients were supported during 2018, and 55 in 2019, exceeding the target of at least 40 over a year. It should be noted that some of the 47 clients supported in 2018 continued receiving support in 2019 and are therefore counted in both years. Pathway assessment

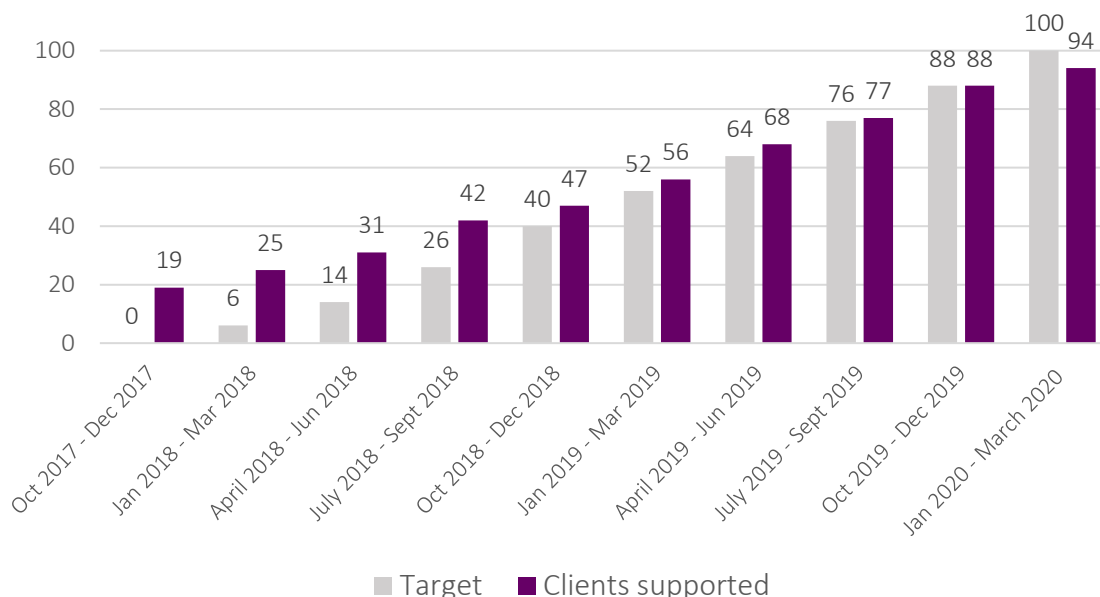
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<sup>10</sup> Manchester City Council: Statistics and Intelligence  
[https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/200088/statistics\\_and\\_intelligence/2168/deprivation](https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/200088/statistics_and_intelligence/2168/deprivation)

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data shows that clients are supported for an average of seven months. The support period ranged from one or two months, through to over two years, depending on the client's needs. The capacity of the individual VPMs to take on additional new clients would also need to be considered. The data showed that 15% of clients had been supported for longer than a year. Figure 3 shows quarterly progress from October 2017 to March 2020.

**Figure 3: Clients Supported - quarterly targets and outputs**



Demographic information was available for 80 clients. Table 1 below shows three protected characteristics and the percentage of clients in each category\*.

**Table 1: Greater Manchester clients - demographic information**

Age	%	Ethnicity	%	Disability	%
16-17	30	White British	72	Learning disability/difficulty	18
18-19	28	Asian/Pakistani	10	Other mental disability	50
20-21	24	Black British/other Black background	9	Physical disability and/or mobility issue	8
22-23	13	African	5	Any disability reported	49
24 and over	6	Mixed race and Other	4	No disability reported	51

\*Categories have been grouped to ensure individual clients cannot be identified.  
Note several clients reported more than one disability category.

While Step Together considers every individual to be different, the young women aged 16-25 supported by this project showed some different types of vulnerability than other demographic groups. The issues they faced could often be about their relationships (with their family or with a partner) and there may be issues of domestic abuse. These young female individuals might be a more complex client cohort and can be more difficult to engage with. In relation to mental health, females were more likely to have a diagnosed

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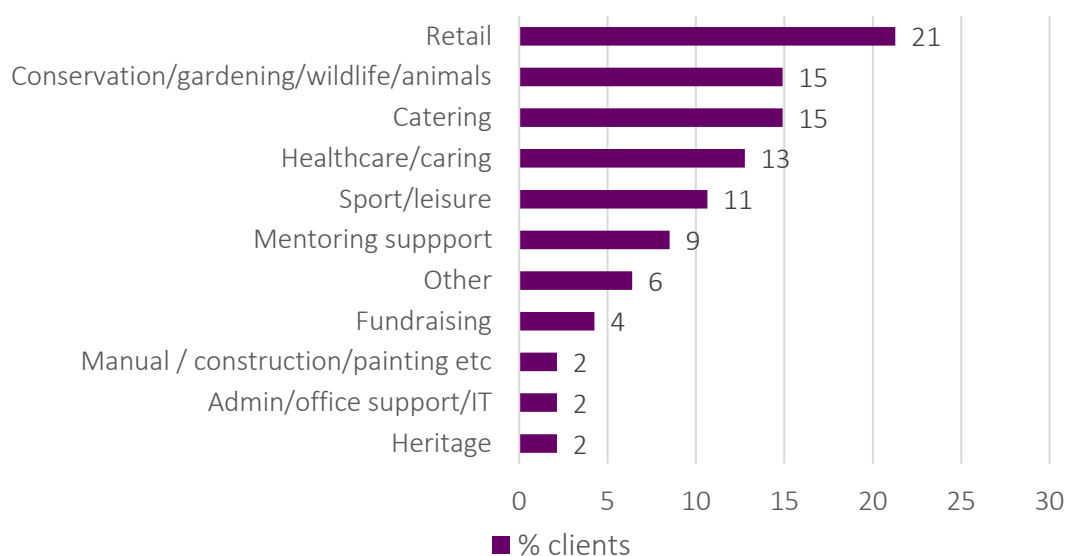
condition. Step Together also noted that females are also more likely to seek help, and therefore actively place themselves in a situation where they can actually get a diagnosis.

During this project, just under half (49%) of the clients supported by VPMs reported a mental health issue, learning difficulty or physical disability. Several clients reported multiple issues.

## Volunteering activity

By March 2020, **72** clients had volunteered as part of the programme of support. Volunteering activity took place in a wide range of areas, shown in Figure 4, and in at least 40 different settings. Over four fifths (81%) volunteered once a week or more often – with 49% taking part once a week and 32% several times a week.

**Figure 4: Volunteer placement categories**



Clients undertook a wide range of volunteering roles and volunteered in settings that were contributing to different population groups and communities. Roles were very varied and included retail skills such as customer service, use of tills, stock rotation; catering – with food preparation, cooking and food hygiene certification, to working with children, developing leadership skills and experience in planning sessions for youth and sports groups, Brownies, children with learning difficulties and pre-school age children. Volunteers also supported community groups for older people, at day care centres for people with disabilities and in health care and caring settings, such as supporting vulnerable people.

The volunteering support provided by clients is likely to have had a positive effect to groups and communities living in these communities. Through supporting disadvantaged young women to take part in volunteering, the project and the individual clients contribute to the themes and vision set out in Manchester City Council's 'Our Manchester Youth Offer Strategy 2020-23'.

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## Section 4: Project Outcomes - Clients

In this section we look at the progress towards the outcomes that were identified for clients at the project outset. Step Together measures client progress through **outcome** and **pathway assessments**. Permission is sought from the client for the organisation to use the information provided by clients in funding bids and publications. Outcome assessments completed by client and VPM measure 'soft' progress. Clients rate their level of agreement with a series of statements on how they feel since working with Step Together - whether they have improved levels of confidence; feel part of the community; feel positive about the future; have gained skills; and have increased resilience and ability to cope with challenges.

The project set two specific targets – for **90%** of clients to report improvements in wellbeing and for **85%** of clients report to improvements in employability. Although not possible to obtain outcome assessment data for all clients, Figure 5 summarises the results reported to DCMS in December 2019 for 34 clients, with these targets exceeded.

**Figure 5: Client outcomes December 2019**



As set out in Section 1, there were four specific client outcome areas that the project wanted to achieve:

- Improved self-belief, motivation and self-esteem, leading to more positive attitudes and behaviours;
- Improved, positive, social networks leading to increased integration into the community and increased resilience;
- Improved relevant skills, experience and focus, leading to increased long-term employment prospects;
- A more positive attitude, more confidence, and greater sense of responsibility as a member of their community, leading to more informed lifestyle choices.

We explore each of these in turn.

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## 1. Improved self-belief, motivation and self-esteem, leading to more positive attitudes and behaviours.

