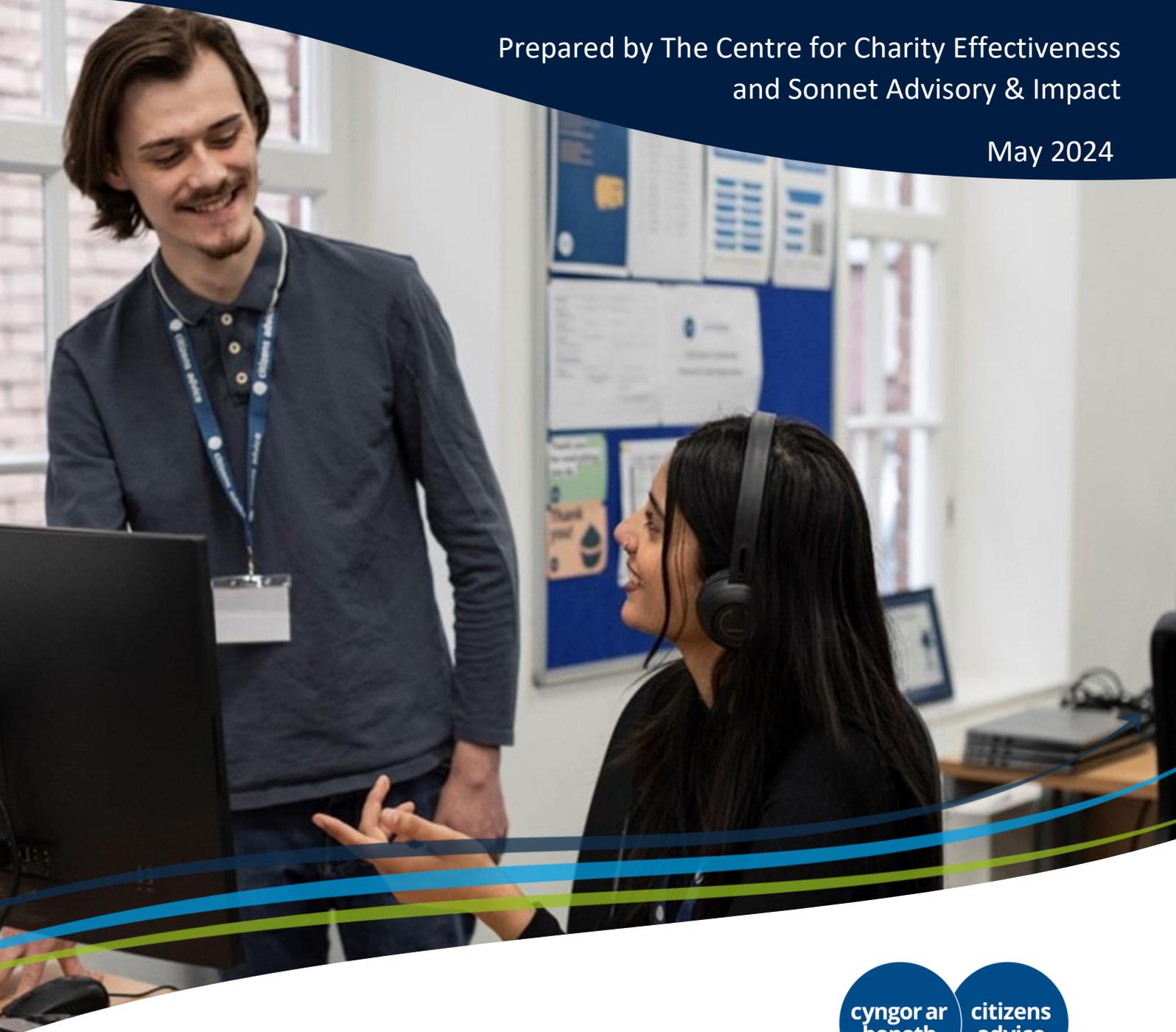


Value of Volunteering in Citizens Advice

Report of findings

Prepared by The Centre for Charity Effectiveness
and Sonnet Advisory & Impact

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Executive summary

Introducing the report

- This report shares findings from research commissioned to understand the value of volunteering within Citizens Advice. This work focussed on three key objectives:
 - to explore the cost/benefits and wider benefits/disadvantages of different volunteering models in Citizens Advice local offices,
 - to understand the impact and value of volunteering for volunteers, Citizens Advice and the local community and
 - to explore the benefits and accessibility of volunteering and the volunteer experience.
- The Value of Volunteering research is part of a wider volunteering transformation programme which overall, aimed to help better understand and address the challenges and opportunities within volunteering. For reasons of scale and complexity, this research does not include trustees or volunteers within the national organisation, including within the Witness Service.
- The report is one product created from the work. Others are:

A **Volunteering Models and Options Toolkit (VMOT)** which includes the Volunteering Models and Options **workbook**, a resource designed to support local offices in making decisions on the best model of volunteering for them. The workbook maps stages across the volunteer journey and options for how to organise volunteering on a local level at each stage. The toolkit also contains **Data and Insights** guidance which shares evidence from across the Citizens Advice network, of approaches that are particularly effective.

A **Volunteering Models and Options (VMOT) Cost Calculator**, which can be used as part of the VMOT workbook to understand the underlying costs of key aspects of volunteer support and management. This can be used to inform local decision making and to support work with funders, when making the case for the costs involved in maintaining and developing a volunteer model.

A **Value of Volunteering Calculator**, enabling local offices to value the contributions of their volunteers. This can be used by national and local Citizens Advice to demonstrate the value of volunteering to external stakeholders, including funders, partners, potential volunteers and the wider community. It will help increase awareness and understanding of the value of what Citizens Advice volunteers achieve, when working alongside staff.

A **Theory of Change** and **Outcomes Framework** which sets out areas of benefit to

volunteers and to local offices as a result of the volunteering experience. These can be used to communicate these benefits internally (across the local and national Citizens Advice service) and externally.

- Cumulatively these products support Citizens Advice, locally and nationally, to develop an evidence-based understanding of how to involve and manage volunteers effectively and the costs and value of doing so.

Value of volunteering

- We have valued the socio-economic outcomes of Citizens Advice volunteering in three arenas: the value of volunteering time, impact on skills development and employability, and impact on health and wellbeing. The total value of this in 2024 is calculated to be at least £100 million. This figure encompasses the value of volunteering time and improved outcomes for volunteers themselves, the economy and the NHS.
- Volunteering with Citizens Advice makes a difference to volunteers in the following key areas; personal development and resilience, health and wellbeing, skills and employability and community connections and engagement.
- The value of volunteering to the Citizens Advice network is most evident in relation to increased capacity and sustainability of local offices, increased overall team diversity, connection with local communities and increased awareness of, and an enhanced reputation for, Citizens Advice.
- The value of volunteering to local communities is seen most clearly in the ability to support more clients/meet more local need and in reducing costs and demands on local public services.

Volunteer experiences

- Most volunteers go through multiple steps to get started as a volunteer with Citizens Advice. On the whole, the recruitment and selection process is seen as straightforward by volunteers, however there is some evidence to suggest there is scope for improvement by reducing delays between the various stages at the beginning of the volunteer journey i.e. between expressions of interest, recruitment, induction and beginning training.
- Qualitative evidence suggests that moving away from some very formal aspects of the application process (such as detailed application forms, aptitude tests and formal interviews) can help overall recruitment numbers and increase the diversity of overall volunteer teams.
- Overall, volunteers are positive about their training, saying it helps them feel confident in their role. However, volunteers are frequently critical about the length of time it takes to complete

the training and lack of flexibility or tailoring of training to reflect their previous experiences.

- Volunteers are generally positive about the support they receive in their roles however many do report feeling upset about client issues or worried about clients they worked with.
- Capacity to manage volunteers is an ongoing challenge for many staff and local offices. This is considered a particular issue when considering how to supervise remote advice giving. In some offices volunteers report that levels of support have reduced since the Covid-19 pandemic and volunteers working remotely report feeling less well supported and less well connected to their local office.
- Volunteers generally feel well recognised by their local office for the contribution they make and the time they commit.
- Volunteers are positive on the whole about the relationships, values and behaviours within local offices, including trust and respect. There are more mixed views on whether volunteers felt their ideas and opinions were valued and listened to by staff.
- Overall, the vast majority of volunteers are positive about their experience and would recommend volunteering with Citizens Advice to others. Over 90% would recommend Citizens Advice as a great place to volunteer and a significant majority plan to continue volunteering with Citizens Advice over the next 12 months.

Volunteer participation and motivations

- The profile of Citizens Advice volunteers varies between local offices however, volunteers are typically older (85% were aged over 55), from white¹ backgrounds and educated to at least undergraduate degree level.
- Based on data from those who completed the volunteer survey, the overall volunteer base within Citizens Advice is less diverse than the UK volunteering population as a whole and the general UK population.
- Sample sizes in relation to demographics other than gender and age are too small to be used to draw further conclusions in relation to their impact on volunteering participation, motivations and experience.
- Many local offices are keen to involve a more diverse range of volunteers and just over two thirds of local office Chief Officers describe themselves as developing new recruitment tactics in order to appeal to a wider pool of potential volunteers. These actions are however, largely focussed on adjustments to advertising and recruitment, rather than more substantive changes the nature of the volunteering role.

¹ Includes White - British, English, Scottish, Welsh, or Northern Irish; White - Irish ; White - Gypsy or Irish traveller; White – Roma; 'White – in another way'

- Volunteers contribute considerable time to volunteering with Citizens Advice on a regular and consistent basis, with two thirds of those who responded to the survey spending between 20 and 30 hours per month doing so. This is notably higher than the external national average of time spent volunteering each month.
- Many volunteers are long standing and have been involved with Citizens Advice for over five years. Almost a quarter of those who responded to the survey have been involved for over ten years.
- The vast majority of local offices involve volunteers as Generalist Advisors (98% of local offices who responded to the survey), however there are a wide range of roles offered in more than half of local offices e.g. research and campaigns, information giving, receptionist, administration and specialist or focused advisor.
- Local offices are less likely to offer roles involving fundraising and media or in supporting aspects of volunteer recruitment and training, but these are the roles local offices are most likely to say they want to introduce.
- Key factors that enable or constrain the range of roles available to volunteers in local offices include funding to support volunteer involvement and paid staff capacity to support and manage volunteers.
- Volunteers mainly undertake their roles in person in their local Citizens Advice office, although volunteering also happens online or on the phone, either from home or another remote location e.g. a community venue. Some volunteers engage via a mix of home and other remote locations.
- Current volunteers often describe being surprised at the extent of flexibility (in terms of hours, location and roles) there is when volunteering with Citizens Advice, indicating that their perception was that the experience would be less flexible than the reality proved to be.
- Local offices use a variety of channels to raise awareness of volunteering opportunities, most commonly Citizens Advice local websites, online adverts via social media and local volunteer centres. While volunteers find out about volunteering with Citizens Advice via a variety of routes, this is most often through word of mouth.
- Volunteers are motivated to get involved for a variety of different reasons, both altruistic (a desire to do something for others) and instrumental (those that benefit themselves), with the most common reason being a desire to make a difference to other people.
- Motivations vary by demographics. Younger volunteers (those aged 34 and younger) are more likely to be motivated by reasons related to skills development, to improve employment prospects and to gain experience in a work environment. Older volunteers (those aged 55+) are more likely to want to keep mentally active, use spare time

meaningfully and to use existing skills to do something worthwhile. Women are more likely than men to say they are motivated to volunteer to gain confidence/self-esteem and to improve their employment prospects.

- Chief Officer survey results indicate a sizeable proportion of volunteer applicants do not end up volunteering with Citizens Advice after they have expressed an initial interest and many that do, do not stay beyond a year. Over half of Chief Officers report that for every ten expressions of interest four or fewer individuals go on to become volunteers, with volunteer conversion rates highly variable between local offices. Over 40% of Chief Officers say that for every ten individuals recruited around four or fewer volunteers will be volunteering one year later. Over four in five Chief Officers report that they are looking to recruit more volunteers and over two thirds regularly worry about retaining volunteers.

Volunteering models and local office experiences

- While volunteer involvement is core to existing local office operations, the volunteering models in use vary considerably in relation to three core dimensions; local context (e.g. size, location, resource levels), local office culture (underpinning attitudes, beliefs and behaviours towards volunteering) and local office management practice i.e. the practical actions that create the day to day experience of volunteer involvement and support.
- There is no evidence to indicate clear trends in relation to the impact of rural or urban location, income and overall size (for which staff FTE was used as a proxy) on different volunteering models and the experience and impact they deliver.
- Factors influencing the nature and extent of volunteering in local offices include volunteer availability, volunteer skills and paid staff capacity to support volunteers. Some funder restrictions requiring sources of funding to be used only for paid staff resource, rather than volunteering resource, were also cited as a barrier by some local offices.
- For some local offices volunteering is a means to an end: a cost-effective way to deliver services. For others the involvement of volunteers is a core part of the Citizens Advice mission and ethos, bringing benefits beyond additional capacity. For many, it is both. In a very small number of cases local offices are moving away from involving volunteers completely.
- Due to the amount of time and effort needed to support volunteers so that their experience is enjoyable and mutually beneficial, the involvement of volunteers both alleviates pressure for local office teams (because it increases capacity to help clients) and creates it. Overall though, local offices feel the involvement of volunteers positively contributes to the culture (e.g. patterns of behaviours, style and tone) and practice (e.g. ways of working and key activities) within their local teams.
- Volunteers are an important source of skills and experience for staff roles, which some local offices indicated were hard to recruit for, but crucial for the delivery of services and projects: 99% of Chief Officers described having staff members who were once volunteers.

- The main differences between staff and volunteers are considered to be the complexity of the cases staff may deal with and the increased flexibility volunteers experience in how they contribute. Many local offices stress the importance of acknowledging that it is the partnership between staff and volunteers that makes Citizens Advice so effective.
- For 72% of Chief Officers uncertainty around the resources available week to week is a negative consequence of reliance on volunteering, however data from the volunteer survey shows that 90% of volunteers describe themselves as doing the same shifts every week. Large numbers of volunteers also have over two years' service, particularly in advice and information giving roles. There may therefore be a gap between perceptions of lack of reliability and stability and the reality of the way in which the volunteer model actually operates.
- Many local offices are keen to evolve and develop their volunteering model but feel they lack the time to consider how to do this. There is an opportunity for increased support for those local offices who have high degrees of inclination to change, but lower levels of resource or confidence to do so. This could include increased cooperation and peer support from and between local offices who have already successfully adapted their approach, and with relevant national teams.

Conclusions and recommendations

- Volunteering within Citizens Advice is most effective when it is underpinned by some key principles i.e. volunteering should be balanced, impactful, inclusive, supported and valued.
- This report makes a number of recommendations in relation to increasing resources available to support volunteering development, how to make better use of the wide range of existing good practice and innovation in volunteering across the network, and further research. Recommendations are made for both the national organisation and the wider network.
- The overarching recommendation is for Citizens Advice to consider ways in which they can better mobilise and utilise the strength of its existing network of volunteering practice. This research has revealed an enormous range of good practice and commitment to continuous improvement in volunteering. However, much of this is not usefully known or meaningfully shared across the network. There is a significant opportunity for the national organisation to play a greater role in this, but we note the limited resources they currently have available to do so.

1. Introduction

This report is one of a number of documents produced at the close of the Value of Volunteering research project, commissioned by the national Volunteering Team at Citizens Advice in March 2023. The data and insights shared here represent the most significant and robust research into volunteering in Citizens Advice for over a decade. The work offers a clear evidence base on a wide range of aspects of volunteering, helping local and national teams better understand the current picture across the network and informing priorities for development.

The report can be read as a standalone document giving insight and data in relation to each of the research objectives, or alongside the accompanying reports which offer more detail on some specific areas of the project. These are listed in section 1.1.1 below. A summary of this full report is also available.

1.1 The brief

Citizens Advice identified three research objectives for the Value of Volunteering project;

Volunteering models: exploring the cost/benefits and wider benefits/disadvantages of different approaches.

Impact and value of volunteering: understanding the impact and value for volunteers, Citizens Advice and the local community.

Benefits and accessibility of volunteering and the volunteer experience: exploring how this may be used to enhance the reputation of Citizens Advice as a volunteer involving organisation, support volunteer recruitment campaigns and researching motivations of current volunteers.

The Value of Volunteering project is expected to support;

- Internal and external communications, influencing and requests for support (financial and non-financial)
- Local and national volunteer recruitment communications and campaigns
- Development of operating and service models, including through workforce planning
- Strategy development

1.1.1 Project outputs

This report brings together the findings from research undertaken by the Centre for Charity Effectiveness at Bayes Business School and Sonnet Advisory & Impact. Accompanying this report are a series of guides and tools for the Citizens Advice local office network. These include:

Volunteering Models and Options Toolkit (VMOT). There are three resources in the toolkit:

- i) **Volunteering Models and Options (VMOT) workbook** which maps and provides guidance on different volunteering models and aims to inform, inspire and enable local office teams to consider how their approach to volunteer involvement could be further developed to meet existing challenges and ongoing opportunities.

Volunteering models have been defined by the Volunteering Transformation Programme Steering Committee as:

1. The way volunteers are recruited and trained
2. The roles they carry out
3. How volunteer roles interact with the delivery of the service
4. Where volunteers carry out their roles
5. The way volunteers are supported, engaged, managed, and developed
6. Volunteering infrastructure, including the way volunteering is resourced.

- ii) **Volunteering Models and Options (VMOT) Cost Calculator.** This tool (and accompanying instructions for use) enables local offices to a) understand the costs of their current volunteering model and b) explore the costs associated with any potential changes to this.

- iii) **Volunteering Models and Options (VMOT) Data and Insights** which shares examples of the nature and impact of different approaches within local offices and evidence of approaches that are particularly effective.

Theory of Change for Volunteering – this summarises how volunteering in Citizens Advice creates impact and is a particularly useful tool when looking at the value (both current and potential) of volunteering within Citizens Advice. It helps local and national Citizens Advice in planning, in monitoring what is going on, in communicating what Citizens Advice is doing and why, and in coordinating activity across Citizens Advice and its partner agencies.

Outcomes Framework for Volunteering – this framework captures the outcomes of volunteering for volunteers and local offices and their staff and sets out recommended measures for collection of data to demonstrate the impact of Citizens Advice volunteering. This can be used to track progress, measure impact, and improve the volunteering experience.

Value of Volunteering Calculator – this tool draws on economic evaluation techniques, identifying the minimum monetary values arising from some of the identified outcomes of volunteering. It can be used to help local offices understand and demonstrate the value of volunteering in their office by assigning values to outcomes for volunteers, local offices and other key stakeholders e.g. NHS and the wider economy. This is useful internally, across the local and national Citizens Advice service, and externally in engagement and discussion with funders, sponsors and public agencies, and with potential volunteers.

Volunteer Archetypes – these describe six profiles of archetypal Citizens Advice volunteers that are most commonly seen across the local office network. These were developed in consultation with the Volunteering Transformation Programme Steering Committee and local offices who participated in interviews and workshops. The archetypes help picture some of the different people who volunteer for Citizens Advice and to understand how volunteering fits into their life outside of Citizens Advice. None of the archetypes are exact and the characteristics are not designed to be taken literally. Using archetypes to tell the stories of the people who volunteer is a helpful tool for better understanding volunteers and their experiences, and for discovering and discussing the value and impact of their volunteering. Archetypes are commonly used in research of this type.

Summary report – a summary of the full research findings detailed in this document.

More information on the Outcomes Framework, Theory of Change and Archetypes are included in the *Technical Report* that accompanies this report.

The Volunteering Models and Options Toolkit (VMOT) workbook, calculators and instructions, and data and insights can be found on the Citizens Advice 'Value of Volunteering' intranet pages.

1.1.2 Report structure

This report covers the following key areas:

- Section 2 explores volunteer participation (including who volunteers, what volunteers do, motivations for getting involved and routes into volunteering) and volunteers' experiences of volunteering, including their reflections on the processes of getting involved, training, support, management and recognition.
- Section 3 examines the value of volunteering to volunteers, Citizens Advice, and communities.
- Section 4 introduces a framework for understanding volunteering models in Citizens Advice and explores the relationship between local office volunteering models and the overall experience of local offices with volunteers.
- Section 5 brings together the findings from the research to identify key principles for

developing and enhancing volunteering models within Citizens Advice.

- Section 6 summarises final conclusions and identifies a series of recommendations for the Citizens Advice service.

1.2 Context for this work

For nearly 85 years Citizens Advice has been providing free, impartial and confidential advice to anyone who needs it, across England and Wales. The Citizens Advice service is made up of a national charity and 240+ independent local Citizens Advice charities. This comprises 8,800 staff (local and national) and approximately 14,000 volunteers. Of these 14,000 volunteers around 10,000 are active in local offices. A further 2,000 are involved as Citizens Advice Trustees and 1,500 are involved in the Witness Service². Citizens Advice services are delivered from 1,615 community locations³. Volunteer involvement has always been central to Citizens Advice and is described as one of seven strategic fundamentals for the service:

"We're strengthened by volunteers. At our heart, we're about people helping people and, from our earliest days, this has included volunteers working alongside paid colleagues. A key element of how we'll always operate is by the amazing power of volunteering. We'll continue to develop our volunteering models to maintain this contribution to our service, and the connection this provides to our communities"

(Citizens Advice, Transforming Together: Our Living Strategy 2024)

Previous internal research estimated the value of volunteers to the network at £98 million (2014) however Citizens Advice lack detailed and up to date data and evidence on the cost and wider impact of volunteer involvement.

Scope of this work includes only volunteers and volunteering within local offices and not the national organisation. The Witness Service, which is delivered by national Citizens Advice, is therefore also out of scope. Trustees within local offices were also not within scope of this work, given the different and separate nature of the way in which they are recruited, and involved in the organisation and their specific governance roles.

The landscape in which volunteering takes place is changing. Across the UK participation in regular, formal volunteering (the traditional bedrock of Citizens Advice) is in decline and post COVID-19 there has been an increased demand for more remote volunteer roles and to offer more flexibility in volunteering. Ensuring a diverse range of volunteers are attracted to and remain involved is also increasingly important as a way of ensuring Citizens Advice services reflect, and are able to fully support, all communities. Local Citizens Advice offices report finding it increasingly hard to recruit new volunteers, increased drop out from existing volunteers (often shortly after or during training),

² Internal Citizens Advice data (Okta), April 2024

³ Citizens Advice Annual Report, 2022/23

volunteers seeking to give fewer hours and a lack of diversity in applicants.

Across the network local offices organise and manage their volunteering in many different ways. While there is a recognition that this range of operating models is in part an appropriate response to different local circumstances and context (location, size, resource levels etc.), the network as a whole lacks a clear understanding of the detail of the different operating models, and the potential strengths and weaknesses of each.

In October 2022 the Volunteering Team within the national organisation established a Volunteer Transformation Programme to better understand and respond to some of these challenges in order to secure the future of volunteering within Citizens Advice. The Value of Volunteering project is one workstream within this Transformation Programme. It is an impact and value study of the current volunteering offer, within local Citizens Advice offices and across the network.

1.3 Overview of methods

The Value of Volunteering project used a mixed methods approach to explore the views and experiences of a wide range of volunteers, local office network staff and external stakeholders. The study included 13 “deep dive” local office case studies and explored the views of the volunteers and staff working within them to develop a nuanced and balanced view of volunteering, its stories, models and motivations. These were supplemented by in-depth reviews of systems and costs around volunteering in those local offices. The models and findings from those “deep dives” were tested through surveys of all volunteers and all local office Chief Officers across the network.

The research was undertaken between June 2023 and February 2024 and involved five phases, summarised in Figure 1 below. The project was overseen by the Volunteering Transformation Steering Committee composed of local office staff members, local office volunteers, a local office Trustee and national Citizens Advice staff. This group was integral to the project and provided regular guidance and feedback on the research approach, frameworks, tools and outputs. Full details of the methodology, including how the “deep dive” case studies were selected, are provided in the Annex.

Figure 1: Research methodology – key phases



1.4 Limitations of the research

This research sought to explore the experiences and views of a wide and diverse range of volunteers and staff working in local offices. It was not possible, however, to speak directly with Citizen Advice clients about their experiences with volunteers and this is a key limitation of the research, particularly in relation to understanding the impact and value of volunteering for them. The study also focussed on the views and experiences of current volunteers and did not involve research with those who have ceased volunteering or those who have never volunteered with Citizens Advice, as this was also out of scope for this project. This is a further limitation of the research.

The 13 “deep dive” case studies allowed the research team to explore in depth the experiences of staff and volunteers in these local offices, however this is a small number of the total offices in the network, particularly given the range of practice we uncovered during the research.

Volunteer survey responses came from 179 local Citizens Advice offices, and overall represented a reasonable response rate. It is not possible however, to claim that the volunteer survey, which had a 15% response⁴, is representative of the entire Citizens Advice volunteer population. Caution therefore needs to be taken when interpreting the findings. Response numbers from demographic groups other than age and gender were too small to support detailed analysis of their impact. Further, unlike the other demographic characteristics which are generally more evenly geographically distributed across England and Wales, ethnicity is much more variable in geographical distribution. There are significant geographical variations in volunteer completion rates in the volunteer survey which therefore impact how robust the ethnicity data is compared to other demographic categories.

⁴ This is 15% of the total number of volunteers taken from October 2023 Okta profile data of active volunteers. Active meaning the volunteer has logged in within 90 days

2. Volunteer participation and experiences

This section of the report explores findings on volunteer participation – the who, where and why of Citizens Advice volunteering – and volunteers’ experiences of their participation, including their experiences of the organisation, management, and support of volunteering.

2.1 Volunteer participation

2.1.1 Who volunteers and who doesn't?

Volunteers within Citizens Advice are typically older (aged 55 and older), from white⁵ backgrounds and educated to at least undergraduate degree level. The profile of volunteers, however, varies between local offices.

The volunteer survey shows the majority of Citizens Advice volunteers are older; 85% were aged 55 and over, with the largest group of volunteers aged 65 to 74 (graph 1). Whilst the national volunteering picture across the UK is similar, with those over 65 most likely to volunteer⁶, participation is heavily skewed towards the older age groups in Citizens Advice, with only one in twenty volunteers who responded to the survey being aged 34 or under (5%, compared to 19% of the national volunteering population). Our wider research with local offices, however, highlights how variable this is with some local offices involving significant numbers of younger students (aged 18 - 25), while others involve very few.

The volunteer survey suggests women have higher levels of participation in Citizens Advice volunteering than men, with 60% identifying as women.

Citizens Advice volunteers are typically white: 89% reported in the volunteer survey they were from a white background⁷. These figures are marginally higher than national volunteering rates⁸ (87% of volunteers are white) and Census population data (84% white). Nearly 3% of Citizens Advice volunteer respondents said they were Asian (Bangladeshi or Bangladeshi British, Chinese or Chinese British, Indian or Indian British, Pakistani or Pakistani British, 'Asian – in another way'), 3% Black (African or African British, Caribbean or Caribbean British or 'Black – in another way') and 1% Mixed/multiple ethnic groups⁹.

⁵ Includes White - British, English, Scottish, Welsh, or Northern Irish; White - Irish ; White - Gypsy or Irish traveller; White – Roma; 'White – in another way'

⁶ DCMS (2023) Community Life Survey 2021/22

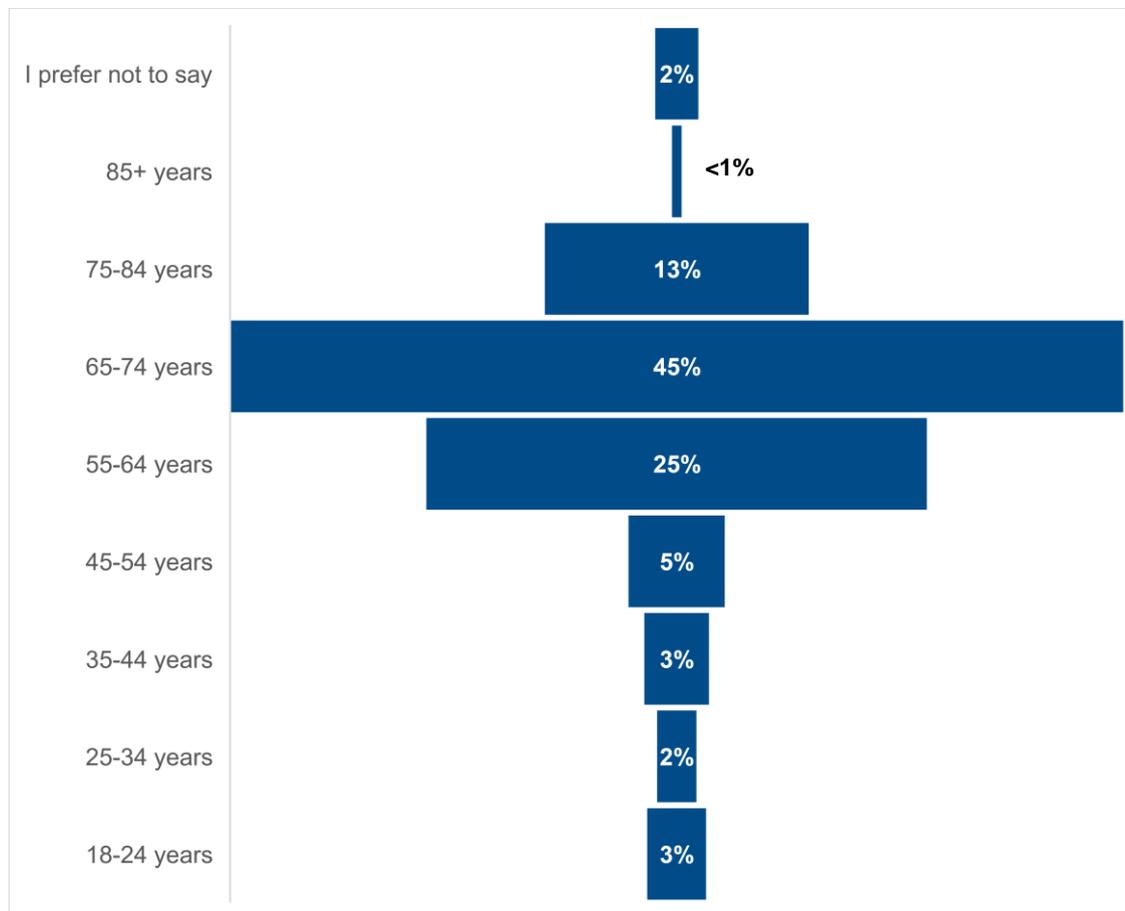
⁷ Includes White - British, English, Scottish, Welsh, or Northern Irish; White - Irish ; White - Gypsy or Irish traveller; White – Roma; 'White – in another way'

⁸DCMS (2023) Community Life Survey 2021/22

⁹ Mixed/multiple ethnic groups included Mixed/multiple ethnic groups - Asian or Asian British, and White or White British; mixed/multiple ethnic groups - Black African or Black African British, and White or White British; Mixed/multiple ethnic groups Black Caribbean or Black Caribbean British, and White or White

One in ten (10%) volunteer respondents said they had a disability, impairment or condition that affects their daily life, significantly lower than the 27% figure for the national volunteering population¹⁰.

Graph 1: Age profile of volunteer respondents



(Base 1,412)

Consistent with other studies of volunteering, which report that people with higher educational qualifications are more likely to volunteer¹¹, the volunteer survey found that 70% of respondents had

British and ‘Mixed/multiple ethnic groups – in another way’. One respondent was ‘Arab – in another way’. Nine respondents selected ‘other’ and 49 respondents (3.5% of respondents) preferred not to say

¹⁰ DCMS (2023) Community Life Survey 2021/22

¹¹ McGarvey, A., Jochum, V., Davies, J., Dobbs, J, and Hornung, L. (2019) Time Well Spent: a national survey on the volunteer experience, NCVO; Mohan and Bulloch (2012) ‘The idea of a “civic core”: What are the overlaps between charitable giving, volunteering, and civic participation in England and Wales?’ Third Sector Research Centre Working Paper 73

an undergraduate degree or higher with 41% reporting they had a masters degree, professional post-graduate, Level 7 or Doctorate qualification. Less than 1% of responding volunteers had no qualifications.

Together, this data on the profile of volunteers suggests that the overall volunteer base within Citizens Advice is less diverse than the UK volunteering population as a whole and the general UK population. This echoes data from Citizens Advice's 2022/3 People Survey, which reports very similar participation rates for the different groups explored above. The relatively low response rate for the People Survey should however be borne in mind (i.e. 31% for staff and 25% for volunteers) when considering this comparison.

Findings from the qualitative data equally highlights issues around the lack of diversity within volunteer teams, with local offices identifying the need and a desire to attract and recruit a more diverse range of volunteers, as well as the challenges they experience in doing so. Two in three Chief Officer respondents (67%) said that they were taking steps to recruit a more diverse range of volunteers. Actions being taken typically focused on working with and seeking to partner with other organisations and advertising more widely in areas likely to attract a greater diversity applicants. Very few offices indicated they were also reviewing volunteer roles and required levels of commitment, as a means of attracting a more diverse range of volunteer applicants.

2.1.2 How much time is spent volunteering?

Volunteers contribute considerable time to volunteering with Citizens Advice on a regular and consistent basis. Many volunteers are long standing and have been involved with Citizens Advice for over five years.

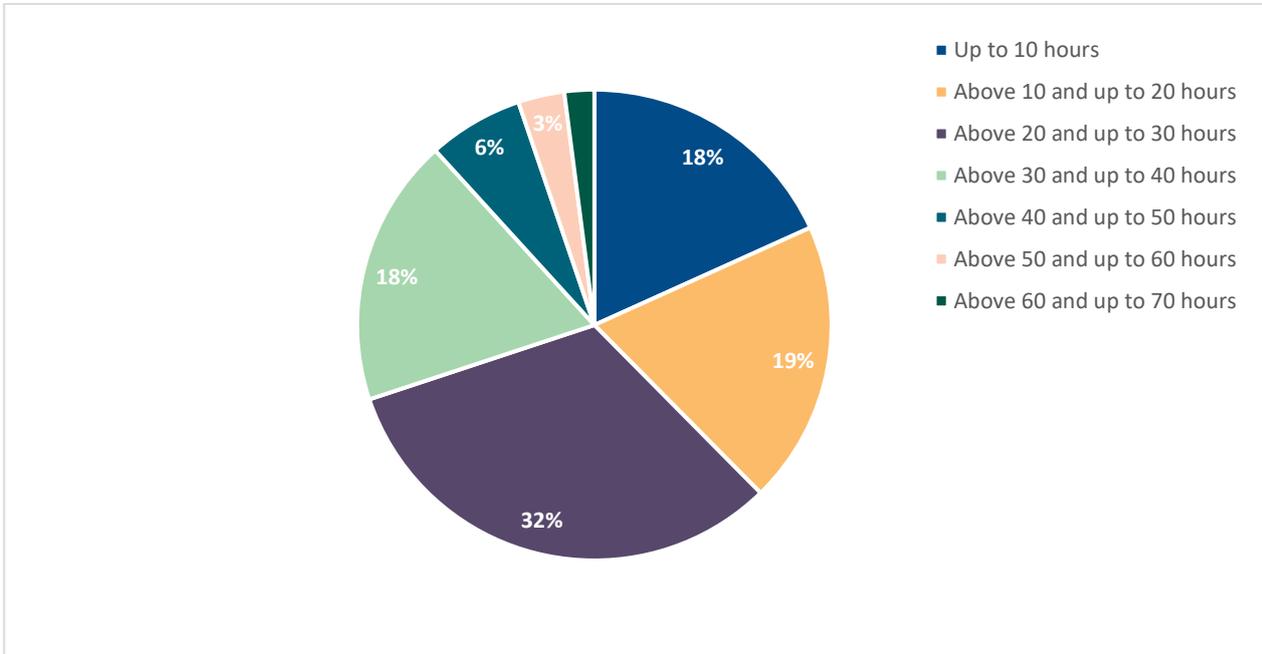
Two-thirds of volunteers (63%) reported spending above 20 hours a month volunteering with Citizens Advice, most commonly committing above 20 and up to 30 hours a month (Graph 2). When compared to the national external picture, this is higher than the average of eight hours of volunteering undertaken per month by volunteers more generally¹² and suggests high levels of commitment amongst Citizens Advice volunteers. Just over half of volunteers (53%) said they are expected by their local office to volunteer for a minimum number of hours a week, often 6 to 8 hours a week, although this varied by office.

In the qualitative work, the importance of flexibility was highlighted by volunteers. Many felt that their local office enabled this, for example volunteers said they were able to take holidays when they wanted to and, in some cases, volunteers stepped back from their volunteering for a period of time. In the volunteer survey, nine in ten volunteers (90%) reported that their local office had a flexible approach towards the hours they gave. However, this flexibility may come at a cost to local offices with staff in the workshops highlighting that having less certainty around volunteer participation could present challenges for local offices.

¹² McGarvey, A., Jochum, V., Davies, J., Dobbs, J, and Hornung, L. (2019) Time well spent: a national survey on the volunteer experience, NCVO

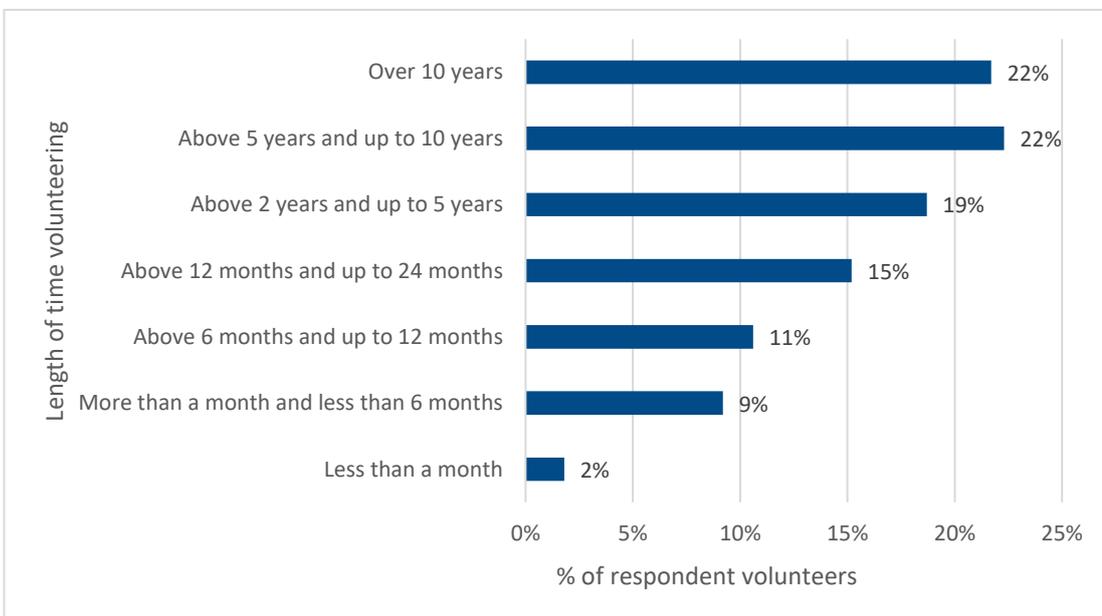
The majority of responding volunteers (63%) said they had been volunteering with Citizens Advice for over two years (Graph 3); more than one in five (22%) had done so for over ten years.