*“They have helped me do things which I previously felt uncomfortable about doing” (Client).*

Meetings between the VPM and clients are noted to record clients’ thoughts and feedback – for example, what they thought about volunteering and the support – were they anxious, or confident, were they enjoying the experience? What did they need from the VPM? As well as client data, regular feedback is gathered at an organisational level in team meetings, collecting quotes, social media feedback and testimonies supplied by partners working with Step Together. Step Together uses a **Pathway Assessment** process to provide a measure of client progress against seven areas:

1. Integration into community;
2. Personal relationships;
3. Aspirations;
4. Social networks;
5. Addressing any other issues (e.g. drug abuse, homelessness, violence/abuse);
6. Education/Training;
7. Employment.

Clients are given a score of between 1 and 10, where 10 indicates a more positive assessment. Clients are assessed around the outset of the support journey and later, towards the case closed date. The initial score and the highest score allocated for each pathway is recorded, and data was available for 79 clients. Table 2 below shows the sum of the scores for each pathway.

**Table 2: Combined pathway assessment data the Greater Manchester project**

Pathway	Initial assessment score	Highest assessment score	Change score
1. Better Integration into Communities	191	289	32
2. Personal relationships (incl. family, children, spouse, parents)	120	149	19
3. Aspirations	326	393	25
4. Social networks	125	167	18
5. Other issues (e.g. drug abuse, homelessness, violence/abuse)	251	287	18
6. Education / Training	213	246	15
7. Employment	112	135	11

The clients scored highly in terms of their pathway assessments for *aspiration*, while starting from a low base in terms of their personal relationships. The young women often had problems in their relationships with family members and some were at risk of homelessness. Given the issues they faced, it is positive to see scores for aspirations remain

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high. While only a small proportion of clients had agreed to share data on outcome measures, it is encouraging to see that all these clients indicated that since working with Step Together they were feeling 'positive about the future' and were feeling 'better about themselves'. They also reported they were more motivated to change their life.

A referral agency reported that they feel the support offered by Step Together is particularly appropriate for their service users, recognising the issues they faced, with low levels of self-belief: *"A lot of the young people struggle with confidence in accessing work and this helps them to build on that"*. As one community association that placed clients in volunteering positions commented: *"Lovely ladies. They are quite young; it is their first foray into a workplace environment. They are all very receptive to things. I think that - you could tell there were other things going on in their lives. Sometimes they couldn't come in - but that's OK, we are flexible like that anyway so that's not really an issue. They are usually not with us long and usually work on reception - one or two months duration"*. The representative noted that some placement could be long standing, but usually they moved on because they had other commitments or were going on to different training.

## *Deema\**

Deema first met the VPM when they came to the hostel where she lives to meet her. She is interested in working in a hospital in the longer term. The VPM had helped her find a volunteering placement in a community centre where she helps on reception. She has been doing this for about a month and does 2 days a week for 5 hours at a time.

*"I enjoy it, really helpful"*. She had met people through volunteering and agreed she makes friends there. The skills she was developing she said were helpful, *"good for developing my language as English is not my first language"*. Deema told us that the VPM was helpful because she found the volunteer place and explained how to apply. Deema was aware that the VPM had helped others at the hostel. She has no concerns about volunteering and intends to carry on when she can (options were currently limited due to Covid-19). She hopes to do volunteering in a hospital and get paid work.

\* All names are changed to ensure confidentiality

## **2. Improved, positive, social networks leading to increased integration into the community and increased resilience.**

*"Step Together has really helped me with my confidence of going out and meeting new people. Also made me feel more confident to find volunteering" (Client).*

Pathway assessments show that the greatest difference in progress between initial score and highest score results from the measure for **better integration into communities**. This was the area where there was most likely to be a change in the client. However, assessments show that client's social networks and relationships have a low start point

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compared with some of the other pathways, suggesting that community integration and positive social connections are a key area where the project can start to make a difference. As noted above, clients often had difficult family circumstances, some were isolated, some may be asylum seekers and some may be on probation. The effects of the service for one client is shown below.

## *Charlotte\**

Charlotte is 24 and lives in Moss Side. She spoke about her mental health and difficulties she had with immediate family. Initially interested in childcare, she has also volunteered at a garden centre through the project but now has a goal of working in retail. At the time of interview, Charlotte had been volunteering once a week at a charity shop for four weeks, beginning by putting away DVDs but has now progressed to working on the till which she had wanted to do. Charlotte explained that in school, she picked art and childcare subjects so getting into retail hasn't been 'allowed' because she lacked the right skills, so volunteering makes a difference – *"you need experience so down the line this will help"*. She planned to commit to volunteer two days a week *"If you do 20 hours you get a certificate. It can go on the CV – which is good, because I've just got childcare on there at the moment and want experience of the till"*.

Charlotte didn't have too many concerns about volunteering but spoke about her general anxiety about new situations. *"What's good is that (VPM) will come with me when I go volunteering – for example she is about to come with me to the charity shop where I'm volunteering because it's new. Just find it hard to go somewhere for the first time. Sometimes difficult getting out of the house, I find it hard to socialise. But this is good as it's given me confidence to speak to people, because you have to"*. She mentioned how customers are starting to recognise her now and say hello and agreed that it was good to help out in the community.

Charlotte said that her volunteering experience was *"Really good – and you can turn up on the days you want to"*. She found the flexibility easier and *"more relaxed"* than her previous experience at the garden centre. *"Mostly elderly people come in. It's better to get experience of the till in this shop rather than somewhere like Primark"*. Charlotte also spoke about building a relationship with the manager of the charity shop and making new friends and social contacts: *"(Manager) is really nice. I have some issues at home and can talk to her and she offers me advice"*. As her experience progressed, she later told the VPM *"I really enjoyed it today, I met four new people and am going to go early next week for lunch with the other volunteers"*.

In the longer term, Charlotte feels volunteering will help her get a job and she was aware of how volunteering could help her address her confidence levels. She noted she needs to *"get better at my communication skills as well, find it difficult talking to people"*. It was encouraging that despite these issues, she took part in the evaluation and arranged a time to speak to an unknown researcher, communicating clearly and concisely, sounding positive and friendly.

When asked about her friends and family's opinion about volunteering, Charlotte was immediate and positive in her response: *"They think it's really good. The rest of my friends are in Uni or did different courses from childcare, so they think it's good. I'm closer to my gran – she says things like 'go for it' and 'push yourself'. She's proud of me for doing it"*.

Charlotte wanted to recommend *"that we need more people like (the VPM)!"*. Her long term plans were that: *"Probably I'd like to help other people - I'd like to do the same thing as (VPM)"*

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## 3. Improved relevant skills, experience and focus, leading to increased long-term employment prospects.

*“They have helped me feel more comfortable about working with young people”. (Client)*

Pathway assessment data in Table 2 shows that while clients made some progress towards employment, this was the lowest scored area of the seven considered. However, gaining employment was not an immediate goal of the intervention, rather a future intention, with the volunteering experience providing a basis for developing employability skills and experiences. As suggested by a referral agency, participation in volunteering opens up new experiences as a step to this longer term aspiration.

*“The service helps to get young people into work / training and ETE (Education, training and employment) by giving people a chance to experience environments that they may not have done without the support of the Step Together worker” (Referral agency).*

Volunteer placements can offer more formal training opportunities, as well as experience in a new setting with new people. One interviewee who offered volunteer placements to clients gave an example of the support they offered: *“We have the induction process. I always make sure I’m there when the young people are doing their volunteering sessions to check in on them every time. They have lots of training opportunities and for reception they are able to complete certified online training courses and also safeguarding”.*

Clients themselves reported some specific results for this outcome:

- *“Step Together has helped get me back on my feet and moving towards education and doing things despite my struggles with mental health”. (Client)*
- *“I really enjoyed it [volunteering] again, I think this Friday I get to go on the tills which will be better to help out, but I am definitely going to stick it out and hopefully get a job or have a good experience by the end of it”. The client gave further feedback a few weeks later: “I really like [manager] she is funny, I am on the tills now and its pretty easy” (Client).*

Feedback from the young person below shows some of the challenges and hopes from the experience.



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*Ellie\**

Ellie is 17 and became a client with Step Together just before lockdown in March 2020. Over an email conversation, she provided feedback on her early experiences of the support offered and highlights some of the issues and barriers she faces. Despite the barriers, she intends to carry on volunteering in the future. Ellie is interested in volunteering within a childcare or care home environment.

***How did the VPM help you?***

She has called me every week and she was really nice. When I was nervous about coursework or CAMHS, (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) she'd talk to me each week about them and ask if I needed any help. (VPM) has also been sending me newsletters each week with some volunteering options on it. (VPM) was supposed to do some travel training with me, but because of Covid-19, we weren't able to. Travelling is something I still struggle with and it will be a big problem in about 2 weeks, when I am supposed to start my level 2 at college.