Graph 2: Time spent volunteering with Citizens Advice per month



(Base: 1412)

Graph 3: Length of time spent volunteering with Citizens Advice as part of current experience



(Base: 1412)

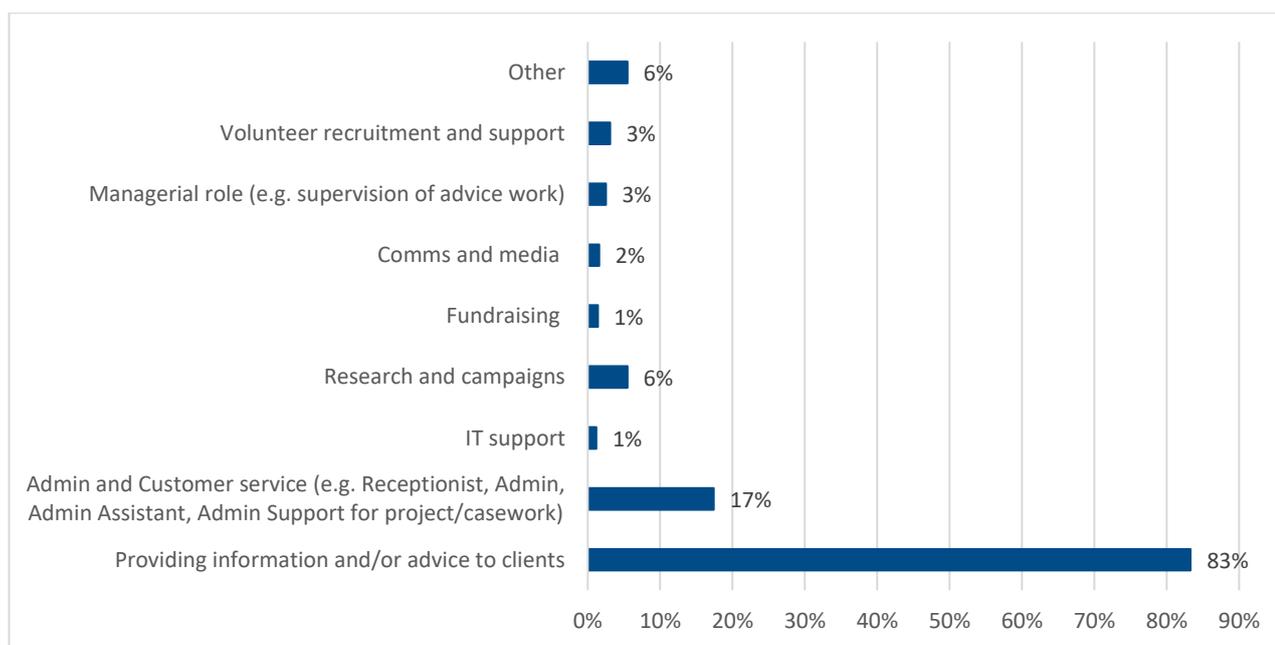
2.1.3 What roles do volunteers undertake?

Many local offices offer a range of volunteering roles, with Generalist Advisor opportunities the most common. The vast majority of local offices involve volunteers as Generalist Advisors (98% of offices), however, other roles offered by local offices include:

- Research and campaigns (71%)
- Information giving (70%)
- Receptionist (69%)
- Administration (63%)
- Specialist or focused advisor (e.g. dedicated to energy team) (54%)

Over four in five volunteers (83%) responding to the survey said they were providing information and/or advice to clients. Just under one fifth (17%) were carrying out administration or customer service roles (Graph 4).

Graph 4: Roles carried out by volunteer respondents

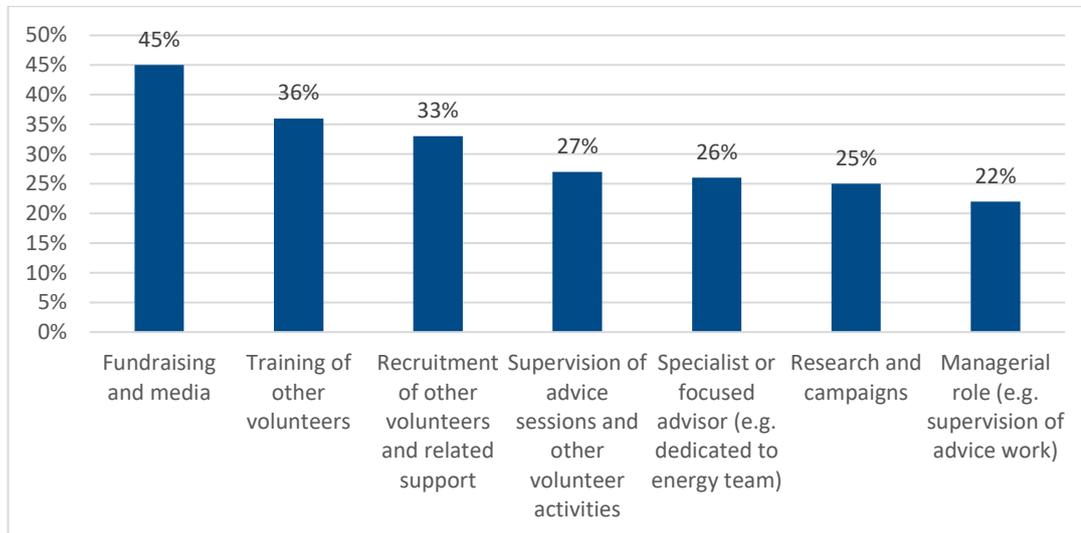


(Base: 1412, volunteers were able to say they carried out multiple roles)

The Chief Officer survey found that local offices were less likely to offer roles involving fundraising and media, recruitment of other volunteers and training of volunteers but these are the roles local offices were most likely to say they needed or wanted to introduce. For example, 45% of local offices said they did not have fundraising and media roles for volunteers but needed/wanted to introduce them. Interest in developing these kinds of roles was also echoed in the local staff workshops. Qualitative research revealed a number of factors that enabled and constrained the range of roles

available to volunteers in local offices, including funding to support volunteer involvement and paid staff capacity to support and manage volunteers.

Graph 5: Proportion of local offices which currently do not have certain volunteer roles but need or want to introduce them



(Base: 97)

2.1.4 Where do volunteers carry out their roles?

Volunteers mainly undertake their roles in person in their local Citizens Advice office, although volunteering also happens online, either from home or another remote location, or from community venues. Some volunteers engage from a mix of at home and other remote locations.

Looking across volunteer roles, the volunteer survey found the most common place to volunteer was in local Citizens Advice offices. Over two thirds (70%) of volunteer respondents said that they volunteered in person at a local office. One in five (22%) reported that they volunteered online (for example providing email advice) at a local office. However, it was not uncommon for volunteers to say they volunteered online from home or from another remote location (for example undertaking online advice or other online activity such as research and campaigns) with no requirements to travel (22%) or with occasional requirements to travel to their local office, for example, for training (14%).

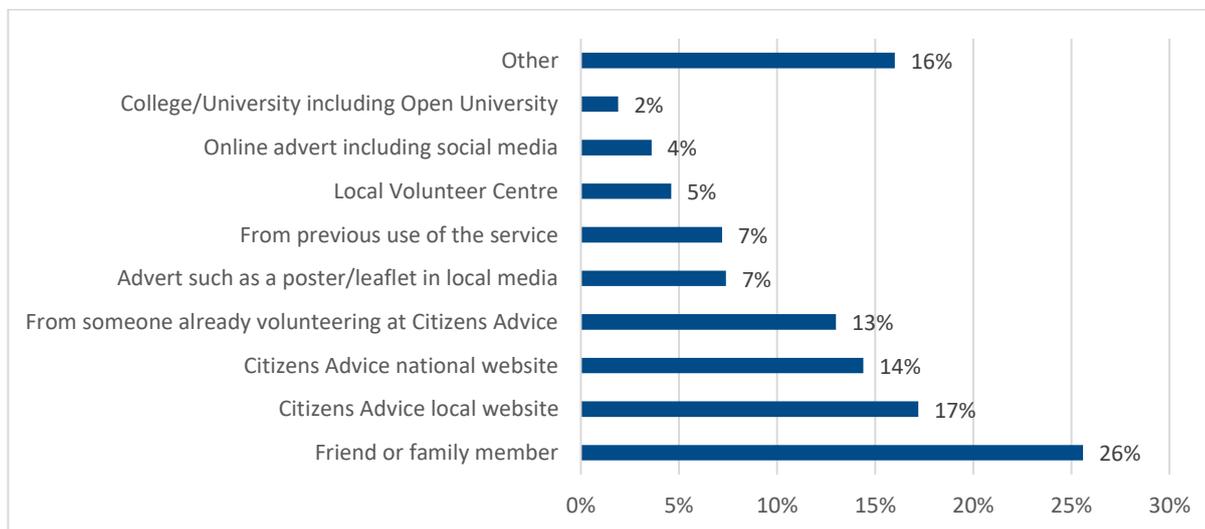
The qualitative research showed varying approaches across local offices with regards to where volunteering could be carried out; some offices were flexible about this, while others were more prescriptive. This in part reflected the local office service's overall operating model (for example the range of services they offered and from where) and the extent to which they were able to support volunteers who were working by phone or email across roles. The Covid-19 pandemic also led to a shift in approach for some local offices and was a catalyst to enabling volunteers to carry out their roles remotely.

Two in five volunteer respondents (39%) said that there were no expectations from their local office that their volunteering would be undertaken at a specified location. When asked where and how their local office permitted volunteers to undertake their roles (included all roles), the majority of Chief Officers said they allowed their volunteers to carry out their roles in locations outside the local office, including online from home/remote location with occasional requirements to travel in (69%). This suggests there is a level of flexibility and choice for some volunteers about where they carry out their roles which is not necessarily taken up. This is, in part, likely to be reflective of some volunteers' preferences for giving information and advice face-to-face (57% of volunteers in these roles said they preferred this channel) and the perceived benefits of volunteering in the local office, including the social benefits.

2.1.5 How do volunteers find out about volunteering?

Word of mouth is a common route into Citizens Advice volunteering with one quarter of volunteer respondents reporting they found out about volunteering through a friend or family member (26%) or from someone already volunteering at Citizens Advice (13%) (graph 6). In the qualitative research, this mechanism for recruiting volunteers was described by a local office staff member as '*powerful*' and important for local offices, many of whom were looking to recruit more volunteers. Wider external research highlights how reliance on recruitment through word of mouth and personal networks increases the likelihood of attracting the same type of people into volunteering, reducing the potential for attracting a more diverse range of volunteers¹³. However, this research did find that local offices are using a variety of other channels to raise awareness of volunteering opportunities including Citizens Advice local websites (87%), online adverts including social media (80%) and local volunteer centres (77%).

Graph 6: How volunteer respondents found out about volunteering with Citizens Advice



(Base: 1412, 1% of respondents said they found out via a 'job fair', 'Volunteers Week' and 'advert such as a

¹³ Donahue, K., McGarvey, A., Rooney, K. and Jochum, V. (2020) Time Well Spent: Diversity and Volunteering, NCVO

poster/leaflet in national media’).

2.1.6 Why get involved in volunteering?

The workshops and interviews revealed that volunteers get involved in Citizens Advice volunteering for a range of reasons both altruistic (a desire to do something for others) and instrumental (those that benefit themselves). Volunteers often cited both forms of motivation:

“I wanted to do something that would be stimulating and meet people and do something that also benefits other people” (Volunteer)

In the volunteer survey the most common motivation - reported by 80% of volunteers - was a desire to make a difference to others’ lives (Table 1). This reflects wider national research on volunteering which finds benefiting others as the most common reason for getting involved in volunteering¹⁴. Citizens Advice volunteers often spoke of wanting to help others and to “give back”. This was not only raised in relation to helping clients but also supporting the organisation to drive broader social change:

“It’s also how [Citizens Advice] utilise those individual clients experiences to make change at policy level. And that really attracted me ... how we can, you know, talk to ordinary people and work out what’s happening for them, and how that can be used to challenge government policy.” (Volunteer)

Table 1: Reasons for getting involved in Citizens Advice volunteering

Response	Percentage of respondents
<i>I wanted to make a difference to others’ lives</i>	80%
<i>I wanted to keep mentally active</i>	80%
<i>I wanted to use my existing skills to do something worthwhile</i>	78%
<i>I wanted to do voluntary work that was interesting</i>	77%
<i>I had spare time that I wanted to use meaningfully</i>	74%
<i>I wanted to contribute to society</i>	71%
<i>I wanted to be involved in the local community</i>	56%

¹⁴ Kanemura, R., McGarvey, A., and Farrow, A (2023) Time Well Spent 2023: A National Survey on the Volunteer Experience, NCVO

Response	Percentage of respondents
<i>I feel strongly about Citizens Advice and its cause</i>	55%
<i>I wanted to feel part of a team</i>	48%
<i>I wanted an element of structure to my life</i>	45%
<i>I wanted to meet people and socialise</i>	38%
<i>I wanted to feel valued</i>	33%
<i>I wanted a chance to learn new skills</i>	32%
<i>I wanted to gain confidence and self esteem</i>	14%
<i>I wanted to keep physically active</i>	9%
<i>I wanted to improve my employment prospects</i>	9%
<i>I wanted to gain experience in a work environment</i>	8%
<i>I wanted to improve my prospects of gaining paid</i>	6%

(Base: 1412)

Motivations varied by demographics. Those aged 34 and under were more likely than older age groups to say they got involved for reasons related to skills development, to improve employment prospects and to gain experience in a work environment. Older volunteers were more likely to cite wanting to get involved to keep mentally active, having spare time they wanted to use meaningfully and because they wanted to use existing skills to do something worthwhile. These findings echo wider research about the importance to older volunteers of roles being purposeful and meaningful and making good use of individual’s strengths and skills¹⁵:

“I was retiring ... I had a very, very technical job. And I was very worried about losing brain power. I know nothing about anything that Citizens Advice do. And actually, that was really attractive, because there was so much learning involved, but with the flexibility.” (Volunteer)

Women were more likely than men to say they were motivated to get involved to gain confidence/self-esteem and to improve their employment prospects through volunteering.

¹⁵ Jopling, K. and Jones, D. (2018) Age-friendly and inclusive volunteering: review of community contributions in later life, Centre for Ageing Better

2.2 Volunteer experiences

2.2.1 Overall reflections on the volunteer experience

In both the quantitative and qualitative research overall volunteers were very positive about their experiences with Citizens Advice. Over nine in ten volunteer respondents (93%) said they would recommend Citizens Advice as a great place to volunteer (56% 'strongly agreed' and 37% 'agreed') with limited variation between different demographic groups.

The majority of volunteers said they planned to continue volunteering with Citizens Advice over the next 12 months with 78% saying this was 'very likely' and 16% 'fairly likely'. One in 20 (6%) said it was unlikely they would continue or were unsure. Amongst those unlikely to carry on volunteering, the most commonly cited reasons focused on them having other commitments (including employment and education) or changing circumstances. A small proportion of volunteers said they wanted to leave due to factors related to the organisation or role, most commonly feeling unfulfilled/disengaged, discontent with the bureaucracy and being dissatisfied with the level of support in the role. It is possible, however, that these findings over-estimate future volunteer retention across the network as those who are less engaged in volunteering or planning to leave may have been less inclined to participate in our study.

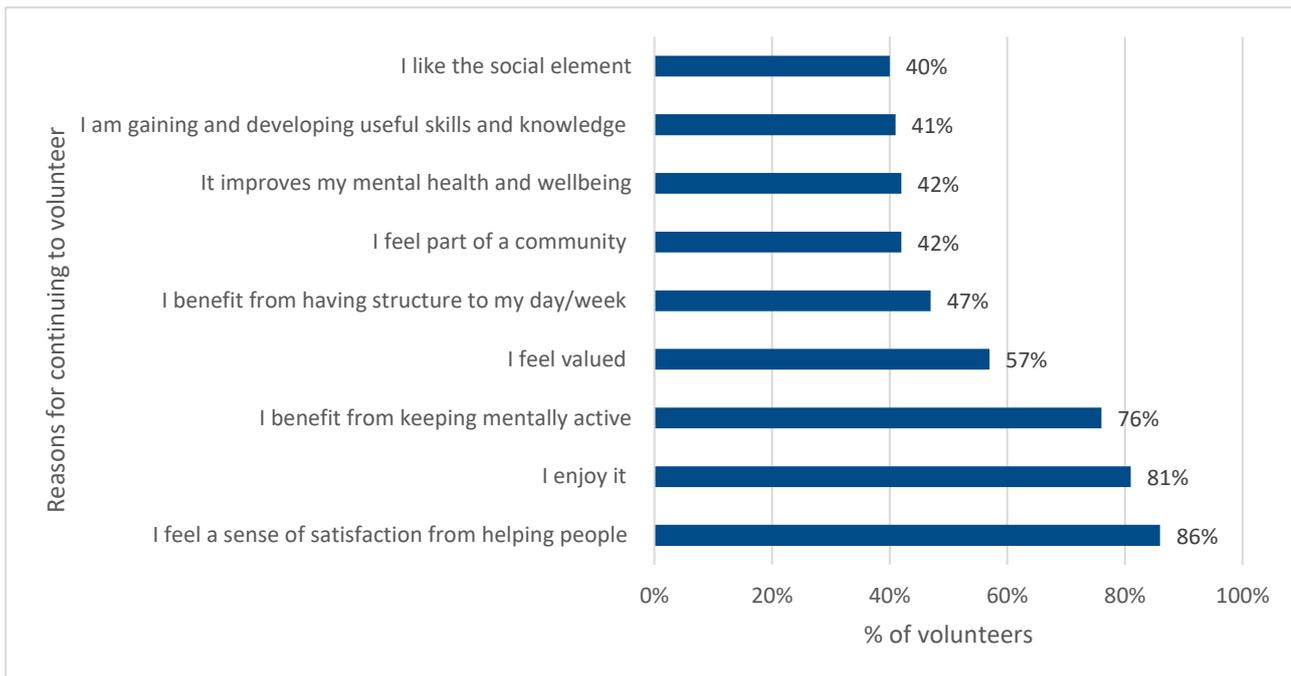
Findings suggest that a sizeable proportion of volunteers do not end up volunteering with Citizens Advice once they have expressed an interest and many do not stay beyond a year. Over half (51%) of Chief Officer survey respondents reported that for every ten expressions of interest four or fewer individuals went on to become volunteers, with volunteer conversion rates highly variable between local offices. Two in five (41%) of Chief Officers said that for every ten individuals recruited around four or fewer volunteers would be volunteering one year later. As highlighted by wider research this could be due to a number of reasons including a life event (such as getting paid employment or becoming ill), a lack of resources (such as time or money) or a poor quality volunteering experience.¹⁶

Exploring why people continue to volunteer is helpful when thinking about retention. Amongst those volunteers planning to stay with Citizens Advice, a wide range of reasons were cited for why they wanted to continue (Graph 7). The majority (86%) said they felt a sense of satisfaction from helping people and four in five (81%) saying they enjoy it. This enjoyment factor was also highlighted in the workshops:

"I'm surprised how much fun it is working at Citizens Advice. They're really good at balancing, you know, like, balancing that, you know, the misery against the joy. So from a personal level, I think I get, okay, I get satisfaction out of doing something, something that's worthwhile, but get quite a lot of fun." (Volunteer)

¹⁶ Brodie, E. et al (2011) Pathways Through Participation: what creates and sustains active citizenship, NCVO, Involve, IVR

Graph 7: Most commonly cited reasons for continuing to volunteer with Citizens Advice



(Base: 1412)

2.3 The organisation, management and support of volunteering

2.3.1 Getting started with volunteering

Most volunteers go through multiple steps to get started as a volunteer with Citizens Advice. On the whole, the recruitment and selection processes are seen as straightforward, however there is some evidence to suggest there is scope for improvement.

Qualitative work highlighted how local offices take different approaches to recruiting and selecting volunteers. Some take a highly formal and structured approach, involving formal interviews, reference checks and in some cases tests. Others opt for more informality, involving informal chats and brief application processes. There were examples from the interviews and workshops of local offices already taking these more informal approaches or local offices moving away from some very formal aspects of the application process (such as detailed application forms, aptitude tests and formal interviews), which reportedly helped overall recruitment numbers and the diversity of those appointed. In these cases, local offices assessed suitability and shared requirements for the role through more informal 'chats', online information sessions, linking potential volunteers with existing volunteers and brief application processes.

Nine in ten (90%) volunteer respondents said they found the recruitment and selection process straightforward. The survey findings suggests that overall the time it takes to get started with induction and training is relatively quick for most but that this entry phase was delayed for others. For nearly one in five volunteers (17%) the time between being accepted as a volunteer and starting

induction was over four weeks, but for most volunteers this was no more than four weeks (61%) and most commonly only two weeks (35%). The qualitative work suggests that the time it takes to get started was important to volunteers and local offices spoke of progressing this entry phase quickly to keep volunteers engaged (see also section 5).

“... keeping the momentum because the volunteers are most engaged at the beginning so we have to make sure we are progressing them fast at the beginning.” (Staff)

2.3.2 Volunteer training

Overall, volunteers were positive about the training received from Citizens Advice, saying it helped them feel confident in their role. However, volunteers were frequently critical about the length of time it took to complete the training and lack of flexibility or tailoring of training to role and previous experiences.

The research found mixed views on the training provided to Citizens Advice volunteers. Most responding volunteers were positive about their volunteer training, with 86% agreeing that the training enabled them to feel confident in carrying out their role and nine in ten (89%) said they were satisfied with the training they received overall.

Where volunteers talked about the positive aspects of volunteer training, they spoke of the quality of the training content or trainer, the ability to progress through the training at their own pace and how much they had learnt from the training content:

“I thought the quality of the materials was really good. And I was very impressed with that ... pretty well written, very approachable, very easy to get through, particularly some of the stuff that I'm not familiar with, like benefits... So quality stuff.” (Volunteer)

Where volunteers were more critical of the training, comments typically focused on the high volume of training materials, the length of time it took to complete training (sometimes outside of agreed volunteering hours), the content being too dry, not interactive enough or not up to date, a lack of tailored training to specific roles (which made some content less relevant) and a lack of recognition of prior experience or learning in training plans:

“There is a lot of training, and some of that training could be probably more cleverly tailored. I mean, I can see why it's there. Everyone needs to come up to the same standard. But when you've got to a certain point in your life and life experience, a lot of people they have done a professional job and this sort of thing. There's quite a lot to wade through really, which you don't need.” (Volunteer)

Some volunteers also commented on training materials being out of date and/or inaccurate.

The speed with which volunteers move through initial training was raised repeatedly by staff and volunteers in the workshops and considered key to volunteer retention. Two in three Chief Officers respondents (63%) think this takes too long and 52% were concerned about the negative impact of this on volunteers. Qualitative evidence suggested early access to client contact, even before all core training is completed, positively impacts retention (see section 4).

2.3.3 Volunteer Support

Volunteers were generally positive about the support they received in their roles, but many still report feeling upset about client issues or worried about clients they worked with.

Qualitative research highlighted that the support volunteers received from Citizens Advice staff was key to their volunteer experience. On a day-to-day basis this was commonly provided by session supervisors, with volunteers commenting on the importance of these relationships:

“That supervisory relationship is so important to me ... getting the right people in those jobs is fundamental for me as a volunteer because they're just the lynchpin for me.”
(Volunteer)

Over nine in ten volunteer respondents (92%) said they felt supported by staff in their local office (1% disagreed) and a similar proportion (89%) thought they had sufficient support/supervision around their role (3% disagreed). When volunteers commented on being unhappy with support this was typically because of a lack of paid staff in these roles or perceived lack of staff capacity or availability to support volunteers to the extent they wanted:

“What makes it work well, right, if you're going to have a supervisor volunteer structure, there's availability of supervisors to ask questions. Whether working remotely or in the office, right. If there's nobody to check then it becomes a problem. It's not the technology, not the location, it's the availability.” (Volunteer)

Capacity to manage volunteers was also raised by staff as a challenge and this was considered a particular issue when considering how to supervise remote advice giving. In some offices volunteers reported that levels of support had reduced since the Covid-19 pandemic and that volunteers working remotely felt less well supported and less well connected to their local office.

Although overall levels of support were seen as positive, it was not uncommon for volunteers to highlight how challenging roles could be. One in three volunteer respondents (32%) said they had felt upset about client issues they have dealt with and over two in five (44%) agreed that they worried about clients after speaking to them:

“I don't think I realised quite how much of a sponge I was in terms of, you know, times are very hard, people are suffering enormously. And it's very easy to kind of soak up a lot of that emotion.” (Volunteer)

Volunteers highlighted that support from staff was particularly important when dealing with complex or challenging cases and there were examples in the qualitative work of local offices that had wellbeing programmes or mental health recovery programmes in place for volunteers¹⁷.

2.3.4 Recognition of volunteers

On the whole, the research suggests that volunteers perceive their contribution is well recognised and valued by local offices. Nine in ten volunteers (91%) said they felt that their local office acknowledges volunteers' contributions generally and a similar proportion felt that their own contribution was recognised (88%). While on the whole volunteers were positive about this aspect of their experience there were reports in the qualitative work from some volunteers that they were not regularly thanked for their contribution or felt unappreciated by their local office;

“It's not a little commitment, lots of time, which should have quite a significant financial value, really to Citizens Advice. And I think the occasional “thank you”, it would be nice.” (Volunteer)

Such issues were typically attributed by volunteers to a lack of staff capacity or the loss of supervisors within local offices. Other volunteers said they did not necessarily want to be recognised, focusing instead on the difference they were making to others.

2.3.5 Culture of the organisation

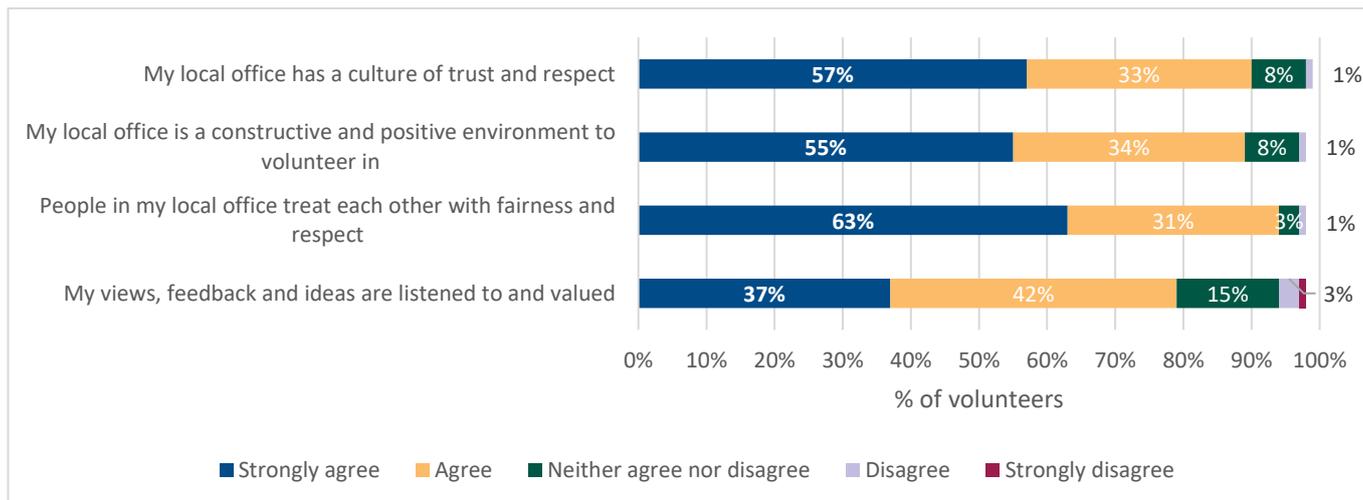
Volunteers were positive on the whole about the relationships, values and behaviours within local offices, including trust and respect. There were more mixed views on whether volunteers felt their ideas and opinions were valued and listened to.

Graph 8 shows that nine in ten volunteers (90%) thought that their local office had a culture of trust and respect. The majority also thought their local office was a constructive and positive environment to volunteer in (89%). This was echoed in the qualitative research:

“[I] never feel like I'm a second-class citizen, because I'm not kind of there every day or not. It's just part of the culture that volunteers are important.” (Volunteer)

¹⁷ The Volunteering Transformation Programme Steering Committee commissioned a new toolkit to support volunteer wellbeing in October 2023, as a result of growing awareness of the need to explicitly address volunteer wellbeing.

Graph 8: Reflections from volunteers on the culture of local offices



(Base: 1412)

The views of volunteers were more mixed on issues relating to their ability to influence their local office; 15% of volunteers neither agreed nor disagreed that their views, feedback and ideas are listened to and valued with 4% saying they disagreed with this. In the qualitative work these issues were raised by a number of volunteers who felt their views were not listened to or that their ability to influence practices in their local office were limited:

“There's a workers meeting once a month ... sometimes volunteers have tried to raise issues there. And to be honest, they've been shut down. And I'm quite vociferous, but I just don't, I will ask questions for clarity. I no longer bother to challenge, because I think it's a waste of my emotional energy. And I think that's a shame.” (Volunteer)

The volunteer survey found those volunteering remotely were marginally less likely to agree that their views, feedback and ideas are listened to and valued (75% compared to 80%) compared to volunteers volunteering in other locations. Where it was possible to compare (i.e. where sample sizes were sufficient) there were no notable differences between groups of volunteers in relation to other demographic characteristics.

3. Value of volunteering

This section of the report explores the findings from the research on the value of volunteering. It first explores the findings from the workshops, interviews and surveys on the value of volunteering to volunteers, to local offices and to the community. It then presents the findings from economic evaluation techniques on the value of volunteering, looking at the value of selected outcomes for volunteers, local offices and other key stakeholders, such as the NHS and economy.

3.1. Value of volunteering to volunteers

Citizens Advice volunteering makes a difference to volunteers in a host of different ways. These different impacts of participation are explored here in relation to:

- Personal development and resilience;
- Health and wellbeing;
- Skills and employability; and
- Community connections and engagement.

3.1.1 Personal development and resilience

The qualitative work revealed that for some volunteers a growth in confidence and self-esteem developed through volunteering brought significant personal benefits, while for others this was less relevant. Nearly half of volunteers (47%) said they had grown in confidence through their Citizens Advice volunteering, with a similar proportion (44%) citing an increase in self-esteem (Graph 9). Younger volunteers (i.e. those aged 34 and under) were more likely to say they had grown in confidence and self-esteem compared to older volunteers. Those in administrative and customer service roles (e.g. Receptionist, Admin, Admin Assistant, Admin Support for project/casework) were more likely to report growth in confidence than those in advice/information giving roles.

In the workshops and interviews volunteers spoke of how they felt more confident speaking with other people or how their confidence had been built through the learning and skills developed through their Citizens Advice volunteering or training:

“I gained back my confidence ... I started to, you know, be more communicative talkative otherwise, I used to be quiet. So it, it really helped myself, my personal and my professional growth, you know, gaining back the confidence and reducing my anxiety.” (Volunteer)

Some volunteers went further to explain how gains in confidence and self-esteem were important building blocks in making fundamental changes in their lives, such as moving into paid employment or improved family relationships.

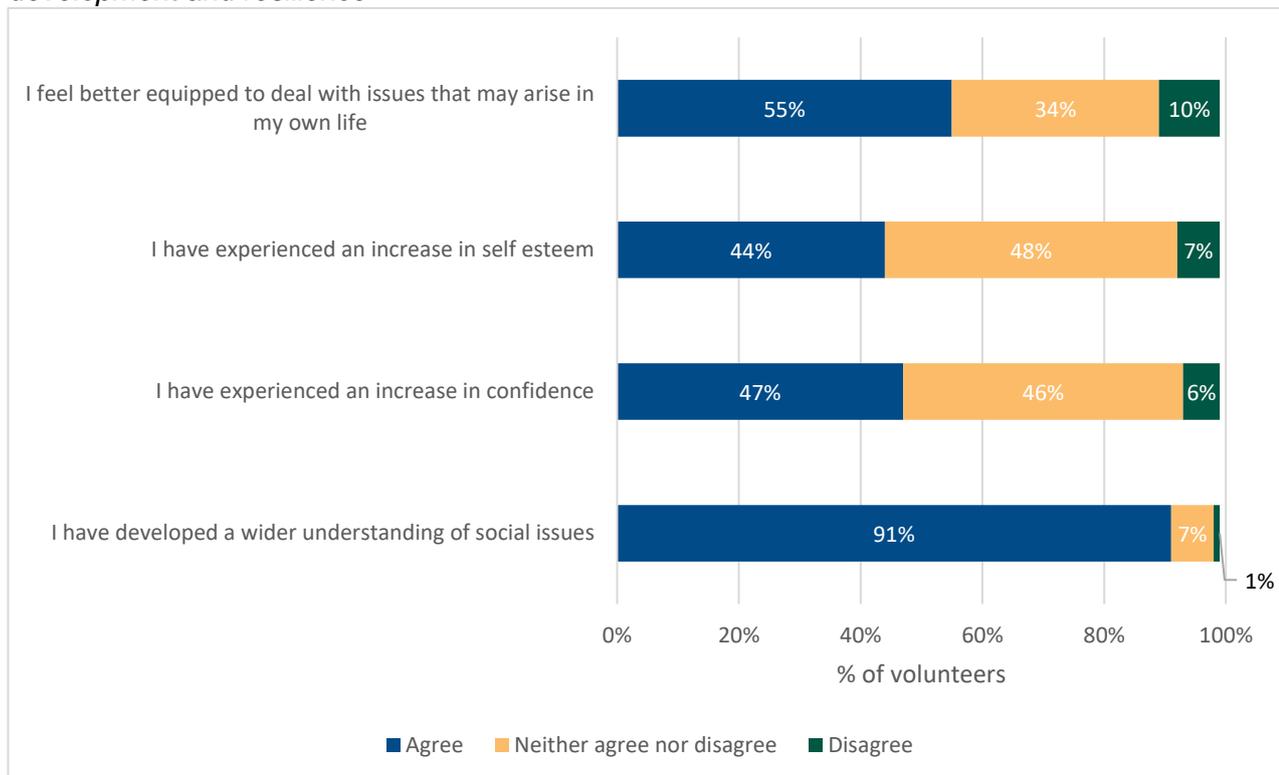
Just over half of volunteers (55%) felt they were better equipped to deal with issues that arose in their own lives as a result of their volunteering and nearly half (48%) reported that they have been able to use the knowledge and experience gained through volunteering to solve personal problems.

The majority of volunteers (91%) thought they had developed a wider understanding of social issues

through their volunteering. This was echoed in the qualitative research: volunteers spoke of how volunteering helped to open their eyes to issues, widened their perspectives and helped them recognise their own sometimes privileged situations. For some this had further knock on secondary effects, with volunteers using this understanding to speak about these issues in their wider family/social circles or community (see below).

“I think I'm more aware of how people are affected by the cost of living crisis, or not being able to afford rent, or being evicted ... I think I've got a better understanding of how difficult it is out there for some people and how lucky I am that that's never been a part of my life.” (Volunteer)

Graph 9: Reflections from volunteers on the impact of volunteering on personal development and resilience



(Base: 1412)

3.1.2 Health and wellbeing

The research explored the perceived effects of volunteering on different dimensions of volunteer wellbeing including sense of purpose and fulfilment.

Nine in ten volunteers (90%) reported that volunteering increased their sense of fulfilment from helping others. Sense of fulfilment was marginally higher for those in information/advice and admin/customer service roles compared to other volunteer roles. Over three quarters of

volunteers (76%) felt that volunteering increased their sense of purpose, a key dimension of wellbeing. This was echoed in the qualitative research with volunteers speaking of how they felt volunteering was worthwhile, rewarding or satisfying:

“At the end of it, I think, actually, I've been able to help that person, I've either been able to find the answers, been able to find them some financial help, and just listen if they're struggling a lot emotionally. So you come to the end thinking I've actually done something worthwhile today, and that's nice.” (Volunteer)

When thinking about why they continue to volunteer with Citizens Advice, over two in five volunteers (42%) said it was because it improves their mental health and wellbeing. In the qualitative research volunteers often linked the structure that volunteering gives their day or week and the social benefits of volunteering to their own wellbeing. Over a quarter of volunteers (27%) said volunteering helped to reduce their risk of loneliness:

“So it's stopped isolation for one, I don't think that can be underestimated. Because, you know, parents with children who have additional needs kind of don't fit ... we end up not fitting in a lot of places. So it stopped the isolation, which has a massive, massive effect on your mental health.” (Volunteer)

3.1.3 Skills and employability

Amongst volunteers who were not retired or unable to work (24% of total respondents) four in five (80%) said they had developed transferable skills through their volunteering (91% amongst those who were unemployed) (see Graph 10). Volunteers in the qualitative research commonly reflected on what they had learnt and the skills they developed through training and volunteering itself:

“I've learnt an awful lot. Yeah, an awful lot that I didn't know before.... So it is all the knowledge that comes from doing your training in all the different areas.... But if I'm honest I've learnt more from the clients.” (Volunteer)

They also reflected on the work experience that volunteering gave them:

“I would say I have gained a lot from volunteering which isn't always obvious. Part of that ... is in my head it is not paid work and as a result I won't be made use of or get that experience but in reality, I have been able to more or less get the same experience as paid people get.” (Volunteer)

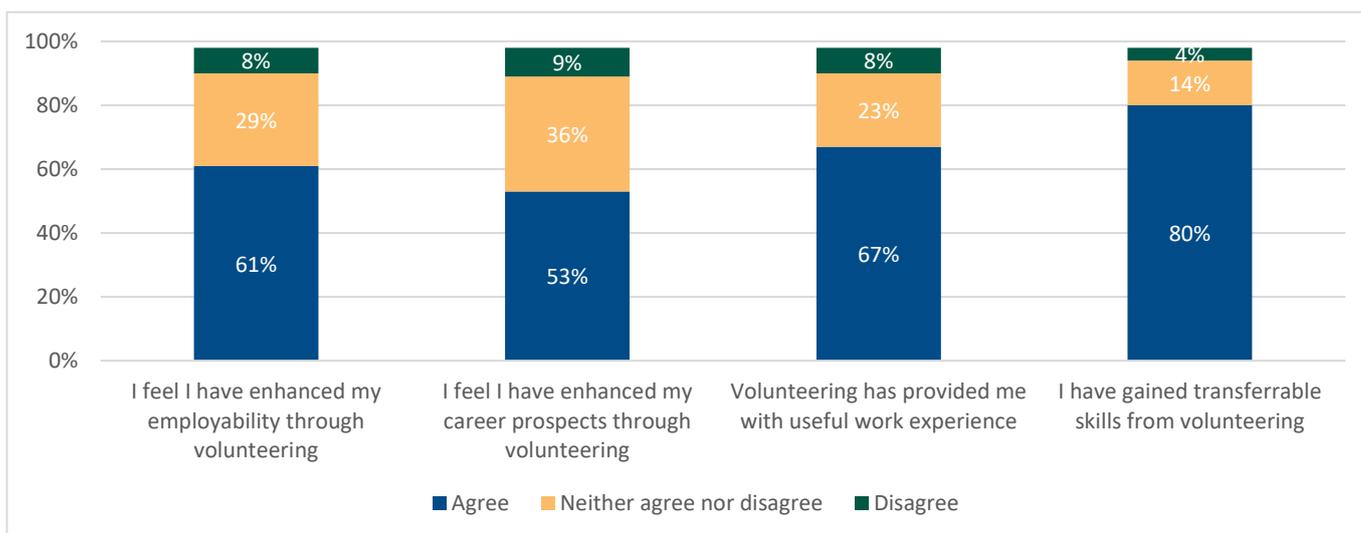
As shown in Graph 10, nearly two thirds of volunteers who were not retired or unable to work (61%) said that volunteering with Citizens Advice had enhanced their employability.

The research suggests that it is relatively common for volunteers to move into paid roles within

Citizens Advice itself. As explored in section 4 all but one local office responding to the Chief Officers survey said there were instances in their office of volunteers becoming paid staff:

“So it was a great way to get back into work, which I never thought I'd do again. And I've gone from volunteer to manager in, you know, 18 months.” (Staff)

Graph 10: Impacts of volunteering on skills and employability amongst those who were not retired or unable to work



(Base: 290)

3.1.4 Community connections and participation

The research aimed to explore the difference Citizens Advice volunteering makes to the participation of volunteers in their communities and their sense of belonging and connection to communities. However, evidence from interviews and workshops was that it was more difficult for volunteers to think and articulate these kinds of impacts.