***What do you think will be the benefits from volunteering?***

I think that I will gain more experience and become more confident speaking to people. I believe that I will gain more skills that I will need in the future.

***What are the challenges or concerns about volunteering?***

As I am struggling with travel, it will have to be local. I'm not a very confident person, especially talking to someone face to face and I believe I will really struggle finding what I want to say...

***Are you hoping to get new skills and/or paid work?***

Both. For the time being, I would like to get new skills but in the future I hope that it will eventually lead into doing paid work.

#### **4. A more positive attitude, more confidence, and greater sense of responsibility as a member of their community, leading to more informed lifestyle choices.**

*“Because of Step Together, I feel more confident and capable about the future and while I’m not well enough to continue volunteering at the moment it definitely helped me feel more accomplished and optimistic”. (Client)*

A common theme throughout interviews with clients and stakeholders was how the project and the volunteering experience had helped the young women become more confident. The one to one nature of the mentoring support was a clear help in this respect. When positive behaviour occurs, this is emphasised by the VPM, encouraging clients to do things such as maintaining good communication channels. Referral partners spoke about how the process opened up new ideas and options for clients. *“It has been a good source of support and has*

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*enabled the service user to become more confident and feel supported in a role they may not have opted to do if they didn't have that support" (Referral agency).*

The improvements in positivity were noted by one referral representative.

*"One girl always sticks in my mind who I was supporting – she was desperate to do something with her time but she had nothing – she had nothing she could put on a CV and so I mentioned Step Together. It (the volunteer placement) changed her completely – she went from being negative and withdrawn, not positive about her outlook on life at all to being completely different – positive, upbeat. Another girl was the same. What they are getting out of this project is a wonderful thing – opens new doors, they see new people – they might be anxious and nervous at first from trying it but they soon change. Everyone says such positive things about it – so it encourages the other girls then. It's a very good service".*

## **Afiya\***

Afiya is 24 and lives in a hostel North Manchester. She met with the VPM there and sees or speaks to her every week, sometimes every two weeks. English is not her first language, so a lack of awareness of what was available in the community and how find out was a barrier to making changes. Afiya is interested in childcare: *"Childcare. It's all I've wanted to do. I told the VPM and it was good. She is very nice. Really really happy with (VPM name). She explains really well. I'm so happy when I speak with (VPM name). She is helpful, tells me about how it all works".*

When asked how she felt about volunteering, she said she felt *"Interested. I feel happy"*. Afiya is in touch with family and they were pleased she will be volunteering, as were her friends at college who think it is a good thing to do. Due to the Covid-19 situation, Afiya was in the process of completing forms and waiting for a timetable for when she could start her volunteering sessions.

Developing confidence in young people is a common aim for many partners. One representative from a setting where volunteers were placed noted that Step Together's goals were the same kind of areas they wanted to address as an organisation. *"It is lovely to see the change. They are all a bit nervous on the first day and seeing them become more confident and relaxed as the weeks go on. That's the best bits – seeing that change in how the young women approach things" (Representative from a community organisation where clients volunteered).*

Improvements in positivity were clear from clients' own feedback:

- *"They are really caring and thoughtful when it comes to your needs and abilities. And that it's always 1:1 work." (Client)*
- *"Step Together gave me a fantastic volunteering opportunity with a group called Everyone Can" (Client)*
- *"You feel normal and happy" (Client)*

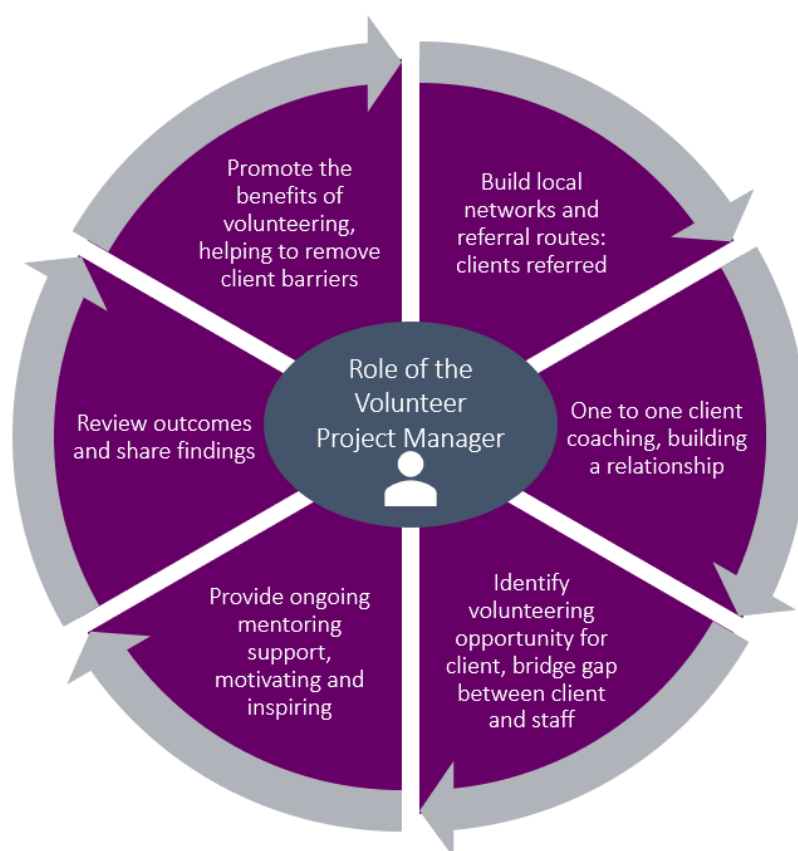
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## Section 5: The support process

In this section we look at the strengths and challenges of the support process before assessing the results and outcomes for other stakeholders in referral agencies and volunteer placement settings. How does the process work – what are the skills required and who is involved in getting clients the right support?

There are a number of activities undertaken by the VPM as part of their support to clients. Figure 6 shows some of the categories involved in the day to day work. The process is not entirely linear, but always contains these actions to support the client’s journey.

**Figure 6: Role of the Volunteer Project Manager**



### ***Building networks and referral routes***

During the first year of the project, VPMs needed to spend time researching potential referral partners and volunteering opportunities in Greater Manchester, building a network of contacts with existing referral organisations and other agencies working with young women who might be supported by the project. The target was to establish six new referral routes as part of the grant offer.

The VPM’s work involved:

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- Attending events, and network meetings, such as Greater Manchester Community of Voluntary Organisations and raising awareness of Step Together;
- Cold calling agencies/local organisations to extend the links and opportunities for young people where needed;
- Working with charities and community groups to remove barriers to volunteering for people with complex needs, challenging stigma and promoting the value these individuals can bring to organisations;

Clients were then referred to Step Together via a new or existing referral route. The VPM arranges a meeting with the client and referral representative, and the journey towards volunteering begins.

The target for developing new referral routes through the project was greatly exceeded. By March 2018, client referrals have been received from 10 different agencies: Salford Next Steps, Wigan Leaving Care Team, Knowsley Leaving Care Team, Permona Gardens, Greenbank, Bolton Sixth Form, Trafford Transitions Team, Stockport Leaving Care, Pure Innovations and Wigan Leaving Care Team. Progress monitoring updates to DCMS showed that **new** referral routes had been established with a further 13 organisations, including: Women MATTA, Women's Housing Action Group, Tameside Women's Centre and Women of Worth.

By June 2018, new referral routes had been established with a further 11 organisations over this quarter: Manchester Young Lives; GMYN: Greater Manchester Youth Network; Manchester Community Spirit; Rio Ferdinand Foundation; Together Women's Project Salford (TWP); Education and Advice Service Stockport; Mosaic Stockport; Salford Women's centre; Salford Youth alliance; M13 youth project; and BHA. There were also two self-referrals.

By the end of the project, **38** different organisations had referred clients – with organisations such as Stockport Council making referrals from different departments.

The development and maintenance of referral networks has been a clear strength and the referral process appears to be working effectively, despite the need for it to be flexible enough to meet the needs of different individuals and organisations. A careers advisor working with 16-18 year olds commented of the service: *"I made a referral and gave some background information with the young person's consent. We then arranged to all meet up to discuss how Step Together could help. (The VPM) then met with the young person following this and kept in touch with progress via emails. Referral to seeing the young person was quick, this is important so the person doesn't change their mind".* Another organisation – a mental health charity for young people - commented that the process was *"Really quick and easy!"*

Clearly the work involved in maintaining good relationships with partners in the referral process will reach a certain capacity where it is not feasible to continue to develop new pathways. It may be useful for future reviews to consider which referral pathways are

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working most effectively, and why. This may help to understand what staff resources are required in order to ensure effective collaborations are in place that contribute to organisational aims and those young people most in need of support.

## ***One to one coaching provision***

The **one to one coaching and relationship building stage** is key to a successful outcome for the client and involves the VPM building a relationship with the client and their family or support network where relevant. The VPM talks and listens to the client to identify their interests, issues, and to explore their motivations and goals.