One in five volunteers (20%) said volunteering with Citizens Advice has inspired them to undertake additional unpaid activities that they were not doing before. This was more commonly reported by younger volunteers (those aged 44 and under) compared to older volunteers (those aged 45 and over). This suggests that for some, volunteering with Citizens Advice has helped to further embed a desire to help others within their communities.

Over two thirds of volunteers (65%) said that through their volunteering they have an increased sense of belonging to a community. When volunteers reflected on this in the workshops and interviews it was more commonly in the context of feeling like they belonged to their local Citizens Advice ‘community’ through their volunteering.

Volunteers also gave examples of how their volunteering brought them into contact with people from different backgrounds and cultures in the community, particularly in relation to the clients they engage with, and this was perceived to bring personal benefits:

“And if I wasn't doing my volunteering, I think my world would be very white, middle-class female. Whereas now I have a real mixture of people that I come across and interact with, and I think that's really important. Because everybody's got, everyone has different opinions. Everyone has different situations, and it's really good to, I don't know, just think it's really good to meet all sorts of different types of people.” (Volunteer)

3.2 Value of volunteering to Citizens Advice

The research explored the difference volunteering makes to the Citizens Advice network, and revealed a wide range of perceived impacts of volunteering including:

- Capacity and sustainability of local offices;
- Team diversity and connection with communities; and
- Awareness and reputation of Citizens Advice.

3.2.1 Capacity and sustainability

The additional capacity that volunteers bring to local offices was highlighted as a key benefit of volunteer involvement amongst Chief Officers in the qualitative work:

“It is a low cost model, if we didn't have volunteers, we wouldn't be able to see as many clients, give as much advice as we do ... by having them it means the clients get to see [advisors] more quickly or get to see someone when otherwise they might not be able to.” (Staff)

The issues of capacity and sustainability are explored in more detail in section 4.

Views were more mixed on whether local offices would be able to deliver the depth and breadth of advice and information without volunteers. While well over half of Chief Officers (60%) said they wouldn't be able to help such a wide range of issues that clients face in the absence of volunteers, over one quarter (30%) did not agree with this. A similar proportion (31%) disagreed that their office wouldn't be able to help clients in as much depth as they currently do without volunteers. Clear here is the varying extent to which volunteering is central to overall local office operating models.

Over half of Chief Officer respondents (57%) said that the involvement of volunteers had led to positive changes or innovation in how their office operates. There were examples of local offices taking up suggestions from volunteers which led to positive changes, for example, the improvements in internal communications. However, as explored in section 2, some volunteers do not feel that their ideas, feedback and views are listened to and valued.

3.2.2 Workforce diversity increasing connections with the community

The desire to have more diverse teams of staff and volunteers was identified as both a motivation for, and a benefit of, volunteer involvement by local offices. This was also explored in terms of how involving a diverse team of volunteers helped improve Citizens Advice services through increased connection with the local community. Some staff members involved in the workshops highlighted that volunteers helped to improve what local offices were able to offer and deliver to the community:

“Volunteers give us a greater breadth ... just with a smaller paid staff team we couldn't possibly deliver. So it means we can, for example, within our staff team cover all the background and language skills that are sometimes needed.” (Staff)

Workshop participants and external stakeholders commonly highlighted the connections that volunteers have with their communities as an asset to the organisation. They spoke of how volunteers were able to help represent communities, have an understanding of local people and issues and an ability to relate to members of their community:

“...the volunteers reflecting the needs of the community, I guess, is something that they do really well ... in terms of bringing that true understanding [of] what's going on out there.” (External stakeholder)

These findings were also reflected in the Chief Officer survey; around two in three respondents (62%) said they thought volunteering made a difference to their local office by making services more relevant and connected to the community (8% disagreed with this). External stakeholders similarly highlighted the value of volunteers' community connections to Citizens Advice services:

“... the more understanding you have of those particular kinds of customers, the more effective those services are going to be for those communities.” (External stakeholder)

3.2.3 Awareness and reputation of Citizens Advice

Most Chief Officer respondents (62%) thought volunteering enhances the awareness of Citizens Advice in the community and specifically increases their ability to reach and engage marginalised groups (18% disagreed with this). Staff participating in the workshops reflected on this impact in a number of ways including how volunteers spread the word about Citizens Advice and signpost services to those in the community:

“We've got a couple of volunteers now that are actually going out to community centres and giving energy advice. So I mean, without them, the people they see, wouldn't have known the services that we can provide. So they can then refer into us. Whereas if they haven't had that, then they've missed it.” (Staff)

Nearly half of responding Chief Officers (49%) said they thought volunteers increase the credibility of the organisation, although 15% disagreed with this. In workshops staff spoke of the value of people in the community knowing Citizens Advice is a charity run with the involvement of volunteers, rather than a public sector body or service. Some staff remarked on the distinctiveness of volunteers, their skills and life experiences, adding value to the organisation and services, and this is explored in more detail in section 4.

3.3 Value of volunteering to the community

When exploring the difference volunteers make to the wider community, qualitative research highlighted the importance of two key points. Firstly, the important role of paid staff and the value they themselves bring to the Citizens Advice network, clients and wider community. The impact of paid staff is not explored in this research but is an important part of the wider picture of the value of the Citizen Advice network.

Secondly, the role of staff is key in *enabling* volunteer value and impact, including through training and support and more generally through helping to create a positive volunteering experience. The findings summarised below, which explore the value of volunteering to the community, should be set within this wider context of the contribution that staff and volunteers make together.

3.3.1 Helping respond to needs and problems

Overall, most Chief Officer respondents indicated that they would not be able to help as many clients if they did not involve volunteers (see also section 4), which points to how volunteers are helping to respond to needs and problems in local communities. External stakeholders commented on how volunteers, alongside paid staff, provide expert advice to the clients they work with, a need which would be challenging to meet elsewhere:

"So I think the expertise that is built up amongst the CAB advisors, whether paid or volunteers is pretty important for us and our clients. It's not just about saving us work, it's actually about what's the best thing for the clients, where can they get the best advice, and that has to be from talking to the people who spend more time dealing with that particular issue and know the ins and outs of it more." (External stakeholder)

"So, I think that value of those volunteers and how that actually helps our service is not to be underestimated. I think it's quite unique, I would say to how they, how they run the service." (External stakeholder)

The research findings point to the positive 'spillover effects' of volunteering for members of the community beyond clients. As a result of volunteering, half (47%) of volunteer survey respondents said that they feel more willing to help someone they didn't know. Most volunteers (87%) reported they have been able to use the knowledge and experience gained from volunteering to help family and friends. Volunteers in the workshops and interviews noted that this often came in the form of signposting to advice or organisations, including Citizens Advice, due to the organisational rules on

providing advice outside formal channels:

“So, lots of people will say to me, oh, you work at Citizens Advice, do you know about this? Or what can you advise about that? And then I’ll go and [recommend they] ask one of the others [Citizens Advice offices]. And so that’s quite, that’s really useful.”
(Volunteer)

3.3.2 Cost and capacity savings

The research also explored perspectives on the cost and capacity savings for public services as a result of the information and advice provided by volunteers. There were mixed views on this in the workshops and interviews. On the one hand, it was argued that the services run by Citizens Advice, some of whom rely on volunteers, could not be provided at the same scale, quality or cost by public services, as noted by one local authority interviewee:

“If that client couldn’t access the CAB, they would come to us as a councillor and say, “well, how are you going to help me?” It’s almost false economy ... [plus] that organisation is running on majority of volunteers.... you start to build this picture of the actual economic value of those individuals, not only to us as an organisation, because we rely on them, but also the economic value to those individuals that access those, you know, the level of support?” (External stakeholder)

Indeed, over four in five (86%) Chief Officer respondents agreed that if their local office didn’t involve volunteers there would be more pressure on public services. However, it was also highlighted that advice and information, provided by Citizens Advice volunteers (and staff), could add more pressure to public services, for example, through an increased uptake of benefits. Assessing this is outside of the scope of this research.

The capacity savings for community organisations and services were also highlighted as a benefit of volunteer involvement. The majority of Chief Officer respondents (88%) felt that without volunteers in their local office there would be more pressure on other community organisations and services. This was echoed in the interviews with external stakeholders, including from this local community organisation:

“So there would be if you’d like a negative impact on us in that it would push work, if you like, back to us.... And I think that’s not just about workload, I think my view is genuinely that our clients are best off dealing with the experts.” (External stakeholder)

However, the following comment from a volunteer identifies how issues relating to the impact of volunteering and Citizens Advice on other local organisations is more complex:

“Citizens Advice: one of the reasons it exists is to empower clients to make better use of other services. On that basis it isn’t taking demand away from other services but empowering people to make use of them.” (Volunteer)

3.4 Value of volunteering expressed in monetary terms

Based on the Theory of Change, Outcomes Framework and volunteer archetypes, the benefits of volunteering at Citizens Advice identified in this research have been valued in socio-economic terms. This has been done by assigning cost or benefits values to outcomes for volunteers, for local offices and for other key stakeholders (e.g. NHS and economy) as a result of the time spent volunteering by Citizens Advice volunteers. The volunteer archetypes are used as the basis for this analysis as the elements within their collective profiles represent the majority of Citizens Advice volunteers and as such, their experiences and outcomes should be fairly typical of the volunteer population. See the *Technical Report* for more information about how these should be approached.

The model values the benefits of volunteering and compares the societal costs and benefits of each archetype if they volunteer with Citizens Advice, versus a counterfactual scenario in which they do not volunteer with Citizens Advice. The difference in these two scenarios captures the net value to society of volunteering at Citizens Advice local offices. This model forms the basis of a value of volunteering calculator which is explained in more detail in the *Value Calculator - Instruction Manual* document.

The outcomes valued and their sources are summarised in the *Value Calculator - Instruction Manual* that accompanies this report. The value of outcomes has been informed by an evidence review and draws on recognised sources of socio-economic values. These show that outcomes featured can be organised into three arenas:

- Value of volunteering
- Skills development and employability
- Health and wellbeing (of the volunteer).

More detail on each of these is shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Value of volunteering time and outcomes in the value calculator

OUTCOME	DESCRIPTION
<i>Value of time donated</i>	
Volunteering time	The monetary value of the time that volunteers spend at their local offices
<i>Skill development and employability</i>	

OUTCOME	DESCRIPTION
Gaining employment more quickly	The additional productivity generated to the economy as a result of volunteers getting paid employment sooner due to their volunteering experiences at Citizens Advice
Receiving a higher wage due to being more skilled	The additional productivity generated to the economy as a result of volunteers being more skilled due to their volunteer experience, and attracting a higher wage rate
Health and wellbeing	
Increased life satisfaction	The value of improved life satisfaction for volunteers (essentially improved wellbeing) as a result of their volunteering
Improved mental health	Volunteering can improve some people's mental health by reducing loneliness or their enjoyment of life. This may be to the extent that it reduces or prevents need for treatment for anxiety and depression. Their use of NHS mental health services reduces, generating capacity in the system for clinicians to see other patients

We have used the calculator to value the time donated by volunteers across all local offices in 2024. Using the total active volunteer population of 10,557¹⁸ and the assumed breakdown of the volunteer population by archetype as outlined in the Annex, this indicated that the value of CA volunteering was at least £100 million in 2024. This encompasses the value of volunteering time donated and improved outcomes for volunteers themselves, the economy and the NHS.

This is based on one year’s service for all volunteers but encompasses the values of improved employment and mental health outcomes for volunteers for the subsequent five year period¹⁹, as outlined in the *Value Calculator - Instruction Manual*. For example, as a result of his year spent volunteering at his local office, Archetype D secures a graduate role more quickly and is economically productive six months sooner.

Table 3 shows this £100 million broken down across the three key categories outlined above. This is the value generated to volunteers themselves, local offices, the NHS in terms of capacity savings and the economy due to improved productivity.

¹⁸ Taken from the Citizens Advice Okta profile data of volunteers in April 2024.

¹⁹ By building medium and longer term outcomes into this calculator we are providing a more comprehensive view of the outcomes of volunteering and reflecting the outcomes uncovered in the research.

Table 3: Value of volunteering for a year

Value of time and improved outcomes	Financial value in £
Value of volunteering	
Volunteering time	76,831,090
Skill development and employability	
Gaining employment more quickly	3,745,371
Receiving a higher wage due to being more skilled	279,774
Health and wellbeing	
Increased life satisfaction	14,561,370
Improved mental health	5,515,444
TOTAL	100,933,049

We can see that the largest value created through volunteering is to local offices (time donated to them valued at the average hourly cost of labour in the UK)²⁰. The next largest value is increased life satisfaction to volunteers due to their regular volunteering (valued at £1,541 per year)²¹.

These are set as minimum values – the actual figures are at least these. For example, in taking the average wage plus on-costs to represent the value of an hour's volunteering time we exclude any additional uplifts from bringing in specialist knowledge or skill with that volunteer. An example, described in section 4.2 below, comes from a Chief Officer extolling the benefit of having a chartered accountant as a volunteer in the team to help with the office's finances and financial decisions.

²⁰ Weekly earnings from [ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings \(ASHE\)](#), 2023; weekly hours worked from [ONS data](#), March 2024

²¹ Lawton, R.N. et al. (2020), [Does Volunteering Make Us Happier, or Are Happier People More Likely to Volunteer? Addressing the Problem of Reverse Causality When Estimating the Wellbeing Impacts of Volunteering](#), *Journal of Happiness Studies*, Volume 22, pages 599–624

4. Volunteering models and local office experience

4.1 A framework for understanding volunteering models

The initial brief for this work included the goal of identifying a small number of volunteering models that could be cited and used as best practice in terms of the value and benefits they produce for clients, volunteers, Citizens Advice and local communities. It quickly became clear this was not feasible, given the huge level of variation in local context and service delivery models taking place across the network. Instead, we have developed a Volunteering Models and Options Toolkit (VMOT), aimed at supporting the network to understand this range in more detail, and to enable and empower local offices to make informed choices about the volunteering models they currently operate or want to implement. The resource is underpinned by a framework with three core dimensions (local context, local office culture, volunteer management practice) that have been found to shape volunteering models;

Local Context: The size, scale and location of local offices, the level of resource and funding they may have available and the volunteer management capability and capacity within that local office.

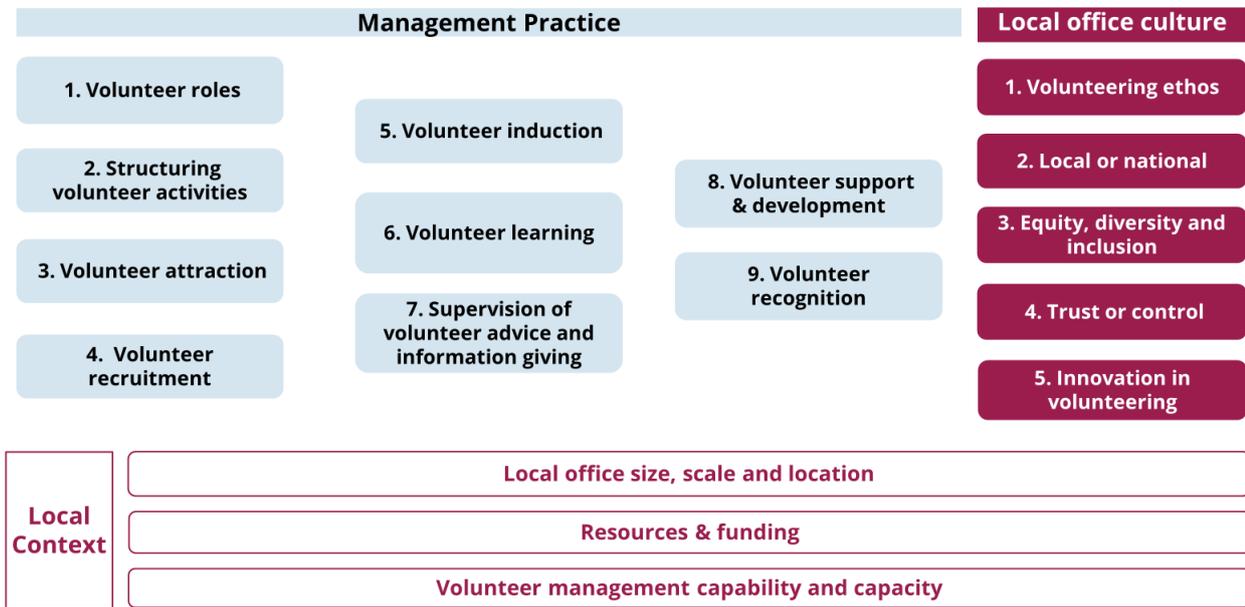
Local Office Culture: Underpinning attitudes, beliefs and behaviours towards volunteering that impact the way in which volunteers are involved and supported. There are five Culture modules, as shown below.

Management Practice: Practical decisions about stages of the volunteer journey that create the day-to-day experience of volunteer involvement and support. There are nine Management Practice modules, as shown below.

Figure 2 summarises this framework.

We conducted analysis to explore the extent to which local office context (e.g. rural/urban location, income, size (for which staff FTE was used as a proxy) influenced different volunteering models and the experience and impact they deliver. Where there are insights on these dimensions, they are included in the VMOT Data and Insights guidance. However, it is important not to put too much weight on the importance of these as whilst the surveys were completed by 40% of Chief Officers and 1,412 volunteers across 179 local offices, in many cases sample sizes are very small. For example, when reviewing the impact of local office income in some cases there are only two responses for particular income bands. To derive more general trends about the role and influence of rural/urban location, income and overall size would therefore be unhelpful. Similarly small sample sizes occur in other elements of local context. Overall, based on available data, these dimensions appear to have little impact on which volunteering models are in place, the impact on volunteer experience and the value derived from volunteering.

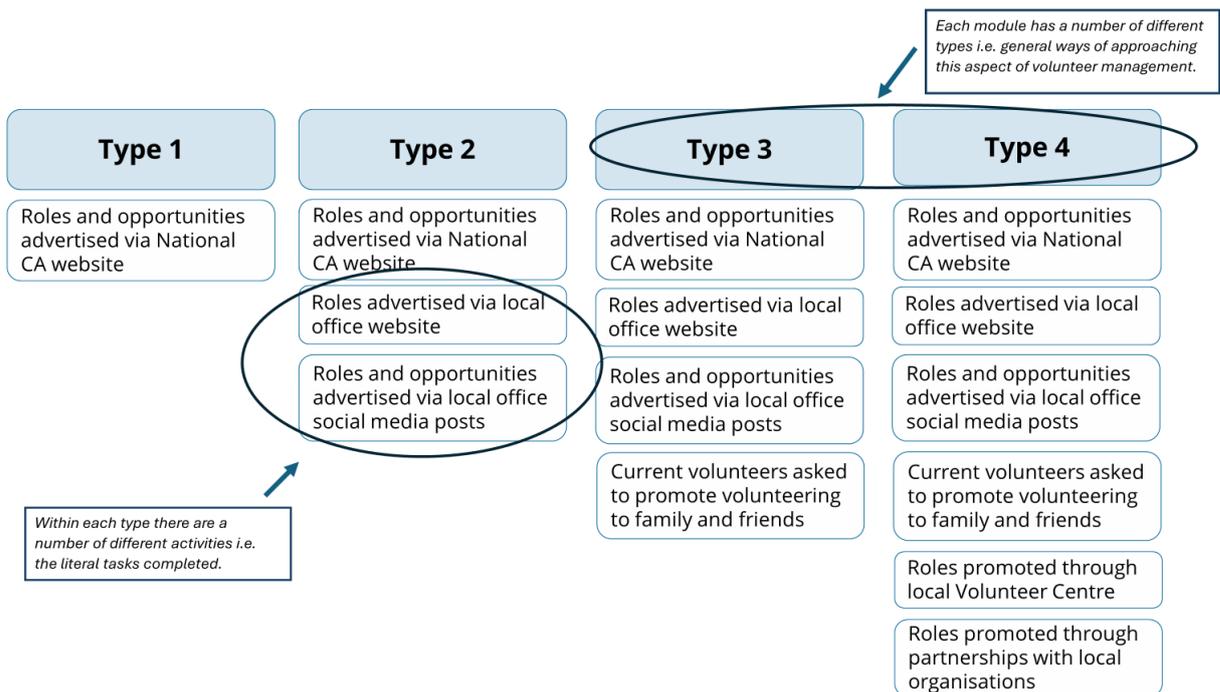
Figure 2: Local office framework for understanding context, culture and practice.



While local context may somewhat limit choice (even if it doesn't eliminate it) there is still a wide range of choices of approach available to most Chief Officers in how to approach different aspects of volunteer engagement and management. Beneath each of the modules within the Volunteering Models and Options Toolkit (VMOT) workbook there are therefore a number of different types and activities that explore each element of volunteer management in more detail. Figure 3 shows an example of this, for the management practice module of Volunteer Attraction, with four types from which to choose.

The VMOT toolkit includes more detailed information on current practice across the network (via the VMOT workbook) and where data is available, the benefits and challenges of different approaches as identified through this research (via the VMOT Data and Insights guidance). It is supported by the VMOT Cost Calculator, an Excel-based tool to support local offices in making informed decisions about which type to use in relation to each module of management practice. This enables local offices to explore costs of particular modules of management activity e.g. attraction, recruitment, recognition.

Figure 3: Example VMOT module - Volunteer Attraction



Below we have summarised the main overall findings in relation to volunteering models and the experiences of local offices.

4.2 Volunteering as central to operations

Of the 98 local offices who responded to the Chief Officers survey only one did not involve volunteers, and just 3 were looking to reduce their volunteer numbers. Further information on reasons for this was not provided. Volunteer involvement is clearly core to most existing overall local office operating models, reflecting its positioning by the national organisation as one of the seven Citizens Advice strategy fundamentals.

When asked to describe the difference volunteering makes to their office 94% of Chief Officer survey respondents agreed it increased overall capacity, reflecting interview and workshop evidence:

“Without our volunteers we would not be running.” (Staff)

“We probably do three times more with volunteers than we would through just paid staff.” (Staff)

While we saw above (section 3.2) that views were mixed on whether volunteer involvement helped

meet client need in more depth or with a greater range of issues, the impact of volunteers in increasing the overall number of clients was very clear. This additional capacity includes bringing in skills, life experiences and knowledge the local office would otherwise not have access to, something 86% of Chief Officer respondents agreed with. One staff workshop participant described the value derived from involving a trained chartered accountant as a volunteer to help with finances, explaining,

“The person I’ve got I couldn’t afford.” (Staff)

Another commented,

“The skills that you can get from a volunteer we couldn’t afford to pay for.” (Staff)

When asked to think about how offices would run without volunteers 87% agreed they would not be able to help as many people, and that there would be more pressure on community services and organisations (also 87%).

4.3 Factors influencing the roles undertaken by volunteers

The range of roles volunteers were involved in was described by Chief Officers as largely shaped by the supply of volunteers that local offices had access to. 88% of Chief Officer respondents agreed volunteer availability was a factor in shaping the roles they offered, and 79% agreed volunteer skills was a factor in this. There was no evidence of significant differences between urban and rural locations in relation to this. Volunteer availability is of course directly linked to local office opening hours, however it was outside the scope of this work to explore volunteer availability in hours when local offices are currently not open.

In addition, 51% of Chief Officers cited volunteer confidence as a factor, and 47% a desire not to overload volunteers. Qualitative data shows the need for careful management of these dynamics however, as some volunteers actively welcomed being challenged to engage in demanding activities:

“... you’re using your brain, you’ve things that are challenging ... I think in some ways I would be lost without it.” (Volunteer)

“I found it very valuable to use these harder skills I have applied in larger companies before ... but in more everyday settings and that has stretched my technical skills.” (Volunteer)

Evidence on the way in which volunteer confidence increases *through* volunteering is also important to remember here: 49% of volunteers agreed their confidence had grown as a result of volunteering

with Citizens Advice, and for 14% of all volunteers growing confidence was an initial motivation for volunteering.

It is also interesting to reflect on the extent to which Chief Officer responses may be shaped by the availability, skills, and confidence of their current volunteers, while potential and new volunteers may present different opportunities. One local office described in detail having moved away from advertising for the specific skills and experience they needed and instead being open to discussions with potential volunteers about the personal and professional experiences they had and their own motivations. This approach had increased overall recruitment and the breadth of roles being undertaken by volunteers.

The third highest scoring factor in determining whether volunteers were appointed was the capacity of paid staff to manage and support volunteers (62% agreement), which can be helpfully compared with staff confidence to do this (a factor for just 11%) and staff willingness to do this (10%): staff *are* confident and content to get involved in volunteer management but lack the time to do this. This then has a knock-on impact on the number and range of roles offered to volunteers.

Survey data shows 37% of Chief Officer respondents also agreed restrictions imposed by funders or their expectations impacted upon the roles in which volunteers were involved. Examples of occasions in which local offices considered they were prevented from involving volunteers in some projects, either by external local funder restrictions or those imposed by national Citizens Advice, were shared in workshops. Staff spoke about their frustrations of not being able to make more use of volunteer time and talent, because of the rules that meant in some cases funding could only be used for staff posts and not to support volunteering. They were at times unclear whether the restrictions were from the funder themselves, or from national Citizens Advice, but their presence was seen as undermining the service's espoused commitment to volunteering²². More practically, local offices were also frustrated at having to spend money on staff posts, when those funds could deliver even more, and perhaps more sustainably, if the funds were allowed to be used to support a volunteer model.

“There was money came out... and it's for energy advice. Now I could run that service for volunteers. We've got people that would do it. But... it was for a paid role that ended March and you're thinking well, that person then walks away in March. My volunteers would do it and their knowledge remains with them. Probably their pressure was from their funder, but it's that lack of acknowledgement of the value of volunteers from outside.” (Staff)

²² The national volunteering team have indicated this issue is currently being addressed in at least one funded programme.

“... my huge frustration with Citizens Advice is the funding is for paid roles. And there’s not acknowledgement that you can deliver that service with volunteers. And that is not valuing our volunteers, and they feel that and they’re noticing that... it’s really sad that you have a model that works, that’s efficient, that you’re delivering, and your funders want to tell you how to run what you’re doing.” (Staff)

Clear here is the sense from some that the “staff only” approach is both not the best use of funds, but also potentially not the most sustainable approach or an approach that is in line with the espoused commitment to, and valuing of volunteering, across the network.

It is also important to note the practical factors that influence roles volunteers undertake with almost a third of Chief Officers describing lack of office space as a factor (32%) and 13% citing costs around IT and other equipment needed by volunteers. More generally 42% agreed budget/funding available to support volunteering was a factor influencing the roles volunteers undertook.

4.4 Volunteering ethos and leadership

Local office qualitative work revealed that alongside these practical and operational issues were those related more to attitudes and ethos. In some local offices volunteering was perceived and celebrated as core to organisational mission; in others much more as a cost-effective way of delivering services.

“... historically, we do the community thing. And we’ve had this volunteer as well, this volunteer, so we’ve had her for 30 years, and she’s been through all the variations that we’ve had. So, we have created something for her ... And I know that’s the wrong way around. But the benefit is still that it’s, it’s a community thing, it’s a looking after people thing.” (Staff)

This contrasts with others who focussed much more on the costs and benefits of volunteering in a more literal sense:

“... if you weighed it on the scales for us it is a cost benefit.” (Staff)

“I’m a paid worker so every minute I’m spending with a volunteer is costing the organisation.” (Staff)

Some local offices also described a clear shared leadership and prioritisation of volunteering across all their staff teams:

“Senior management (are) involved in the process from beginning to end.” (Chief Officer survey respondent)

“We encourage all staff to have an open door policy with volunteers as we want to ensure that people giving their time and skills for free feel supported at all times. In particular I, as Chief Officer, and our Advice Services Manager, make ourselves available to volunteers outside of office hours and for matters not related to the office. We do this to ensure volunteers understand they are part of our community and are valued.” (Chief Officer survey respondent)

Clear here is the extent to which there is both a shared leadership commitment to volunteering and a sense of working in full and authentic partnership with volunteers, rather than seeing them as a means to an end. This underpinning ethos also influenced the extent to which and how volunteers were involved in the local office.

4.5 Workforce diversity and flexibility

A significant proportion of Chief Officer respondents describe one of the key differences made through volunteer involvement as increasing connections between people from different backgrounds or with different characteristics (77% agree this is the case). More than four in five Chief Officers (83%) agreed that volunteers bring skills, life experiences, and knowledge the local office would not have access to otherwise. This was echoed in the qualitative work:

“It’s about getting different people in from different walks of life, different ethnicities, different cultural backgrounds, different ages, you know... and people that wouldn’t necessarily want to work for us.” (Staff)

Over two thirds of Chief Officer respondents (68%) said there would be less interaction between people of different backgrounds and ages without the involvement of volunteers in their local office. This is interesting given volunteer survey data shows the demographic diversity of the Citizens Advice volunteer base is in fact limited, and actually less diverse than the general volunteering population in the UK. The view that volunteering increases the demographic diversity of local office teams therefore perhaps reflects the fact that although the volunteer base itself is not demographically diverse, it is different from that of the staff base.

It might be reasonable to assume that this is the case in relation to age, given the generally high proportion of volunteers who are retired and the often cited involvement of younger students (aged under 25) as volunteers in many local offices. However, a review of the 2022/2023 Citizens Advice People Survey data shows this not to be the case²³, other than in the age category of over 65. Amongst volunteers 57% are aged over 65, compared to just 7% of staff. In contrast 28% of both staff and volunteers are in the age category of 55 – 64 years and while the proportion of volunteers aged under 25 is 3%, this is actually higher for staff i.e. 6%. There are limited differences between staff and volunteer teams in relation to gender, disability, ethnicity and other demographic

²³ It is important to note that the response rate for the 2022/23 People Survey was 31% for staff and 25% for volunteers, and not evenly distributed across England and Wales. Results should therefore be considered in that context.

characteristics. The perception of volunteers bringing greater diversity to local office teams, therefore appears to be greater than the reality, when considered through the lens of demographic characteristics. Volunteers may however bring a more diverse range of wider life experiences, perspectives and backgrounds, which add value to local offices.

It is notable that 67% of Chief Officers described themselves as taking steps to diversify their volunteer base. Respondents were prompted to describe what this involved, and 58 responses were submitted. All of these focussed on broadening the promotion of current roles, for example through seeking to work with partner organisations, attending community events or using more inclusive language in advertisements. Crucially none of the responses related to adaptations to the volunteer role or ways in which people could volunteer time to the organisation. This is despite clear external national evidence that key barriers to volunteering generally continue to be concerns it will involve more time than people are able to commit and a lack of flexibility (Kanemura, 2023).

Lack of flexibility in volunteering has been identified as a key enabler to participation (Jopling and Jones, 2020) with external evidence showing that for those who had not volunteered over the last year, the most common things that would encourage them are flexibility with the time they need to commit and flexibility in the way they give their help (Kanemura, 2023). This is particularly interesting given there is some evidence from current Citizens Advice volunteers that the experience of being a volunteer is generally more flexible than might be perceived to be the case before getting involved:

“I don't think people realise how much flexibility there is in it. I certainly didn't.”
(Volunteer)

“So as soon as I said I needed to step away from advice work, everyone was really understanding and kind about it... there was a lot of flexibility about, you know, what would you prefer to do, you know, you can do as little or as much as you'd like or is appropriate to you and your current circumstances.” (Volunteer)

During interviews one staff member also outlined in some detail the adaptations their local office had made to ensure a volunteer with a specific condition was able to participate in volunteering,

“We have one volunteer, who [has a specific condition], and so does everything via her computer, but she does email advice. And what that gives her, it is, is something quite special, you know. She's routine and structure in her life, and she's found it, you know, a really great process for her.” (Volunteer)

Clear here is the strength of the mutually beneficial experience derived from taking this flexible and inclusive approach.

4.6 Volunteers: alleviating and creating pressure

When thinking about how offices would run without volunteers 88% of Chief Officer respondents indicated that this would create more pressure on paid staff. Despite these results, which can be seen as indicators of the involvement of volunteers having a positive impact on local office experience, volunteer involvement is also a source of concern for many Chief Officer respondents: 72% indicated that uncertainty around the resources available to the local office from week to week is a negative consequence of reliance on volunteering.

This uncertainty is interesting given both the workshops and the surveys indicate that there is regularity and predictability in volunteer attendance, and a continuity of engagement. Volunteer survey results show volunteers are most often active between 4 and 8 hours per week, and the Chief Officers survey shows the most common time volunteered is one day per week. 90% of volunteers describe themselves as doing the same shifts every week. In addition, large numbers of volunteers have over two years' service, particularly in advice and information giving roles. It is also interesting to note that there was very little qualitative evidence that volunteers were unreliable in attendance, other than several references to the way in which volunteers were able to take as many holidays as they liked, and at relatively short notice. There may then be a gap between *perceptions* of potential lack of reliability and stability (driven by the fundamental principle of volunteering as a voluntary relationship without contractual security) and the *reality* of the way in which the volunteer model actually operates i.e. typically with regular, routine and often long standing involvement and attendance. It may also be the case that the volunteers who were motivated to complete the volunteer survey, were those more likely to volunteer routinely and reliably.

Other negative consequences of volunteer involvement reported by Chief Officers included the time involved in managing and supporting volunteers. This was cited by 36% of respondents, although a larger proportion actively disagreed this was a negative consequence (50%). The time involved in training volunteers was also a concern with 56% agreeing this was a negative consequence of involving volunteers. Training time being too long was also something 63% of Chief Officer respondents agreed was a source of worry. Survey responses from Chief Officers indicated more generally high levels of worry in a number of areas related to volunteer involvement with 71% agreeing they regularly worry about retaining volunteers. Having enough volunteers in the office was a worry for 67% of respondents.

The above data is particularly interesting given workshop evidence that involving volunteers helpfully created opportunities for staff to gain management experience. This was presented as a positive route into learning about people management. However, the above data suggests that the voluntary nature of the relationship may bring particular, and perhaps additional, challenges: managing volunteers may be more challenging than managing staff and therefore perhaps not the easiest place to start in people management. The way in which the management of volunteers can require additional and different skills (and be particularly emotionally demanding for managers) has been highlighted in external research (Ward and Greene, 2018)²⁴. This was noted in workshops where staff commented that managing volunteers can be difficult, with volunteers at times “*over confident*”

²⁴ Ward, J., & Greene, A. (2018). Too Much of a Good Thing? The Emotional Challenges of Managing Affectively Committed Volunteers. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 47(6), 1155-1177

and not keen to complete required training (Staff).

4.7 Volunteers: positively impacting local office culture

Qualitative data indicated ways in which involving volunteers positively impacted upon the overall culture within a local office. Staff workshop participants referred to volunteers bringing “richness to the daily experience of working” and the added “*enjoyment of working in the bureau*” as a result of working alongside volunteers, which was described as “*nice*” (Staff member). Staff referred to the different culture involved in volunteer management and the way in which exposure to this positively impacted their own working experience:

“The culture of volunteers is different to paid staff and that is healthy to a certain extent.”
(Staff)

“Volunteers seem to value the work from a different perspective ... if I was employed there, I think having people voluntarily join would make me feel better about myself.”
(Volunteer)

The suggestion that volunteers work from a different “perspective” (meaning perhaps bringing different motivations, previous experiences and as being at different stages of life) is seen as a positive force. Alongside this, for some paid staff working alongside people who are actively choosing to volunteer their time in support of the organisation they are working for, is experienced as a form of validation or endorsement.

The need to take care to manage volunteers sensitively and appropriately, reflecting the voluntary nature of their relationship with the organisation, was also seen as having positive wider benefits across the local office:

“... always trying to be checking yourself to make sure you are doing it in a positive way or in a kind way. And that creates an atmosphere that is supportive, and collaborative, and kindness.” (Staff)

The culture of support, collaboration and kindness described here, while being particularly driven by the need to specifically manage volunteers appropriately, has wider impacts for all staff and volunteers. Notably these comments are all from staff, and it is important to consider these alongside the volunteer feedback on the extent to which they feel listened to and able to influence change in their local office (see section 2) which may indicate that this espoused culture of support, collaboration and kindness is not always fully delivered for all volunteers.

4.8 Volunteers as a source of paid staff

Volunteers are an important source of skills and experience for staff roles, which some local offices indicated were hard to recruit for but crucial for the delivery of services and projects. The extent to which volunteers can become a source of future local office staff is clear: 99% of Chief Officers described having staff members who were once volunteers. While the proportion of the staff

workforce who were previously volunteers varied, the most common response was between 21 and 40%. For nearly two in five local offices (36%), over two fifths of staff were former volunteers and for one in ten (9%), former volunteers represented over 80% of staff in local offices. In addition, 67% of Chief Officers reported instances of volunteers becoming paid staff and continuing the same or a similar role to that which they had previously carried out as a volunteer.

Although almost all local offices have some staff who were previously volunteers (and 4% of volunteer survey respondents also held paid roles within their local office), the desire to gain employment with Citizens Advice is rarely an initial motivator for volunteers, being described as such by just 6% of volunteer survey respondents. Additionally, while the research found that the movement of volunteers into paid roles brought significant benefits to local offices and volunteers themselves, it also presented challenges for local offices with the loss of volunteers and volunteer capacity.

4.9 Boundaries between voluntary and paid roles

Both the Chief Officer and volunteer surveys explored experiences of the differences between staff and volunteer roles. For Chief Officers this was most likely to be described as paid staff provide advice on funded projects (79% agreement) or paid staff undertake more complex or ongoing cases (72% agreement). Volunteer responses also reflected these themes with 47% indicating a difference was that paid staff take on more complex or ongoing cases and 46% that paid staff provide advice on funded projects.

Notably, 7% of Chief Officers and 12% of volunteers agreed with the statement “I don’t feel as though there are any differences between the roles of volunteers and paid staff members”. Qualitative work offers a range of possible reasons for these views. Participants often wanted to make clear that the overall Citizens Advice operating model only works because of the way in which staff and volunteers work together. It was common for both staff and volunteers to make efforts in both workshops and interviews, to ensure the research team understood the equal value of each part of the workforce, whether paid or voluntary. In addition, for some staff and volunteers there was a need to clearly convey the risk that focussing too heavily on the value and impact of volunteering was to somehow downgrade the importance, value or impact of the contribution of staff.

“Staff should be valued too. So there shouldn’t be a distinction between volunteers and staff, in terms of the organisation’s attitude and approach to those who assist them to do their objectives.” (Staff)

Participants also often discussed the importance of staff and volunteers being able to offer services of an equivalent quality to clients:

“Trying to get volunteers to the same competency as a member of staff, the idea is to have the same quality and consistency.” (Staff)

“... the end product of what they’re (the client) receiving is at a standard that it will be that standard, whether it was paid staff or volunteer.” (Staff)

In some cases participants felt it was helpful that clients did not know whether the person supporting them was a staff member or volunteer, while for others it was helpful for clients to be aware they were being advised by a volunteer. This was sometimes described as being valuable because the client may feel particularly well supported if they knew their adviser was choosing to volunteer their time to help them, or as a way to manage client expectations about the speed at which their case would be progressed. As research with clients was out of scope, we have been unable to explore this in more detail.