This process could take several weeks or more before a client is in a position to volunteer at all. VPMs noted that some young people are more chaotic and vulnerable and requires a lot of support, with some needing more 'hand-holding' to get to the point of going to appointments and trying out volunteering opportunities.

The skill and ability of the VPMs to build trust and get to know the different young women in this process were important. One VPM reflected that they felt that they could connect and get on well with young people, talking about how their role *"can bring the service to them"* rather than the client having to go out and seek it themselves or get over the barrier of having to go to a venue/appointment. The referral agencies spoken to for this evaluation had observed these behaviours and the VPMs' ability to engage with different individuals and put them at ease. One who noted this skill (and emailed a note as part of their feedback for the evaluation) said: *"Just to add that I found (VMP) really easy to talk to and she was able to quickly build rapport with the young person that I referred, who struggles with new people"*.

This aspect of the support process can be resource intensive and is to an extent, 'invisible' work, but essential to achieving project outcomes. A referral agency noted: *"Because of the complex nature of some service users it is a massive help that one to one work with clients can be completed – which is time consuming but is a really valuable part of what Step Together offer"* (Probation Service).

## ***Identifying a volunteering opportunity for the client***

Here, the VPM can **bridge the gap between client and staff/supervisors at the placement**, making the initial contact and helping to arrange suitable interviews and appointments. Many of the young women supported would find it difficult to approach such a situation independently and can be anxious about meeting new people. Others may not have the means or awareness of how to find out about an opportunity, even if they are confident enough to make contact. The VPM aims to find a volunteering position that matches the client's interests as far as possible and/or can support them in developing the relevant skills and experience they need for their future goals. If the client has expressed interest in volunteering in a field that the VPM is not familiar with, additional research is undertaken to find a suitable opportunity or to identify an opportunity that could provide transferable skills and experiences.

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This can involve the VPM being continually involved in researching suitable opportunities for the young person that meet their interests and goals. The location of the opportunity also has to be practical: regular attendance is unlikely to be achieved if the young person is incurring long travel times and costs that will be unaffordable. One agency noted this as a strength: *“The needs of the young person are considered and something suitable found, rather than fitting them into placements that already exist. Very flexible, meeting in a location suitable for the young person, finding an opportunity within their local area (often these people don’t want to travel far)”*.

One interviewee who placed some volunteers from the project noted that the VPM role and ongoing support was beneficial:

*“She is a contact to speak to and she supports by doing the coordination of getting the young person into the placement, and she is there to discuss any issues with. It is also nice for the volunteers as she usually comes with them first time and will also drop in at times later on. It is good for the young person to have the continuity – not just a complete handover and good to have someone else checking in – it is another support system for the volunteer to be checking that progress” (Representative from a volunteer placement setting).*

*“They (VPMs) help me all of the time, take me to placements, other agencies just told me the address and made myself go all by myself but with Step Together, working with (VPM) has made me more confident as I know Step Together staff thought about my safety and made sure I am happy with the placements we go and see or not” (Client).*

This hands on, one to one support process appears to be working well and is meeting the needs of the clients and other stakeholders involved.

## **Providing mentoring support**

Part of the project aims to motivate and inspire clients to volunteer in their communities, with a view to this helping them feel valued as contributing members of society and to build new social networks. Mentoring activities usually include:

- Maintaining regular contact with client, and where necessary, their parent/guardian/staff at their place of residence.
- Helping the client prepare a CV and develop their interview techniques.
- Attending the client’s interview/induction for their volunteering placement.
- Providing feedback and coaching on the interview process, a skill that can be drawn on in future.
- Supporting the client with any paperwork required to volunteer, such as DBS checks.
- Helping the client find and travel to the location of the volunteering placement, giving travel training where required.
- Escorting client to ongoing volunteering sessions when needed – for example helping clients with very low confidence/motivation levels who might otherwise drop out.

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- Maintaining communication with all parties rather than a final handover, including visiting client at their volunteer placement.
- Completing outcome assessments to monitor progress and to collect data to share with funders.

The whole approach is flexible and the support offered is always tailored to the client's own needs. This type of support benefited both the volunteer setting staff members and the individual clients. A representative from a volunteer placement setting reported that Step Together could help them by providing *“Support where we don't have the resources to spend time sourcing and staying with them (clients) at their placements”*. This was reflected in a client interview:

*“She supports me – like today, she's not even supposed to be working today and she's gone out of her way to come with me. She's always texting before we meet with reminders, because I'm not very good at keeping in touch and she'll tell me about things (Young Female Client).”*

The time required before a client reaches the stage of volunteering varies greatly, and no assumptions are made about how long the process should take or whether the support on offer is time bound. This has been noted as a considerable strength. One referral agency reported that the VPM was *“efficient and welcoming”*. Following their referral, they noted their client had progressed a lot and was still working with the VPM to make future steps. Four months on, they provided further written feedback on the process, recording that the VPM was *“very approachable”*, that they were *“always kept in the loop and updated with progress”*. They noted that they had seen changes in the young person, who was now attending voluntary work and had *“great improvements with well-being”*. The support from the VPM was still continuing and they observed their client had built a great relationship with the VPM.

A representative from a volunteer setting noted that the ongoing contact that Step Together had with their clients was less structured than the approach they had experienced from some other organisations. This was seen as a positive: *“it is not just timesheets etc. – I would describe (the VPM's) interaction and support as ‘pastoral’ and ‘holistic’. Great, because that is what is so important”*.

There are of course challenges for the VPMs in managing this holistic process. One VPM spoke about how some of the young women are good at communicating and managing their attendance at appointments. It is seen as a positive behaviour when the young person lets others know if they can't attend an appointment or volunteering session, or feel unable to attend, even if it is just by sending a text. The flip side is the lost time when clients fail to make contact or show up for agreed appointments – not withstanding that clients with depression and anxiety and other personal challenges can find it extremely difficult to be structured in their lives and maintain good levels of communication. The VPM gave an example of the effect on day to day work – such as taking two trips to Rochdale to meet one individual which were time consuming in terms of travel. Only one meeting took place in the end because the client did not attend. She noted: *“It can involve a fair bit of work though to*

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*follow up with people and rebook appointments, to understand the reasons for no shows".* However, by accepting that this situation will happen, the organisation doesn't penalise clients, leaving them open to access the services again if ready to do so.

There are also challenges in dealing with the impact 'no shows' and unreliable attendance can have on other stakeholders, especially in managing relationships with staff members who have agreed to take on the clients as volunteers. On some occasions, the VPM would have to bridge the relationship between the young person and the volunteer setting and communicate on their behalf if the volunteer does not show up. This needs to be done carefully, as it reflects on Step Together as an organisation and the VPM role generally. Managing the expectations and experiences of others is likely to be a stressful part of the VPM role and requires good communication skills and relationship management to provide good customer service.

## ***Reviewing outcomes and sharing findings***

Measuring the outcomes of this work and the resources required to coordinating this flexible approach with up to 18 individuals and multiple agencies at a time is not straightforward. Indeed, the relationship building and coaching stage indeed may not lead to the client volunteering at all. Depending on the client's needs and goals, an alternative option may be for them to move into training or education instead, and for some, the support can help them directly into employment. An example was given where this has occurred with clients who might not have English as a first language – their barriers are more practical, such as not being able to find out how to access the opportunities they wanted. Overcoming these barriers could be quicker in terms of the support required, as opposed to helping clients with personal and motivational barriers.

Monitoring the number of volunteers placed as a measure of success is both a strength and a challenge. From a client's perspective, the VPM's support may help them 'bypass' volunteering and move straight to education or work experience/paid work and be an individual success. However, from a project perspective, the client hasn't 'volunteered' so is not included in monitoring information as an active volunteer, despite the input and time and resources dedicated by the VPM. For example, the VPM noted that in February 2020, they were working with 4 or 5 individuals and were at a very early stage of building a relationship. These were the 'inactive' examples of people worked with, as they weren't yet ready to engage with volunteering opportunities and so be added to the monitoring system. An option is to reconsider this process and review success measures in order to better demonstrate the extent and value of the work done with every client, regardless of whether this results in actively volunteering. Formally recording all contact points with clients/potential clients might also be precautionary as part of identified project risks, and necessary for any insurance and safeguarding requirements.

There are several approaches in place for reviewing outcomes – the outcome and pathway assessments discussed above, and the recent introduction in 2019 of the use of the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale to improve the organisation's well-being data



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for clients, allowing tracking of progress and any changes from pre or early intervention stage onwards over time to measure their progress. The timing of this depends on the level of ongoing contact with clients. Unfortunately, due to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in the last quarter of the project, it has not been possible to gather sufficient pre and post WEMWBS data to analyse any changes in well-being at this time. Warwick Medical School suggests that “As a rule of thumb studies need to include at least 30 people with data at two points in time or 30 people in each group to be compared”<sup>11</sup>. However, continuing with this approach in future work is likely to be beneficial. Other community interventions aiming to improve well-being in the UK are using WEMWBS with beneficiaries and taking a common approach may help when promoting findings and comparing evidence about what works.