For some volunteers it was positive to have no distinction between volunteers and paid staff, and this reinforced the strong bond and shared commitment between them:

“I think there is a sense that we’re all working together. So we’re running a drop in, there’s a queue of people in the street, we make a commitment that whoever shows up, we’re going to see them that day. So there is a sense of we’ve all got to work together. Otherwise it’s not going to work... I do get the feeling that ... everybody’s equal in the sense that we’ve all got to make this work.” (Volunteer)

It is important however, to note that these positive views about lack of distinction come from existing volunteers. What may be considered positive by those already involved, could be a barrier to potential or new volunteers and in this context it is important to note the external evidence that a growing proportion of volunteers think that volunteering is becoming too much like paid work (26% in 2023 compared to 19% in 2019) and that their organisation has unreasonable expectations in terms of what they do (24% in 2023 compared to 17% in 2019) (Kanemura et al, 2023)²⁵. Despite this external evidence, interview participants did positively comment on the flexibility of approach in their local office and highlighted this as a key difference between the staff and volunteer experience:

“When you’re volunteering there’s less pressure, I suppose you’re doing it more on your terms. So... I can not turn up one week and do four sessions the next week as well... There’s no expectation on you. It’s absolutely on your terms... you’re there helping when you want to do it, what works best for you.” (Volunteer)

²⁵ Kanemura, R., McGarvey, A., and Farrow, A (2023) Time Well Spent 2023: A national survey on the volunteer experience, NCVO

“... it’s about flexibility ... I could take five weeks off and go travelling.”
(Volunteer)

Volunteers also actively highlighted the way in which their experience did not feel like a job:

“My working days don’t get later and later, you know, and never take stuff home and never do stuff in the evenings. You know, and never expected to do anything outside those core hours and that’s really important to me.” (Volunteer)

“...it’s important as a volunteer because I never want to get sucked into the kind of stress that everybody has as a paid worker.” (Volunteer)

4.10 Developing new volunteering models

In workshops and interviews participants at times indicated a desire to change their current volunteering model or their approach to aspects of volunteer management, and expressed some frustration at feeling they had limited capacity or capability to do this:

“I’ve got some very clear ideas but there is a) not enough capacity and b) not the support from the National Office to do things differently. And a variety of other dependencies. So, there are barriers, which are sometimes difficult to understand how to overcome.” (Staff)

They went on to note the need for a “driver” to make change, explaining,

“... the only way we did it was we merged, said there was a big driver for change and looking at the whole organisation.” (Staff)

Some local offices appeared to be seeking a significant reason to make a change, beyond simply a desire to improve things. For some there was a sense of needing something specific, like a merger, to happen and create the need to make changes.

Workshops also highlighted a desire from some local offices for more joined up working between them in order to improve aspects of volunteer management, even without merging. They were keen for the national organisation to play a role in enabling this. Workshop participants explained:

“I do not understand why more is not done centrally, and why there are so many inconsistencies. And I just think so much money could be saved if things were done centrally.” (Volunteer)

One specific suggestion was for increased central coordination and delivery of some aspects of volunteer training, working to a regional delivery model.

“... we get very small snippets, half an hour training on certain things ... But they’re not specific to our CA, they are only done on a certain day of the week, which not every volunteer works every day ... even if it was saved, we took all of London together ... yeah, that’s all 32 boroughs in London. Yeah, so why is it not done by CA, London? Yeah. And it’s things like that, that I just think could be so much more efficient.”
(Volunteer)

While in some workshop discussions staff were seeking an event or significant “driver” to prompt change (e.g. a merger), some local offices had chosen to redefine a number of aspects of their volunteering model simply in response to their need for more volunteers, a desire for a more diverse pool of volunteers, and in recognition of the changing external context for volunteering. In one case a local office had altered their overall approach to attraction, recruitment and training resulting in dramatically increased expressions of interest, overall number of appointments and diversity of appointments. Key changes included:

- Amending recruitment materials to focus on benefits to volunteers and the degree of flexibility available, reducing the focus on the need for professional skills and no longer requesting CVs.
- Significantly increased use of social media to promote opportunities.
- Removing the need to complete an application form ahead of a conversation with a staff member, instead beginning with an informal meeting to explore applicant attitudes and motivations, rather than skills and experience.
- Ensuring all those who expressed an interest were booked in for an initial call within 48 hours.
- Tailored inductions reflecting the skills, experience and motivations of each volunteer and shaped following 121 discussions with the new volunteer, to understand their previous experience and development needs.
- Bringing forward the point at which volunteers first have contact with clients, now typically in week three, to maintain motivation and support skills development.
- Moving away from volunteers completing all training ahead of seeing clients and instead being supported to see clients early on, and then complete the training relevant to that client.

Taken together, these and other related changes could represent a significant change to the way in which volunteering is approached, and the local office who had made all of these changes describe them as having positive benefits for volunteer recruitment and retention, but also for staff recruitment.

Overall, it has enabled them to continue to deliver services that meet client need. Clear in this example is the extent to which this local office views volunteering as something they can and should influence i.e. an operational activity they could and should proactively manage. This contrasts with the attitudes of some other local offices, who appeared to view volunteering much more as something that happened to them, and which they were largely only able to respond to, rather than positively influence.

“We’re all down in the trenches, because we’re all trying to do the best, we have with the resources we have, and time to sort of sit and take stock and plan and think about the future tends not always to happen, because you’re just kind of firefighting.” (Staff)

The extent to which this mindset may be influenced by staff capacity, is also clear, something that was regularly referenced in interviews and workshops: not all local offices feel they have the capacity to consider and experiment with new approaches, which adds to their sense of volunteering being something they can only respond to, rather than more directly influence. There is clearly potentially a larger role for national Citizens Advice in making it easier for local offices to consider and test new models.

5. Key principles for developing and enhancing volunteering models

Although the importance of local context cannot be ignored and the number of variables shaping local offices volunteering models are significant, it is helpful to try to summarise what this research has found overall in relation to what may be most likely to have a positive impact on volunteering across the CA network. This final section of the report therefore suggests five key principles for enhancing or developing volunteering models across the Citizens Advice network.

These principles have been identified as a result of reflecting on overall themes that have emerged through this work and have also been informed by external work by NCVO, which identifies the key features of a quality volunteer experience (McGarvey et al, 2019)²⁶. The principles outlined here focus in particular on responding to the issues being faced locally within Citizens Advice, including the recruitment, retention and demographic diversity of volunteers. By including them we aim to offer the Citizens Advice network a way to think about the overall approach to volunteering that they need to take. More detail on specific volunteer management activities is included in the VMOT, where actions taken by local offices will bring these principles to life.

The results of our research suggest that overall, consideration should be given to ensuring volunteering in Citizens Advice is balanced, impactful, inclusive, supported and valued.

Balanced

- Balancing the formality and bureaucracy of recruitment and onboarding processes with an easy to navigate and rapid start for new volunteers.
- Balancing the need for comprehensive training with the retention benefits of volunteers becoming active early in role.
- Balancing the need to be able to plan around knowing when volunteers will be volunteering, with the need to offer flexibility for volunteers.

Impactful

- Ensuring volunteers' needs to make a difference to other people's lives are meaningfully met.
- Providing training and ongoing support that enables volunteers to feel confident they are helping others.
- Sharing with volunteers how data and feedback they gather and share on cases and clients, is used and makes a difference nationally as well as locally.

²⁶ McGarvey, A., Jochum, V., Davies, J., Dobbs, J, and Hornung, L. (2019) Time Well Spent: a national survey on the volunteer experience, NCVO

Inclusive

- Proactively and consistently seeking to attract and retain a more diverse range of volunteers.
- Proactively and consistently working to create and maintain inclusive local office cultures, including for those working remotely.
- Focussing work on equity, diversity and inclusion on role design, support and recognition, as well as how volunteering is promoted.

Supported

- Supporting volunteers to give their time flexibly, to fit volunteering in around the rest of their lives.
- Supporting volunteers in dealing with the sometimes emotionally challenging nature of the work they are involved with.
- Supporting volunteers to progress in role and beyond, as is appropriate for each individual.

Valued

- Valuing volunteers through regular, routine thanks and other forms of recognition, remembering to be inclusive of those working remotely.
- Valuing volunteers by listening to their ideas, concerns and questions.
- Valuing volunteers by involving them as partners in developments in the local office.
- Valuing volunteers by taking time to understand and make use of the skills, knowledge and experience they bring.
- Valuing the diversity of thought that comes from involving volunteers with different life experiences.

One way of bringing these principles to life is to consider two contrasting “illustrative examples” of local office approaches which can be seen as extremes or “ideal types”²⁷. These have been built from the qualitative and quantitative data we have explored. Neither one represents an existing local office precisely, rather they reflect a combination of elements that can be considered either a

²⁷ Ideal Types are created by combining characteristic traits from a range of examples into a definitional construct that can then be used for analysis and research. An ideal type is a form of theoretical standard, against which real cases can be compared. The use of the term “ideal” does not imply a value judgement but refers to the theoretical nature of the examples.

positive force for volunteering (Local Office A) or a likely barrier to volunteering success (Local Office B).

In creating these illustrative examples we have necessarily reduced significant detail about many key aspects of volunteer management. We know that in reality within each of these elements is a spectrum of options and approaches (as shown in the VMOT) and that local office context also shapes this, to some extent. More thorough explorations of the elements shown here, and others, are included in the VMOT workbook, where detailed information is given on each aspect of volunteer involvement and options for how to approach this. This, alongside the VMOT Cost Calculator enables local offices to make informed decisions about the most appropriate approach for them.

These summary illustrative examples may, however, be helpful in illuminating some of the principles we have identified across some of the key stages of the volunteer journey, showing the range of approaches currently being taken and highlighting areas for further work.

Table 5 – Local Office “illustrative examples”

Local Office A	Local Office B
Attitudes to and accountability for volunteering	
A volunteering ethos that views and celebrates volunteering as core to CA mission	Volunteering seen as a means to an end, and a cost effective way to deliver services
Volunteers seen as valued and trusted partners, to be empowered and enabled	Volunteers seen as junior team members needing to be trained, controlled and managed
Shared commitment to leading for volunteering across the staff team	Leading for volunteering seen as the responsibility of one or two staff members only
Clear accountabilities for volunteering within the staff team	Limited clarity on roles and responsibilities for volunteer management among staff
Volunteer roles	
Volunteers involved in a wide range of roles, across all aspects of local office activity, with varying levels of responsibility	Volunteer roles restricted to a small number of areas/departments and with limited levels of responsibility
Volunteers able to engage in range of shift patterns (e.g. numbers of hours and days), locations (e.g. office, remote or home based) and times and days of the week	Volunteers expected to engage during standard working hours and days and to set shift patterns, largely office based

Local Office A	Local Office B
Openness to explore and capitalise on the broad range of skills, knowledge and experience volunteers bring to the local office	Desire to recruit to and fit volunteers into pre-determined and defined roles and areas of responsibility
<i>Volunteer attraction and recruitment</i>	
Proactive, widespread volunteer attraction activities, making routine use of community partnerships and social media	Reactive approach to volunteer attraction relying on routine and traditional channels and methods
Attraction materials focussed on benefits to volunteer and local community	Attraction materials focussed on local office need
Streamlined recruitment processes primarily focussed on attitudes, motivations and interests	Lengthy recruitment processes focussed on qualifications, experience and testing
<i>Volunteer training, supervision and support</i>	
Streamlined training processes focussed on giving early client contact	Lengthy training process focussed on completing all aspects ahead of client contact:
Proportionate supervision and case checking, focussed on skills development	Consistently high levels of supervision and case checking, focussed on correction and compliance e.g. leadership self-assessment
Proactive ongoing support for volunteers, focussed on enabling them to grow and develop in their volunteer journey with CA	Reactive and limited support for volunteers, focussed on dealing with issues as they arise
Regular, creative personalised and group volunteer recognition activities	Ad hoc, generic rather than personalised volunteer recognition
<i>Inclusive and innovative practice</i>	
Actively embracing opportunities to involve a more diverse pool of volunteers as core to ongoing local office success	Consideration of diversity as additional, and something to focus on once core volunteering is in place

Local Office A	Local Office B
Openness to experimenting with new approaches to volunteering and a recognition this is essential to continuing to attract and retain volunteers	Continued focus on trying to attract and retain volunteers to existing ways of working that meet local office need
Actively seeking and learning from volunteering practice across the CA network and externally	Focused primarily on maintaining existing approach to volunteering without seeking external examples of good practice or development

When reviewing these examples what is key is the way in which each small element has a role to play: there is no one overarching solution to the challenge of recruiting and retaining a diverse range of volunteers and it will also depend on local office context. Success comes from a coordinated and integrated approach across every stage of the volunteer journey. The VMOT workbook supports local offices to understand the breadth of points of choice across the volunteer journey, and the range of options at each point. By using this, alongside the VMOT Cost Calculator, local offices will be able to make more informed choices to meet local need and create sustainable services.



6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The value of Citizens Advice volunteering is significant. For volunteers, for the network of local Citizens Advice offices, for the service as a whole, for clients and for communities, the financial and non-financial value of volunteering is extraordinary. Day in, day out Citizens Advice volunteers, working alongside and supported by staff, change lives and change communities. That Citizens Advice volunteering is a powerful force for good, cannot be disputed. It is valuable and valued.

There is considerable scope to share and celebrate the value of volunteering more loudly, both internally (across the local and national Citizens Advice service) and externally. The tools developed through this work, particularly the Theory of Change, Outcomes Framework and Value Calculator, can be used to support this. Externally, focus should be particularly on the wider value of volunteering beyond the volunteer themselves and beyond Citizens Advice. Raising the profile of the impact on local communities may well be helpful in volunteer recruitment and in securing external funds to support volunteer engagement.

Citizens Advice volunteering is also complex and challenging to organise and manage. It requires ongoing attention and resource to ensure it can continue to play its full part in delivering the Citizens Advice mission. It is also increasingly important to tackle the comparative absence of demographic diversity among Citizens Advice volunteers, in order for the service to continue to represent and meet the needs of all communities in a sustainable way.

While much of the data in this research indicates a largely stable volunteer community, giving higher than average amounts of time on a regular, routine basis, the research has also revealed the high levels of volatility in volunteering, particularly in the important early stages of attraction, recruitment and training. Clear here is the significant amount of resource and effort local offices are putting into the early stages of volunteering, for more limited return: high levels of drop out in these early stages and turnover in year one creates considerable and ongoing challenges for local teams. Those leading and managing volunteering operations therefore find themselves supporting two distinct models: the long serving, core volunteering team and the more volatile and unpredictable team of newer recruits. For Citizens Advice to continue to rely on volunteering as a core component of its overall delivery model it will need to ensure local offices are effectively supported to do both. Key to this is to focus on efficient and effective recruitment, selection, onboarding and training processes and the development of new and more flexible ways for people to volunteer. The creation of the Volunteering Models and Options Toolkit (VMOT) workbook and cost calculator enables local offices to take a systematic and informed approach to reviewing their approach, supporting them to increase their knowledge of the range of options available and being used across the network, and to understand the benefits of these, and associated costs.

Below are some key recommendations that have emerged from this work. Our overarching

recommendation, however, is for Citizens Advice to consider ways in which they can better mobilise and utilise the strength of its existing network of volunteering practice. This research has revealed an enormous range of good practice and commitment to continuous improvement in volunteering, with many local offices proactively responding to the need to evolve their approach in order to continue to be able to rely on volunteers. However, much of this is not usefully known or meaningfully shared across the network. If examples are shared this is at best descriptive, rather than analytical and is therefore not sufficiently focussed on developing the tools needed to support other local offices to adopt a similar approach. There is a significant opportunity for the national organisation to play a greater role in this, but we note the limited resources they currently have available to do this.

Ensuring there is adequate resource to capture, analyse, and share and facilitating learning from each other, is key to ongoing success in volunteering with Citizens Advice. Most volunteer-involving organisations of the size and scale of Citizens Advice, and with volunteering so central to its operations, would have resource in some way dedicated to this, either through an internal consultancy model or a business partnering model. This is the case even in federated charities or those with structures similar to Citizens Advice.

The absence of this is notable in Citizens Advice and this research has highlighted the potential value this approach could add to individual local offices, and the service as a whole. While the existing national Citizens Advice volunteering team provide some written guidance, templates and examples and strive to connect local offices and share good practice (for example through peer learning sessions and a community of practice) they simply do not have the capacity to provide the more meaningful and proactive support to the extent of being able to affect real change in local offices. While tools such as the VMOT workbook and calculator and the Value Calculator are useful resources that local offices can use on a self-serve and self-directed basis, the process of conducting this research and sharing emerging findings with local office teams, has highlighted the need to be more proactive in working with local offices to engage them in making best use of this work.

6.2 Recommendations for the Citizens Advice service

Resource to support volunteering development - national

1. Increase specialist staff resource focussed on supporting volunteering development across the network, perhaps through an internal consultancy or business partner model which is located nationally but particularly focussed on working across regions/areas to support innovation, change and sharing of good practice.
2. Review current and future funding streams that restrict use of funds to only allow paid staff to carry out particular roles. Work to influence funders about the value of volunteer involvement and reliability and quality of volunteer delivered services.
3. Invest in a volunteer recruitment campaign across England and Wales, led by the national volunteering team and focussed on supporting local offices to attract a diverse range of

applicants. This should be developed and delivered once foundation work has been done to support local offices to evolve their approach to volunteering to be more flexible and better meet the needs of potential new volunteers. It is likely campaigns of this nature will be needed on a semi-regular basis.

4. Consider ways to better support local office colleagues to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to effectively manage volunteers, and particularly to develop the skills to work effectively with a changing volunteer workforce who may have new and different expectations from the charity they choose to support with their time. Recognition that the management and support of volunteers is a specific skill, distinct from the management of staff, is important.

Resource to support volunteering development - network

1. Make use of the value calculator and local and national data it generates to influence local and national funders to invest in supporting the development of volunteering and Citizens Advice services generally.

Making best use of existing resources and communities of practice - national

1. Work to embed routine use of the resources developed through this research project as a way to continue to develop the range and quality of volunteering across Citizens Advice i.e. the Volunteering Models and Options Toolkit (VMOT) workbook and calculator and principles for effective volunteering.
2. Expand current guidance and support for local offices on developing new volunteering roles beyond template role profiles. Local offices are seeking more holistic support in working through how to introduce new roles, recruit for them, integrate them within the service and support volunteers who move into these roles.
3. Work collaboratively with local offices to support improvements to the learning journey for volunteers, including by tailoring learning to role, taking account of existing skills and previous experience and encouraging early client-focused activity.
4. Review current volunteer training materials to ensure they are accurate, up to date and meeting need.
5. Explore where national, regional or area based approaches to the delivery of some core training could reduce demands on individual local offices, as well as facilitate greater sharing between volunteers.
6. Develop guidance and resources to support local offices in taking more streamlined approaches to volunteer recruitment and volunteer induction.
7. Develop guidance and resource to support local offices in attracting a diverse range of

volunteers. This must be focussed beyond new approaches to attraction and recruitment and instead consider more fundamental issues such as role design.

8. Routinely gather and share case studies and examples of good practice and new approaches to volunteering that illuminate the principles identified in this work.
9. Create and facilitate more opportunities for learning and sharing between local offices on volunteering, including by building on the existing volunteering community of practice either nationally, regionally or by area.

Making best use of existing resources and communities of practice - network

1. Use resources developed through this research project (e.g. VMOT workbook and calculator) to inform a review of current volunteering practice within each local office.
2. Explore where national, regional or area based approaches to the delivery of some core training could reduce demands on individual local offices, as well as facilitate greater sharing between volunteers.
3. Work collaboratively with national teams to support improvements to the learning journey for volunteers, including by tailoring learning to role, taking account of existing skills and previous experience and encouraging early client-focused activity.
4. Review current volunteer training materials to ensure they are accurate, up to date and meeting need.

Additional research - national

1. Consider further research focussed on those who have ceased volunteering with Citizens Advice, to better understand their reasons for doing so and use findings to continue to evolve volunteering practice.
2. Consider further research focussed on those who don't volunteer with Citizens Advice to better understand the barriers and enablers to doing so, particularly amongst more diverse groups. Use the results to inform new volunteer recruitment activities at a local, regional and national scale.
3. Consider further research, likely qualitative and potentially longitudinal, to explore the experiences of a diverse range of volunteer applicants and recruited volunteers and use the results to continue to evolve inclusive volunteering practice.