## ***Promote the benefits of volunteering, helping to remove client barriers***

Gathering baseline and post intervention data from project beneficiaries to promote the benefits of volunteering - particularly when working with people with complex needs - is a common challenge for projects and evaluation processes. Form filling requests, and project monitoring requirements can cause an additional unintended barrier for prospective clients, and the process requires a careful balance, especially when trying to build a trusted relationship. However, the value of this combined with the qualitative feedback is important in order to demonstrate impact and learn about the effectiveness of services.

Other evaluations that have used similar data collections tools with similar client groups have had to balance the requirements of project monitoring processes against the benefits of developing a successful relationship with beneficiaries. The need to be flexible with monitoring requests to avoid overburdening individuals and harming the end goal often means the quality of post-intervention data can be affected. However, continued efforts to improve the quality of evidence gathered from projects will help to promote the benefits of volunteering and continue to learn more on how best to remove the structural and personal barriers to volunteering for clients. Developing a bank of good quality evidence also helps to ‘close the loop’ as depicted in Figure 3 above. The knowledge gained and shared among VPMs can then feed back into their work to build local networks and partnerships, collaborating with others to help provide integrated services for clients.

To further promote the benefits of volunteering and the organisation’s approach to others, interviewees have suggested it is worth considering if a distinct role would add value, working more strategically. Staff capacity compared with ongoing needs of clients are stretched, and although there are benefits to the VPM role encompassing both partnership/network development with direct client support, there is an argument for creating a regional higher grade position to undertake the coordinating and networking activities, developing and overseeing partnerships and collaborations, and helping to

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<sup>11</sup> Warwick Medical School Webpage - Collect, score, analyse and interpret WEMWBS.  
<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/using/howto> (Accessed October 2020)

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promote the shared organisational benefits of projects such as this. This could free up more time for VPMs to work and be able to meet the unpredictable needs of clients and to manage and support partner expectations 'on the ground'.

## Section 6: Outcomes for other stakeholders

While the project's aims and target outcome measures were focused on clients, we were keen to explore how the project affected other stakeholders involved in the process, to draw out any learning and outcomes at organisational level. How was the project and organisation adding value to stakeholders' work? How was it contributing to a broader network of support for young, disadvantaged people in Greater Manchester? The evaluation process aimed to understand and capture the impact made by the Step Together team, and specifically the Volunteering Project Manager post. Understanding the skills and capacity involved in supporting clients on their journeys is likely to be of use to identify transferable learning to inform other Step Together Volunteering programmes and interventions that work in collaboration to achieve connected aims.

As identified above, the agencies that Step Together are working with have little spare capacity to integrate the activities of the VPM into their own day to day work. In this respect, Step Together can meet the needs of particularly complex individuals who need additional (and flexible) support. Roles that the VPM can take on on behalf of referral agencies include:

- Building the relationship with the client to explore their interests and identify their goals;
- In response to these interests, researching and sourcing very localised volunteering opportunities across the whole Greater Manchester region;
- Helping clients directly with the application process;
- Accompanying clients on their initial interview to the volunteer placement;
- Supporting clients to attend volunteering sessions, including accompanying where asked;
- Being available as an ongoing contact point and sounding board; not bound to a defined timeframe.

These aspects of the role would be too time consuming for the organisations that referred clients or would require additional skills to work with those with very complex needs. Interview feedback from a referral partner provides an example, below.

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## Referral Partner Example 1

At a Housing Project for young women at risk of homelessness in Greater Manchester, the VPM works with several young women who are in temporary housing there. The partnership with the residence developed as a result of the VPM cold calling to give out leaflets and build the local network. The manager spoke of how they had formed a relationship with the VP who *“became our go-to person...(VPM) has such a nice way with customers – made them feel comfortable and at ease”*. The VPM and manager arrange regular sessions for Step Together to speak to groups of young women and to be available on a one to one basis.

All young people going into temporary accommodation are strongly encouraged to take part in volunteering/training/seeing work or placement and attend job centre appointments. There are links for individuals with The Growth Company <https://www.growthco.uk/> for finding work experience. Step Together can offer tailored support to help the young women with this process.

*“It has been really beneficial working with Step Together who support our customers- the results have been really positive. It has been nice to see our girls engage with a service. The VPM has been a massive hit with the customers due to her being patient, approachable, supportive and flexible. By working with Step Together it has opened a lot of doors and opportunities for our customers. The whole staff team would definitely recommend this service to others”*.

The project offers a service that the partner is unable to provide. The staff at their residence have no capacity to go to interview appointments with the girls or actually attend the volunteering activity with them, which is what the VPM can do in her role. There was not sufficient time or available training budget for the Housing Association to bring in such a service inhouse, or to develop the level of specialism required.

*“Personally, as much as we would love to go with the customers if they have an appointment or interview or something we can’t – some lack the confidence to go on their own and are anxious – they want that extra support on appointments and (VPM) can go with them and it builds up their confidence (to go alone)”*.

Since 2018, at least 14 young women at the residence have been supported by the project.

## A different kind of support

The feedback from stakeholders throughout the evaluation suggests that Step Together and this DCMS funded project are providing additional services not always available for young women. As one representative noted *“I have always found Step Together a great service and one of the main positives for my service users is that they provide one on one support for those who really do benefit from it and who otherwise would not be able to take the initial step into volunteering”*. Another referral agency reported: *“It ensures the young people have a vast amount of support in place”* also commenting: *“Great and helpful transition process...Many of the clients struggle massively in this area and we are unable to dedicate our time to just this support”*. A further agency said: *“We link with a lot of outside agencies, but these are mostly linked to college or education or employment, but with Step Together it*

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*is volunteering*". Other organisations were also said to concentrate more on adults and gaining work experience rather than volunteering.

One interviewee spoke of the depth of knowledge that was required, with one referral partner commenting that they didn't think there would be as many opportunities for the customers unless they researched things ourselves, and did the referral research – *"but it is a full time job: Really, the value is (the VPM) herself and the knowledge the workers have. She has such a lot of knowledge and experience on other fields"*. When asked if there was anything about the Step Together project that stood out, an interviewee suggested: *"They are patient. They don't give up at any time. It's all about the customer face, If a customer can't attend an appointment or didn't feel confidence to then there's no big drama – they are not made to feel bad – they just rearrange at a time to suit them (the girls). There is constant communication without being pushy – no pressure"*.

## **Meeting gaps and adding value to existing service provision**

Stakeholders interviewed noted that while they did work with other partners like Step Together, these organisations did not necessarily work with disadvantaged young women. One said this was something they would need to look to address if they found they were having less contact with this particular demographic now that the funding for the project had ended. Another referral organisation had similar points about the additionality of the service: *"My young person is no longer being support due to a lack of funding; this means that she will come back onto my caseload. Due to her age I cannot work with her beyond September so need to find alternative support"*.

The work of the project was also contributing to other organisations' targets and goals, as this referral agency commented: *"We are measured on progressions into employment, education or training, for a young person accessing this type of provision then this would be a positive step towards a future goal"*. Step Together supported them in reaching their aims and objectives by *"Working with young people who need more support to access volunteering opportunities and getting them a bit closer to accessing employment, education or training... It helps with building confidence, resilience and is an extra resource to support our work"*.

A second example below from the Probation Service provides further detail.

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## Referral partner Example 2

Step Together work regularly with the Probation Service. A representative working with females described the support that had been offered through this project to their service users: *“The needs of service users are complex and can range from Mental health / social isolation / dealing with barriers to Education, Training and Employment / Lacking in employment experience. I have been using the Step Together service for two years – I currently have one female who comes into the young women with complex needs category”*. The representative referred those who were interested and feel they would benefit from the service in relation to accessing voluntary opportunities. She noted that the client had to have a certain level of motivation for her to refer them. After making the referral, an initial meeting is then arranged jointly with the probation worker, the service user and Step Together.

The representative felt that the process of strong one on one support works well. However, a challenge was to keep the service user engaged especially if they are experiencing fluctuating mental health and may have other chaotic domestic circumstances. The representative reported that they weren't working with any other agencies like Step Together who were providing similar services for this cohort, other than a mentoring service for service users provided by CLI *“but this is a lower need service and for those who do not have high support needs”*. The representative continued: *“Step Together is essential in being a service that can help divert young people from a continued criminal lifestyle. It can provide them with insight and confidence through voluntary work which then enables them to believe they can do what they want and encourages them to continue to develop as individuals and make a positive contribution to society. As with many public sector / local government organisations any extra resources are welcome. I find them a valuable resource and have used them many times to try and engage service users”*.

The representative noted that if they didn't have the relationship with Step Together, *“there would be nothing to replace the service, so again it would be one less resource available...Step Together is a much needed resource in the local community particularly with more vulnerable young people”*.

## Learning points

There were very few suggestions from stakeholders about how the process could be improved or anything they would like to see done differently. One suggestion from a representative at a volunteer setting was that it would be good practice for any site visits to be coordinated between all three parties: the VPM, the client and the staff member at the volunteer setting. This which would allow the staff member to organise their time to ensure they are available for discussions when visits take place, while still ensuring there is coverage for other activities taking place in the setting.

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A representative from a volunteer placement setting suggested that during the initial contact with the client, they are helped to identify a clear set of goals for what the client wants to get out of the volunteering experience. This will help them to take ownership of the experience - for example, it could be to boost their confidence, or because they want to gain a particular skill, although people might not know what they could get out of it – which is where the VPM's initial work is important in helping the young people identify these goals. It was hoped these goals could then be shared with the staff at the volunteer placement setting so they can also provide tailored support to help clients meet their goals. The interviewee noted how it was true of many placements (outside of this project) that clients might find it easy to be 'organised into certain things because it sounds good' but if these goals are set out then choices and activities can become clearer.

Building in these aspects to the overall monitoring system could be an option for further understanding the impact and benefits to clients and organisations, although challenging. As the interviewee noted, getting longer term feedback on clients, particularly those with complex needs was difficult: *"We try to follow them up but it's not easy to get feedback on them."*

Both clients and stakeholder organisations suggested they would like to see more VPMs resourced and for the service to continue. This was their main recommendation: *"The only thing that I would say is that Step together could do more with more staff but I know that this is limited to funding"* (Referral agency). They noted that they were unsure how the service would continue without funding. Clients had similar feedback and wanted more people to benefit:

- *"I think the service is very good now. Maybe more awareness of the service"* (Client).
- *"I'd like more people to know about this organisation!"* (Client)
- *"Keep doing what you are doing and helping people out"* (Client).

## Section 7: Conclusion and recommendations

With Covid-19 restrictions tightening across the UK in September and October 2020, it remains more important than ever to be able to provide young women who were eligible for the project with this kind of support. There is a real risk across the UK of increased unemployment, a lack of access to training and education and increasing levels of poverty as a result of the pandemic. This is coupled with continued pressures on youth services, charities and third sector organisations that raise and receive funding to support people at risk. It seems likely that the situation will increase the numbers of young people who are at risk of disadvantage, particularly those with complex needs. Over the coming months, we may see an even greater division in various 'disadvantage gaps' such as in education and

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skills, access to technology and services that have gone online<sup>12</sup>, access to sport and leisure<sup>13</sup> which supports physical and mental health, and access to support networks and social opportunities. Levels of health and well-being are likely to be affected, along with the ability to gain volunteering and work experience and ultimately employment offers in an even more competitive climate.

Recent research shows some initial worrying findings. The organisation 'Young Minds' has begun regular surveys of young people during the crisis and the summer survey gained responses from 2,036 young people aged 13-25 who have looked for mental health support. This finds that "the coronavirus crisis has had a profound impact on young people's ability to access support". The survey showed that 81% agreed the situation had made their mental health worse, with 41% agreeing it was 'much worse', up from the previously recorded 32% recorded in March 2020.<sup>14</sup> Of the 1,081 young people who had been receiving some form of mental health support in the three months leading up to the crisis, 31% said they were no longer able to access support but still need it. It is hoped that support through Step Together can continue to make a difference in future.

The overall outcomes for the project were for the young women to have:

- Improved self-belief, motivation and self-esteem, leading to more positive attitudes and behaviours;
- Improved, positive, social networks leading to increased integration into the community and increased resilience;
- Improved relevant skills, experience and focus, leading to increased long-term employment prospects;
- A more positive attitude, more confidence, and greater sense of responsibility as a member of their community, leading to more informed lifestyle choices.

The evaluation has found that the funding for this project has been highly successful in achieving the desired outcomes for the clients. This project has supported 94 young women with complex needs to use the mentoring support and the volunteer placements to develop positive relationships and to engage in their local community. The young women feel that volunteering has helped them gain skills and confidence that will equip them to progress to further volunteering opportunities, further education, training or employment.

The role of the volunteering project manager in a network of statutory and voluntary services for young people in Greater Manchester was highly valued, as were the individuals

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<sup>12</sup> Children's Commissioner 2020: Briefing: Tackling the disadvantage gap during the Covid-19 crisis April 2020 <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/cco-tackling-the-disadvantage-gap-during-the-covid-19-crisis.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Women in Sport: Lockdown Research. Implications for women's participation. Available to download at <https://www.womeninsport.org/research-and-advice/our-publications/lockdown/> (Accessed September 2020)

<sup>14</sup> Young Minds 2020: Coronavirus: Impact on young people with mental health needs. Survey 2: Summer 2020 <https://youngminds.org.uk/about-us/reports/coronavirus-impact-on-young-people-with-mental-health-needs/> and <https://youngminds.org.uk/media/3904/coronavirus-report-summer-2020-final.pdf> (Accessed September 2020)

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themselves who were employed in these positions. The Volunteer Project Managers were a positive and important part of the young women's support network, helping them to move forward in their lives. In addition, the project has built on the provision for young people made by the referral organisations who are unable to offer this tailored support. Evidence from the evaluation suggests there is considerable value gained from the support offered and that the specific service provided is not available from other interventions/partners elsewhere.

The project has helped to remove barriers and create new volunteers in Greater Manchester, thus contributing to community work and services offered in the wide range of settings where volunteers were placed.

In summary, the evaluation found that:

- Step Together provides a unique service that goes beyond what other agencies can offer at present.
- The flexible, holistic one to one approach is key to achieving successful outcomes with people with complex needs.
- The service is based around the individual's needs rather than a fixed set of parameters set by an organisation.
- The approach is time intensive but can have long term benefits, some of which may yet to have materialised for clients around their future employment and education prospects and integration in the community.
- Without the service, there may be gaps in provision for this cohort who find it very difficult to take these first steps towards volunteering and building new connections independently.
- Improved confidence, communication skills, employability skills and social engagement are all outcomes for clients.
- The referral process worked well for partner organisations involved with young female clients, and was felt to be simple, quick and responsive to needs. The development of relationships in the local network appears to be strong. helping to promote the shared organisational benefits.
- Evidence from the evaluation suggests there is considerable value gained from the support offered and that the service provided is not available from other interventions elsewhere.

## Recommendations

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### **1. Continue providing support for young, disadvantaged women**

The support offered through the three year DCMS funded project had positive outcomes for clients and stakeholders alike, and a loss of resources for outreach workers and will leave a



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gap in service provision. Seeking further funding to continue this tailored VPM support will be important to continue provision at a time when the need for it is increasing.

## **2. Review the effectiveness of partnerships and referral routes to understand where resources are most effectively deployed**

The scope of the VPM's role is broad, and tailored support requires a time intensive approach. Future improvements to the service may be made by allocating resources for a strategic role, taking on some of the responsibilities for developing partnerships and maintaining referral routes. This could involve reviewing which partnerships and referral routes are now critical to providing effective, integrated support for the young women.

## **3. Continue to collect and use evidence and insight, and share findings**

Monitoring and assessment processes for clients and partners are already built into Step Together's work and improvements to the systems used are being considered. Wherever possible, it is recommended that some ongoing processes are developed to track the long term impacts for clients, beyond the project funding cycle. Longer term evidence can benefit service design, inform funding bids, and help engagement with statutory service and third sector partners. Findings from evaluations and case studies should be shared wherever possible with the research participants who contribute to reports, as well as more broadly.

Step Together have already introduced the WEMWBS to track outcomes and progress for clients. It is recommended this is continued to help build a data bank for this project and others. Other community interventions aiming to improve well-being in the UK are using WEMWBS with beneficiaries and taking a common approach to assessing well-being outcomes may help when promoting findings and comparing evidence about what works.

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## Section 8: Appendices

### Appendix A: Evaluation method and Logic Model

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach to understand whether and how these outcomes are reached through the project. This involved a planning and preparation stage, fieldwork using qualitative and quantitative methods, and analysis and final reporting in the mid to late summer of 2020. Privacy notices and consent forms were prepared (Appendix 3). The evaluation ran from January 2020 to September 2020

#### Quantitative data

Project monitoring information was collated in Step Together's existing case management system (IIZUKA) to manage the programme. This data was exported and analysed to assess the numbers, demographics and assessment client outcomes.