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Annex – Methodology

Phase 1a: Review of internal and external evidence

To build knowledge and understanding of the current practices and challenges for volunteering at both a national and local level within Citizens Advice, a review of existing internal evidence was undertaken. The resulting report summarised key developments in Citizens Advice that create the context for the Value of Volunteering project.

In parallel, a rapid external evidence review identified and synthesised evidence on formal volunteering from published UK academic and grey literature. This explored current trends in volunteering, evidence on social value /Social Return on Investment (SROI) of volunteering, key developments in volunteer recruitment and retention and evidence on different forms of volunteer involvement.

Phase 1b: Development of archetypes

Drawing on the results of the evidence reviews six volunteer archetypes were developed to represent 'typical' Citizens Advice volunteers as a means of developing an understanding of the outcomes of volunteering and the Theory of Change (see *Technical Report*). Archetypes are a means to better understand and reflect the stories, experiences and impact of those volunteering. These archetypes were developed through the different research activities (see *Technical Report* for further details) and shaped in partnership with the project Steering Committee. Together they describe the majority of volunteers' characteristics, but real volunteers may combine these.

The six archetypes are outlined overleaf.

Archetype A	Archetype B
<p>Archetype A is a Volunteer Advisor who gives generalist advice, in person at her local office, every week for around six hours. She is a 60-years plus, white British woman who has been volunteering with Citizens Advice for a few years. Alongside her Volunteer Advisor role, she also volunteers with other local organisations and community groups. Archetype A wants to volunteer to make a positive difference to people’s lives and to use her time meaningfully; these are the key reasons for her getting involved with Citizens Advice. She also wants to use her existing skills to do something worthwhile and to be involved in voluntary work that is interesting and stimulating.</p> <p>Archetype A has no plans to leave Citizens Advice and she wants to continue because of the sense of satisfaction she gets from helping people. She is keeping her brain active through her advisor work and she enjoys her time with the local office.</p> <p>Volunteering makes a difference to Archetype A personally. Above all, she gets a sense of fulfilment from helping others. The time she spends volunteering brings more structure to her life as well as an increased sense of purpose through being involved in something she sees as worthwhile and meaningful. This helps to support her own health and wellbeing. As well as helping clients, Archetype A feels she is able to support others in her own community using her knowledge and experience gained from volunteering.</p> <p>The value of volunteering calculator can be used to show the monetary value of some of these changes for Archetype A. For her, the outcomes included in the calculator are increased life satisfaction and improved mental health.</p>	<p>Archetype B is a retired 60 plus year old white male who volunteers in his local office a couple of days a week, predominately in person but sometimes online. He is a Generalist Advisor and keen to use his professional skills and experiences from his previous workplace in his volunteering with Citizens Advice. Using these skills is a key motivation for getting involved in volunteering, alongside wanting to make a difference to people’s lives and to do voluntary work that is interesting. Being retired he is less concerned about developing new skills through his volunteering.</p> <p>Archetype B has been volunteering with Citizens Advice since retiring and is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. His reasons for continuing relate to him benefiting from keeping mentally active, having structure in his life and social aspects of volunteering, all helping to enhance his own wellbeing.</p> <p>The sense of fulfilment from helping others and the sense of purpose volunteering brings are key impacts of participation for Archetype B, particularly important for him post-retirement. He also feels there have been knock on effects of his volunteering as he has been able to use the knowledge and experience he has developed to help family and friends. He is less likely to say that volunteering with Citizens Advice has inspired him to undertake additional unpaid activities within his community which may be explained by him already being involved in other types of volunteering in his community.</p> <p>The value of volunteering calculator includes increased life satisfaction and improved mental health for Archetype B.</p>

Archetype C	Archetype D
<p>Archetype C is a Research and Campaigns volunteer who volunteers remotely twice a week in the evenings depending on her availability that week. She is in her late 40s/early 50s and is a Black-British woman. She is driven to volunteer by a desire to make a difference to others' lives and influence broader social change. She is keen to use her existing strengths, skills and experiences in her volunteering role and wants to do voluntary work that is interesting to her. Archetype C is less concerned about improving her career prospects through volunteering and is not interested in getting a paid role with Citizens Advice.</p> <p>Archetype C has been volunteering for a year with Citizens Advice and continues to do so foremost because helping people gives her a sense of satisfaction and she enjoys it. She also feels that her volunteering role keeps her mentally active and challenged.</p> <p>When thinking about the difference volunteering makes to her and those around her, a key area of impact is the sense of fulfilment and purpose participation gives her, alongside feeling more confident, helping to support her own wellbeing. She feels she has developed a wider understanding of social issues through her volunteering role and has been able to use the knowledge and experience gained to help family and friends.</p> <p>For Archetype C, the key outcomes for the value of volunteering calculator include increased life satisfaction and improved mental health.</p>	<p>Archetype D is a young law student from an Asian background who volunteers with the local Citizens Advice office close to his university. He provides information and advice to clients over the phone from his local office and volunteers once a week, for 3 to 4 hours. He has been volunteering for around six months.</p> <p>Archetype D is driven to volunteer because he wants work experience to advance his career. It is important to him that he learns new skills and that volunteering gives him the opportunity to gain experience in a work environment. He is less concerned about making a difference through his volunteering and being part of a team. It is likely that Archetype D will be with Citizens Advice on a short-term basis and will leave after a year once he has gained experience and skills to support his course and career.</p> <p>Through volunteering Archetype D feels he improves his employability. Volunteering provides useful work experience which he can use in his future career. Volunteering has also made a difference to his own personal development, helping to grow his confidence and equipping him to deal with issues that may arise in his own life. While not a key reason for getting involved with volunteering in the first place, his involvement with CA has brought more social connections for Archetype D and he gets a sense of fulfilment from helping others, helping to support his own wellbeing.</p> <p>The value of volunteering calculator includes increased life satisfaction, improved mental health and gaining employment more quickly as the key outcomes for Archetype D.</p>

Archetype E	Archetype F
<p>Archetype E is a Volunteer Administrator and also supports the local office with volunteer recruitment. He is in his 20s, has an African background and has recently moved to the UK.</p> <p>Archetype E volunteers twice a week in his local office. His motivation for getting involved is rooted in his desire to make a difference to other people and society through his volunteering and to feel more involved in his local community. He is also keen to gain work experience to help improve his future employment prospects.</p> <p>Archetype E is likely to volunteer with Citizens Advice for two years or less and will continue to volunteer foremost because he enjoys it. Gaining and developing useful skills and the sense of satisfaction he gets from helping people are also key reasons for him to keep volunteering with his local office. Archetype E hopes he might get paid employment with Citizens Advice in the future.</p> <p>Volunteering brings a range of personal benefits for Archetype E. He gets a sense of fulfilment and purpose from his volunteering and feels his confidence has increased; these are key benefits that can help to improve his wellbeing. Linked to this, is the increased sense of belonging Archetype E has gained through volunteering and how he feels he is now at less risk of loneliness.</p> <p>Archetype E is more likely than any other archetype to be inspired to undertake additional unpaid activities within his community that he was not doing before. Volunteering also makes a positive difference to how he feels about his employability and future career prospects.</p> <p>For Archetype E the key outcomes for the value of volunteering calculator include increased life satisfaction, improved mental health and receiving a higher wage due to being more skilled.</p>	<p>Archetype F volunteers twice a week as a Generalist Advisor. She is a white woman in her 30s, a full-time mother of school aged children and living with a chronic illness. She volunteers in the local office and also online, depending on her weekly circumstances. This flexibility is important to her, enabling her to fit volunteering around her caring responsibilities.</p> <p>Archetype F volunteers because she wants to make a positive difference to people's lives and wants to gain experience to help her secure paid work in the future.</p> <p>Archetype F has been with Citizens Advice for around two years and continues because as well as giving her a sense of satisfaction from helping people, she feels she is developing useful skills and knowledge. The hope of securing paid employment with the organisation is also a motivation for continuing to be involved.</p> <p>Archetype F feels volunteering has increased her confidence and self-esteem and feels her involvement has helped her to better relate to others. Volunteering also brings her a sense of fulfilment and a sense of purpose – important for her own wellbeing. She feels volunteering will benefit her in the future and that she will be able to use the knowledge and experience she has gained to solve personal problems. Archetype F believes she has developed transferable skills, gained useful work experience and enhanced her career prospects and employability. She is likely to get a paid role with Citizens Advice in the future.</p> <p>This is the archetype most likely to say their involvement with Citizens Advice has influenced others to volunteer.</p> <p>The value of volunteering calculator includes increased life satisfaction, improved mental health and gaining employment more quickly as the key outcomes for Archetype F.</p>

Phase 2: “deep dive” case studies

Selection of local office “deep dive” locations

Thirteen local offices were selected as locations for “deep dive” exploration. These Citizens Advice offices were invited to take part in a range of workshops and interviews exploring experiences and impact of volunteer involvement and the operating models currently used. The aim was to involve a range of local offices reflecting known key dimensions including:

- Income level
- Geographical region
- Level of deprivation in communities served
- Rural or urban location
- Current levels of volunteer involvement

Existing national Citizen Advice data and volunteering team knowledge was used to categorise each local office and the project team worked with the client team to agree potential participants.

Participation was voluntary, with not all of those initially invited to get involved choosing to do so.

Table A1 summarises the characteristics of the local offices who took part.

Table A1: Characteristics of “deep dive” local offices

Local Office	Income Band	Region	Deprivation ²⁸	Rural/Urban ²⁹	Volunteer involvement ³⁰
1	£500-750k	SE	Very low	Mixed	High
2	£250-500k	E. Mids	Above average	Mixed	Medium
3	£500-750k	Yorks/Humbe	Above average	Mixed	Low
4	£1-2m	NW	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
5	£250-500k	London	Very low	Predominantly	Medium
6	£1-2m	W. Mids	Very low	Predominantly rural	Medium
7	£1-2m	Wales	Average	Predominantly	Medium

²⁸ Deprivation categories were devised by national Citizens Advice based on data from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) last used in 2019 and were used purely as indicators to enable us to select a range of offices, rather than as a robust picture of communities served by local offices.

²⁹ Classifications were allocated by national Citizens Advice, based on internal data and insight.

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8	>£2m	N. West	Varied	Predominantly	High
9	£1-2m	London	Average	Predominantly	High
10	£750k-1m	NE	Average to high	Mixed	High
11	£500-750k	Wales	Low	Predominantly rural	Average
12	£100-250k	SE	Unknown	Unknown	Average
13	£250-500k	NW	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

These characteristics were selected following a review of a range of factors and with the aim of including a mix of all of these.

The thirteen deep dive case studies involved the following research activities:

Collection and analysis of local office data

The quantity and quality of data provided to the research team varied and included documents such as the organisational chart, year-end accounts, volunteering policies and information related to volunteering including numbers and demographics.

Staff and volunteer workshops

Staff and volunteers from the 13 selected ““deep dive”” local offices were invited to take part in workshops to explore a range of issues as identified by the project brief and the initial internal and external evidence review. Two different types of workshop were held, one for staff only, the other for volunteers only. Each workshop ran for three hours and was facilitated by members of the external research project team. For both staff and volunteer workshops three of the workshops were held face to face, and at locations around the country convenient to participating local offices, and one was held online. Workshops were recorded and transcribed.

A total of 28 staff took part across the four workshops, with participation in each one ranging from 6 – 8. Staff members held a variety of roles including Chief Officer, Training Manager, Volunteer Development Coordinator and Administrator.

A total of 24 volunteers took part across the four workshops, with each workshop including between 4 and 8 participants. Volunteers involved held a variety of roles across advice and information, research, communications and administration. As far as was possible care was taken to involve a diverse range of participants in terms of demographics, Citizens Advice role and length of service, although participants were not asked to identify in this way during workshop recruitment or delivery.

The workshops were designed to enable peer challenge amongst those present. As one volunteer

gave their view that could be challenged constructively or built upon to enhance and explore it so that more detail and nuance was drawn out.

Topic areas explored in the workshops are summarised in the table below. Content and approach were adjusted to reflect the specific needs and experiences of the two different communities (i.e. staff or volunteer) but with a clear link between these. Workshops were also used to specifically test and help evolve the draft Theory of Change and archetypes that had been developed as a result of the internal and external evidence review.

Table A2: Workshop topics – staff and volunteers

Topic explored	Staff Workshops	Volunteer Workshops
Personal motivations for volunteering	No	Yes
Local office motivations for involving volunteers (including advantages and disadvantages of doing so)	No	Yes
Personal experiences of volunteer recruitment and onboarding processes	No	Yes
Drivers of volunteer recruitment and retention: factors contributing to success	Yes	No
Reasons for staying, leaving and/or not stepping forward to volunteer	No	Yes
Impacts of volunteering (on volunteer, client, Citizens Advice and local community) – testing a draft Theory of	Yes	Yes
Critical success factors in creating effective working relationships between staff and volunteers	No	Yes
Differences between staff and volunteer roles and responsibilities (nature of and rationale for)	Yes	No
Volunteer archetypes	Yes	Yes

Analysis of “deep dives”

Thematic analysis of the discussion in the workshops, and analysis of supporting data was undertaken within each case study local office and between local offices to enable comparisons of practice. Emerging themes were further clarified and any gaps filled using volunteer, staff and external stakeholder interviews, and fed into the exploration of operating models and costings in the

staff interviews with Chief Officers and Finance leads described in more detail below.

With the benefit of the additional interviews the themes across case studies were refined and explored in two research team sense-making sessions. Models, costs, and volunteer experiences identified through the case study “deep dives” fed into the development of the survey to test the understanding developed across the qualitative work and how widely various elements identified could be seen across the network.

Interviews with volunteers, staff and external stakeholders

Volunteer interviews

Volunteers were invited to take part in an online interview and recruited via local office staff. In total, twelve interviews were carried out across eight of the “deep dive” local offices, each approximately one hour long. Interviews were recorded with consent and transcribed. Topics explored in the volunteer interviews included:

- Routes into volunteering and reflections on the process of getting involved
- Motivations for volunteering with Citizens Advice
- Reflections on the organisation of volunteering
- Factors that make most difference to having a positive volunteering experience
- Impacts of volunteering on volunteers themselves, clients, local offices and the local community
- Plans to continue/leave volunteering and reasons for this

Staff interviews

All case study local offices took part in a ‘process and costings’ interview which explored the processes in place for recruiting, managing and supporting volunteers and costs associated with these. These interviews lasted between one and two hours and were predominantly undertaken online. All but one of these interviews involved at least two staff members, typically the finance lead and another staff member, which included Chief Officers, Operations Manager, Business Manager, Service Manager and Volunteer Recruitment/Training/Development leads. These interviews informed, in particular, the VMOT workbook and calculator (see separate documents).

Five additional staff interviews with local offices were undertaken to follow up on examples of interesting practice. This included two with local offices outside the “deep dives” who were involved with current corporate volunteering programmes. These were included to ensure the research captured this area of volunteering.

External stakeholder interviews

Seven online interviews were carried out with external stakeholders, recruited via local offices. This included interviews with local authorities, voluntary sector support organisations, local food banks

and local voluntary organisations. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and an hour and explored external stakeholders' experiences of local Citizens Advice services and their views on the value and impact of volunteer involvement in the service.

Phase 3: Surveys

Survey development and launch

Two separate surveys were designed for this project, one for volunteers and one for Chief Officers. The volunteer survey was designed to test findings to date on a larger scale, focussing on the volunteer experience and its impact, and the prevalence of different approaches and volunteering models (i.e. how and why local offices involve volunteers) in practice. The Chief Officer survey was designed to explore their perspectives of the models, approaches and relationships discovered during earlier "deep dive" work.

A collaborative and purposeful approach to building the surveys was taken, developing questions based on the streams of work within this research and the areas that needed to be tested to meet the research objectives, combining input from Citizens Advice, Sonnet, and CCE.

Both surveys were piloted between 8 and 15 January 2024. Five Chief Officers who had expressed an earlier interest in being involved in the volunteering transformation project, and sixteen volunteers from a range of local offices who were recruited from the Citizens Advice Volunteer Voice Network (VVN) completed pilot surveys and provided feedback. The VVN is a regular newsletter to update volunteers interested in the Volunteering Transformation programme; they are invited to participate in sharing their views on a range of subjects, for example through surveys and focus groups.

Citizens Advice invited all those who signed up to the VVN (over 100 volunteers from over 50 local offices) to pilot/test the survey. Those who responded positively were sent an email invitation to take part.

Following the pilots, revisions were made, and the finalised surveys, including translated versions in Welsh, were launched on 25 January 2024 and stayed live for a period of two and a half weeks, closing on 12 February 2024. All Citizens Advice Chief Officers were invited to take part and Citizens Advice undertook communication activities to promote the survey with key local office staff, asking them to share the survey with all active volunteers (excluding trustees who were out scope); we did not undertake any sampling within either population.

Citizens Advice carried out a wide range of communications to promote the surveys, prior to their launch and while they were live, and held a series of drop-in question and answer sessions for those who wanted more information before choosing to take part.

Analysis of responses and weighting of data

In total, 1,412 volunteers from 179 different local offices (15% of the volunteer population and 74% of local offices) and 98 Chief Officers (response rate of 40%) completed the surveys.

In cleaning the data we removed no full response set from any individual. However we did remove individual responses to questions where they were inconsistent with others in their response e.g. where a respondent may have chosen, I prefer not to say or I don't have an opinion to a question, but also selected other responses to the same question stating an opinion.

After cleaning the data, analysis was undertaken question by question, and following this, further analysis, including cross tabulations, to draw out patterns between and across the data.

In administering the volunteer survey we did not aim for responses to be representative of the volunteer population. It was not possible to target a representative set of responses at the time as no evidence was available on the demographics of the full population of Citizens Advice volunteers. We had considered weighting the responses to enhance the views of underrepresented groups in the sample; however, weighting the results in this way would be over-emphasising a small number of responses which could reduce the accuracy of the results.

In analysing the data we performed a comparison between the demographics of respondents to our survey and:

- The UK population per 2021 Census data³¹
- Respondents to the 2021/22 Community Life survey³²

Using archetypes to understand results

To explore the experiences and impact of volunteering through the lens of the volunteer archetypes developed as part of this project each survey respondent was assigned to one of the archetypes. Categorising the respondents into archetypes was challenging as our theoretical archetypes are neatly defined and cover a range of characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, caring responsibilities, disabilities; it would not have been possible to categorise our respondents into one archetype based on all of their characteristics as there would be considerable overlap, with respondents possessing characteristics that align to multiple archetypes. To avoid this overlap and to be able to assign one archetype to each respondent, we had to choose one characteristic that took precedence and which we would use to group respondents. Age was selected as this characteristic as it is the best proxy for someone's stage of career, which is one of the clearest delineators between the archetypes' stories. Where multiple archetypes fall within a similar age range, we split these groups up by further characteristics such as gender and caring responsibilities. The breakdown of how we categorised each respondent is below.

³¹ Gov.UK (2023) UK Population by ethnicity - male and female populations

³² DCMS (2023) Community Life Survey 2021/2

- If they were aged between 18 and 25, they were categorised as Archetype D
- If they were aged between 25 and 44 AND had caring responsibilities, they were categorised as Archetype F
- If they were aged between 25 and 44 AND had no caring responsibilities, they were categorised as an Archetype E
- If they were aged between 45 and 64 AND not retired, they were categorised as Archetype C
- If they were retired OR over 65, AND a woman, they were categorised as Archetype A
- If they were retired OR over 65, AND a man, they were categorised as Archetype B

The breakdown is as follows:

Archetype	No. of respondents	% of base
A	607	44
B	457	33
C	199	14
D	42	3
E	38	3
F	37	3
Total	1380	100

Note that 32 respondents did not give enough information in the demographics section of the survey to be assigned to an archetype. These have not been aligned to an archetype and so do not feed into any analysis of survey respondents by archetype. These 32 respondents do feature in the rest of the survey analysis, however.

The analysis of survey respondent by archetype feeds into the value calculator and exploration of volunteer archetypes.

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