**Outcome assessments** are completed by the client and the VPM and measure 'soft' progress in the clients' levels of confidence, general well-being, positivity about the future, motivation, skills development and resilience/ability to cope effectively. Clients rate their level of agreement with a series of eight statements, as follows:

1. During the time I've been working with Step Together, I have gained skills that could help me get a job that I really want.
2. Since I've been working with Step Together, I feel more confident.
3. Since I've been working with Step Together, I feel better about myself.
4. Since I've been working with Step Together, I feel more positive about the future.
5. Since I've been working with Step Together, I am more motivated to change my life.
6. Since I've been working with Step Together, I feel more able to cope effectively with life's ups and downs.
7. Since I've been working with Step Together, I feel more part of my community.
8. Since I've been working with Step Together, I feel that I have more people around me who I can turn to for support.

Step Together also uses a **Pathway Assessment** process to provide a measure of client progress against seven pathways:

1. Integration into community;
2. Personal relationships;
3. Aspirations;
4. Social networks;
5. Addressing any other issues (e.g. drug abuse, homelessness, violence/abuse);
6. Education/Training;
7. Employment.

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Clients are given a score of between 1 and 10, where 10 indicates a more positive assessment. Clients are assessed around the outset of the support journey and later, towards the case closed date.

**Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale:** Across all services offered by the organisation, staff have begun to use the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) to establish clients' well-being pre intervention and at further stages over time to measure their progress. The timing of this depends on the level of ongoing contact with clients. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 situation meant that only one round of data was able to be recorded for the project from a small number of clients, not reaching the minimum sample of 30 with two data collection points advised by Warwick Medical School<sup>15</sup>. Therefore this data has not been included in this report.

**Client survey:** To ensure client voices are captured, a short online survey was created for clients to complete anonymously. The survey covered:

- Level of satisfaction with the support offered;
- Barriers and benefits of their volunteering experiences - such as the challenges and effects on confidence, skills, motivation, connectedness with their community;
- Perceptions of 'distance travelled'
- Feedback on whether the project had an impact on their well-being and employability; and
- Any suggested next steps or recommendations for project staff.

In the event, the survey was not shared due to the Covid-19 situation but is still available as a future feedback mechanism for clients.

## Qualitative data

**Semi-structured interviews:** Feedback on clients' progress was gathered from a series of interviews with the Volunteering Project Manager who was well-placed to offer judgements about the relative progress made by the clients and comment on the barriers, challenges and strengths of the overall project.

Several interview rounds took place, one early in the evaluation including a day spent shadowing the VPM, and one in the final quarter to explore the progress made. Progress meetings via Zoom also took place. The discussions covered:

- Exploring the clients' background;
- Establishing staff expectations for the clients and for the project overall;
- Assessing progress;
- Discussing barriers and enablers to achieving project aims;

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<sup>15</sup> <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/using/howto/>

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- Gathering information about the impact on individual clients and their journeys; and
- Gathering information about the impact on the staff themselves and any learning/recommendations.

## Site visit/shadowing the Volunteer Project Manager

A day was spent alongside the VPM to gain an understanding of the project context and the day to day processes involved. It included a visit to a referral organisation providing supported housing for young homeless women or those at risk. With pre-agreed consent, the visit also included observing the VPM accompanying a young client on a first interview for a volunteer placement at a community centre setting.

## Sample of clients, referral partners and volunteer host organisations

Due to data protection issues, the Volunteering Project Manager identified a sample of clients and partners who are willing to be interviewed as part of the project and organised the completion of consent forms supplied by the researcher.

The potential outcomes for clients and other project stakeholders were set out in the draft logic model during the planning and preparation phase of the evaluation. This has been used to guide data collection processes and consider how the relationship between project activities and intended outcomes is functioning. The logic model (Version 1 January 2020) is set out in Appendix 1. The evaluation aimed to establish the extent to which the intended outcomes had been achieved for clients and stakeholders, and how.

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Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• £133,394 grant from Tampon Tax Fund (DCMS) from 2017-2020.</li><li>• One outreach post in Greater Manchester</li><li>• Induction and training completed by first quarter.</li><li>• Established referral routes firmed up and in place in first quarter.</li><li>• External evaluation commissioned in Year 3.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outreach post provides 1-1 support.</li><li>• Research and broker tailored volunteering placements that respond to beneficiaries' needs interests and ambitions.</li><li>• Develop relationships with referral and volunteer placement agencies.</li><li>• Provide coaching and mentoring support post placement, supporting clients into education or employment or helping them move forward generally with their lives.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1:1 In depth support for 12 clients over a 3 month reporting period.</li><li>• Up to 100 direct/indirect beneficiaries across the project.</li><li>• At least 40% of clients supported during the second year of funding.</li><li>• 90% of clients report improvements in wellbeing.</li><li>• 85% clients report improvements in employability.</li><li>• Increased number of connections between Step Together and referral and volunteer placement settings.</li></ul>	<p>Disadvantaged young women have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improved self belief, motivation and self-esteem;</li><li>• Improved, positive, social networks;</li><li>• Improved relevant skills, experience and focus; and</li><li>• A more positive attitude, more confidence and greater sense of responsibility as member of their community</li><li>• Referral agencies and volunteer placement settings have a positive experience of working with Step Together Volunteering.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More positive attitudes and behaviours.</li><li>• Increased integration into the community and increased resilience.</li><li>• Increased long-term employment prospects.</li><li>• More informed lifestyle choices</li><li>• Increased. volunteering activity by young women from disadvantaged backgrounds in Greater Manchester.</li><li>• Better connected support systems and volunteering routes for people with complex needs in Greater Manchester.</li><li>• Shared learning among organisations/program mes helps improve service provision.</li></ul>

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## Appendix B: Privacy Notice for Step Together Volunteering – Evaluation of the Tampon Tax Project, Greater Manchester

### The Evaluation

Step Together Volunteering<sup>16</sup> has commissioned an independent evaluation of the Tampon Tax Grant Funded Project in Greater Manchester. This project aims to improve the lives of young women and girls aged 16-25 by supporting them in finding volunteering placements.

Becca Mattingley is the researcher undertaking this work, which will run from January to September 2020. The evaluation will involve visits and telephone interviews to gather feedback from participants, referral agencies and volunteer placement agencies. A report will be prepared for Step Together Volunteering and the funders, DCMS<sup>17</sup>, by September 2020.

Your feedback would be welcomed to help us understand whether the aims of the project are being achieved, and to gather your views on the challenges, successes and learning to date. Participation is completely voluntary.

### What personal data do we hold and where do we get this information?

Personal data is defined under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and is 'any information relating to an identifiable person who can be directly or indirectly identified by reference to an identifier'.

This research does not require the collection of personal data from you. If you choose to provide personal data as part of the research, you will not be identified from or linked to the responses you provide. If you raise a query or complaint and provide personal data requesting a response, the researcher will forward the request only to the relevant person and subsequently delete it from the research data.

The researcher may need to record or take notes of some interviews. If this is the case, they will make this clear to you before the discussion begins, and you will have the opportunity to tell them if you are not happy for the discussion to be recorded in this way.

### How secure is your personal data?

Personal information provided to the researcher is stored on a secure server with additional document password protection.

### How long is your personal data kept?

Your personal data will only be kept until the research is completed, when it will be deleted, unless you have given permission for the researcher to contact you again in future projects where you might be interested in providing your feedback.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.step-together.org.uk/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-digital-culture-media-sport>

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## Individual rights

Under GDPR, you have the following rights in relation to the personal information you provide as part of this evaluation; you have the right:

- To access a copy of your own data;
- For us to rectify inaccuracies in that data;
- To object to or restrict processing (in certain circumstances);
- For your data to be 'erased' (in certain circumstances); and
- To lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection.

The contact details for the Information Commissioner's Office are: Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Phone: 01625 545 745 or 0303 123 1113. Website: [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)

## Further Information

If you have any further questions about how the data provided as part of this study will be used, please contact:

Becca Mattingley

[beccamattingley@outlook.com](mailto:beccamattingley@outlook.com)

(Phone number)

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## Consent form

The charity Step Together Volunteering has commissioned Becca Mattingley, Research and Evaluation Consultant, to undertake an independent review of the Tampon Tax Grant Project in Manchester. This project aims to improve the lives of young women and girls aged 16-25 by supporting them in finding volunteering placements.

- The researcher will be interviewing participants in the programme, representatives of referral agencies, and representatives of volunteer placement agencies.
- All information you provide will be treated in confidence. We will not attribute views to individuals or their organisations without their express written prior permission.
- The privacy notice for this project explains how any personal information gathered for this review is stored securely and used for reporting. If you choose to provide personal data, this is only kept until the research project is completed unless you have given permission for the researcher to contact you again.
- The researcher would like to take notes and/or record discussions and will ask your permission to do so in advance.
- Participation is completely voluntary. You can withdraw from the research at any point.

Please read the following statements carefully and initial the box beside each statement if you agree, and sign and date at the end of the form.

I have understood the privacy notice and information about this research project.	
I am happy for the interview to be digitally recorded and/or noted.	
I understand any data collected will be anonymised and is stored securely.	
I understand I can choose not to participate in the research and that I can withdraw from the research at any time.	
I am happy to take part in the research.	
<b>Print name</b>	
<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	



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## Appendix C: Interview topic guide for stakeholder organisations

### Introduction

Step Together Volunteering have commissioned an evaluation of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Tampon Tax Fund project. This grant was awarded to Step Together Volunteering in 2017 for a three year project to improve the lives of disadvantaged women and girls in Greater Manchester through volunteering.

The project provides one to one support to young women through a 'Volunteering Project Manager' outreach post. This role aims to develop the young people's confidence, self-esteem and gain new skills through volunteering. Ongoing mentoring is offered post-volunteering placement, to help the young people move into education, employment, or generally to move forward in their lives.

Part of the evaluation involves telephone or face to face interviews with key stakeholders in the project. We are speaking to referral agencies, volunteer placement organisations and some of the young people involved to gather views on whether the aims of the project are being achieved, and feedback on the challenges, successes and learning to date.

This evaluation is running from January 2020 to report in September 2020.

Can I check that you have received the privacy notice in relation to this research and you are happy to continue? (Y/N)

Before I start the interview, can I ask if you agree to let me audio-record and take notes of our discussion? The recording will be kept secure and we will not quote you by name or organisation in any report without your permission. (Y/N)

Do you have any questions before we begin? (Y/N)

### Background

1. Could you tell me a little about your role and day to day work of the organisation?
2. How did you /your organisation come to be working with Step Together?
3. Could you give me a sense of some of the needs of the young people you work with, especially the cohort supported by this Tampon Tax grant?

### The process

1. How long have you been involved with this specific three year volunteering project for young women with complex needs?
2. *(For referral agencies)* How do you decide which young women and girls to refer to Step Together Volunteering?
3. What are the key activities involved in this partnership? How does the process of referral work, day to day?

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4. What aspects (of the process and the partnership) work well? What are the challenges?
5. Do you work with any other agencies like Step Together who are providing similar services for this cohort of young people? If so, what is similar or different about the process?

## Outcomes

6. What do you think are some of the benefits of having the role of the Step Together Volunteering Project Manager?
  - For the young people (and their family).
  - For your organisation.
  - For the wider workforce and network supporting young people in this region.
  - For communities in Greater Manchester.
7. Does your organisation measure your outcomes/impact for this particular cohort of young people? If so, how is this measured - what does success look like? Any case studies that can be shared?
8. How does, or how could Step Together support you in reaching your aims and objectives?
9. Does Step Together bring any additional value to your work? Does it address any particular gap?
10. Is there anything about this project with Step Together that stands out?
11. What would happen if the relationship with Step Together did not exist?

## Learning and next steps

12. Have there been any learning points for this partnership since you began working with Step Together?
13. Is there anything you would like to see done differently?
14. What will happen when the Step Together funding finishes? Can certain aspects of the project become sustainable longer term without additional support?
15. Are there any recommendations you would like to make about how such grant funded projects function in the future?
16. Are there any other points you would like to raise that we haven't discussed?

**Thank you very much for your time and input.**

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## Interview topic guide for young people

### Topic Guide Young People

#### Background

1. Could you tell me a little about you – where you live, how old you are?
2. How did you meet (VPM name) How have they helped you?

#### Volunteering experience

3. What sort of volunteering are you interested in?
4. How long have you been volunteering? Where, how often?
5. Was volunteering ever something you had thought of doing before you met (VPM name)?
6. How do you feel about going to volunteer? What has it been like volunteering? What has gone well? What has gone less well?
7. What bits do you enjoy? What don't you enjoy? Do you have any concerns about it?

#### Prompts for possible outcomes

8. What do you think you'll gain from volunteering? What do you think will be the benefits for you personally?
9. Do you think you are more confident since volunteering?
10. Do you think it will help you find a job? Why is that? Skills
11. Have you made new friends?
12. What do your friends and family think about you volunteering?

#### Next steps

13. What are you hoping to do next with your volunteering? Generally?
14. How can (VPM name) or the project help you?
15. Are there any suggestions you would like to make to people who fund this type of project?

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## Appendix D: Questionnaire for online survey

In 2015, the charity 'Step Together Volunteering' received funding from the DCMS to help young women and girls in Greater Manchester to find volunteer placements. This survey is for volunteers and those who are looking for a volunteering placement. We would welcome your feedback on your experiences. Your views are important to help us learn lessons to improve the support we offer in the future.

The survey should take no more than ten minutes to complete. Please be assured that your responses are anonymised, and no individuals or organisations will be identified in reporting the feedback. Thank you in advance for taking part.

### Your volunteering experience

1. What kind of volunteering have you done, or plan to do? Please write in.

2. How long have you been volunteering?

- I haven't started volunteering yet (*Go to Q3*)
- A month or less (*Go to Q3*)
- More than a month but less than six months (*Go to Q5*)
- Between six months and a year (*Go to Q5*)
- More than a year (*Go to Q5*)

3. What are your hopes from volunteering? Please tick any that apply.

- Improve my social skills
- Get work experience in an area I'm interested in
- Have something to put on a CV
- To be more confident
- Help other people
- Make friends
- Feel better about myself
- Try something new
- Develop a skill I need for a job in the future
- To have fun

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- To feel part of the local community
- To help me feel positive about my future
- None of these
- Other

Other - please write in

4. Do you have any concerns about volunteering? Please tick any that apply.

*(New volunteers routed to Q8 after completing this question)*

- Travelling to the venue
- Meeting the staff
- Meeting members of the public
- Having anxiety and/or depression
- Not knowing what to do
- Making a mistake
- Having to volunteer regularly
- Not enjoying it
- Being bored
- Not being welcomed by others
- None of these
- Other

Other - please write in

5. Thinking back to when you first started, what were your hopes from volunteering?

Please tick any that apply.

- Improve my social skills
- Get work experience in an area I'm interested in
- Have something to put on a CV
- To be more confident
- Help other people
- Make friends
- Feel better about myself
- Try something new
- Develop a skill I need for a job in the future
- To have fun
- To feel part of the local community
- To help me feel positive about my future
- None of these

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- Other

Other - please write in

6. And do you think that volunteering has helped you do any of these? Please tick any that apply.

- Improve my social skills
- Get work experience in an area I'm interested in
- Have something to put on a CV
- To be more confident
- Help other people
- Make friends
- Feel better about myself
- Try something new
- Develop a skill I need for a job in the future
- To have fun
- To feel part of the local community
- To help me feel positive about my future
- None of these
- Other

Other - please write in

7. Do you have any concerns about volunteering? Please tick any that apply.

- Travelling to the venue
- Meeting the staff
- Meeting members of the public
- Having anxiety and/or depression
- Not knowing what to do
- Making a mistake
- Having to volunteer regularly
- Not enjoying it
- Being bored
- Not being welcomed by others
- None of these
- Other

Other - please write in

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8. What has volunteering been like for you?

- Very good
- Good
- Neutral
- Not very good
- Not at all good
- I haven't volunteered yet

## Support provided by Step Together

9. Volunteering Project Manager's role is to provide one to one support and advice to help you find a volunteering placement that suits your needs and interests. The Volunteer Project Manager gives ongoing advice and mentoring to help people move forward in employment, education, or generally. How would you rate the support that you have received?

Listening to me



Understanding my needs



Finding me a suitable place to volunteer



Keeping in touch with me



Helping me with any problems



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10. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the support from the Volunteer Project Manager? Please write in.

11. Is there anything about your volunteering experiences that you would like to change? Please write in.

12. How could the Volunteer Project Manager and Step Together help you in the future? Please write in.

13. Are there any other suggestions you would like to make? Please write in

## About you

14. How old are you?

- Under 16
- Age 16 to 18
- Age 19 to 21
- Age 22 to 24
- Age 25 or over
- I don't want to say

15. Do you consider your day-to-day activities limited because of a health condition or disability/impairment that has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

- Yes, limited a lot
- Yes, limited a little
- No
- I don't want to say

16. What is your ethnic group?

- White
- Mixed
- Asian/Asian British



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- Black/Black British
- Other
- I don't want to say

## Your details

Being able to understand the impact of our work on our clients is very important to us as it can help us improve our services. If you are willing to take part in further research about your experience with Step Together, please tick the box below. You can opt out at any time.

- I'm happy to be invited to take part in further research projects.

Please provide your contact details below if you are willing to be contacted again by the research team.

Name

Email address

Phone number

**Thank you very much for taking part in this research. Please press submit to complete the survey.**