



## **VOLUNTEER PASSPORTING RESEARCH**

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Media and Sport*

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MyPass Global

Oxford University Gardens, Libraries & Museums (GLAM)

Royal Voluntary Service, St John Ambulance and British Red Cross 'Volunteer Passport Partnership'

Sport England

Team Kinetic

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award

The National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA)

The National Trust

The National Volunteer Police Cadets programme

UK Youth

Volunteer Now

Volunteer Scotland

Volunteer Service BaNES

Volunteering Victoria

## List of abbreviations

Covid-19	Coronavirus disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)
CPD	Continuous professional development
CVS	Community Voluntary Service
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DCMS	Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
HEE	Health Education England
ICP	Integrated Care Partnership
NCVO	The National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NHSVR	National Health Service Volunteer Responders
RVS	Royal Voluntary Service
VIOs	Volunteer involving organisations

## Executive Summary

The concept of **volunteer passports** has long been a topic of debate in the volunteering community. Many stakeholders have embarked upon ‘passporting’ initiatives in the past, reaching varying stages of maturity in their development and implementation. The renewed focus on the vital importance of volunteering during Covid-19 has provided a fresh impetus to consider volunteer passports and their potential for supporting and unlocking further voluntary activity.

This study was commissioned to help build an evidence base for understanding:

1. **The present landscape of volunteer passports and passporting;**
2. **Areas of demand and opportunities for volunteer passports and passporting to support volunteering, as well as the perceived challenges involved.**

The research included two main elements: **a literature review** and **primary qualitative research** with volunteers, volunteer involving organisations (VIOs), digital platform providers and stakeholders. Qualitative research was carried out with 58 respondents in total, who were interviewed through a mix of group discussions and individual or paired depth interviews.

The research found a wide range of volunteer passport and passporting initiatives in the UK and internationally, underscoring the diversity of meanings attached to this concept. Across this diversity, past and present volunteer passport and passporting initiatives shared two broad aims: to improve **‘volunteer portability’** understood as easy movement of volunteers across different VIOs and roles; and **validate and value volunteers’ experience, skills and contribution**:

- Passporting initiatives striving for volunteer portability often involved networks of organisations developing **a joined-up approach to volunteer recruitment, onboarding and management**. These initiatives focused on passporting systems, mechanisms and processes that enabled volunteer portability, rather than passports as ‘products’.
- Volunteer passports aiming at validation were typically **volunteer-owned ‘products’** that provided a portfolio of the volunteer’s experience, knowledge and skills acquired through volunteering.
- There were also passporting initiatives that straddled portability and validation aims, for example, **training-based volunteer passports**.

Across these different types of volunteer passport and passporting, there was some consistency in **key elements** they involved. These included:

- ‘federations of trust’ as networks of organisations developing a joined-up volunteer approach;
- shared volunteer vetting and training standards and agreements and sometimes also centralised delivery of vetting and training;
- shared pool of volunteers;
- matching of volunteers with volunteering tasks across the network;
- a volunteer profile/ portfolio offering a record of their volunteering and skills;
- routes to validate volunteer learning, for example, through certificates or qualifications;
- volunteer reward schemes which were sometimes linked to volunteer profiles, so rewards could be redeemed against time spent volunteering.

However, different volunteer passport and passporting initiatives combined these elements in different ways, rather like jigsaws, and did not always include all these elements. In addition, some were digitally enabled, so also required particular **digital infrastructure** as detailed in the report.

Some **key drivers** behind the development of such initiatives and **benefits** they sought to achieve included: achieving **quick and large-scale mobilisation of volunteers**; improved volunteer experience and cost savings for VIOs through **reduced duplication** in volunteer recruitment and onboarding process; greater **consistency of standards** in volunteer vetting, training and skills resulting in quality assurance; and **supporting, developing and valuing volunteers**. The research also underlined some **key challenges** involved in volunteer passporting initiatives, such as: the difficulty in aligning standards across diverse organisations, geographical limitations to volunteer portability, and concerns that portability may loosen VIOs' relationships with their volunteers.

The research with volunteers, VIOs and stakeholders highlighted what they perceived as key **areas of demand for volunteer passports and passporting to support volunteering**. Specifically:

- **Portable ID and DBS checks** were welcomed as a core element of a potential volunteer passport to reduce duplication in volunteer recruitment and onboarding;
- Having a **shared pool of volunteers** was perceived as important for particular types of volunteering: emergency, event-based, micro, place-based, task-based volunteering;
- **Standardisation of volunteer training and skills** was of interest to some in two areas: standardisation of entry-level volunteer skills and sector-specific standards for specialist skills;
- **Validation** of volunteers' experience and skills was perceived as beneficial for particular groups of volunteers, where volunteering was also a potential route to employment.

The study further identified some **key success factors and design considerations** for volunteer passport initiatives to benefit the voluntary sector. This included: **commonality** of interests needed to develop 'federations of trust'; **flexibility** to allow for adaptations to diverse sectors, VIOs and volunteers; **sustainability** in terms of the voluntary sector resource required to develop and maintain passporting schemes; **credibility** within the voluntary sector; **open data technology** and **integration** with existing volunteer management platforms and infrastructure; **accessibility** for users and alternative systems for those not using these platforms; ensuring **volunteer-controlled** passport product; and the ability to **manage risk** in the shared volunteer management system.

The report that follows provides detailed findings on the areas above. Following **Chapter 1** which outlines the research objectives and methodology, **Chapter 2** suggests a possible taxonomy of types of volunteer passports and passporting, key drivers, elements and models involved, and related practices which are part of the passporting landscape. **Chapter 3** details experiences of existing volunteer passport and passporting initiatives: their perceived benefits, as well as difficulties and challenges involved. This chapter concludes with a discussion of broader views on the demand for volunteer passports and passporting from the perspective of volunteers, VIOs, digital platform providers and stakeholders. **Chapter 4** discusses expectations of how the government could support volunteering through volunteer passports. **Chapter 5** offers conclusions and a synthesis of key findings, also pulling out comparisons across different voluntary sectors, including: sport, culture, health, community action, education, youth and police volunteering. Throughout these chapters, the study seeks to provide a basis for a **shared understanding** of different applications of volunteer passports and passporting, rather than promote any single model.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Project background

The concept of ‘volunteer passports’ has long been an active topic of debate in the volunteering community. Many stakeholders have embarked upon volunteer passport initiatives in the past, reaching varying stages of maturity in their development and implementation. The focus of these initiatives greatly varied, from those seeking to enable easier movement of volunteers across different organisations to others providing a passport as a record of volunteers’ experience and skills. Given this diversity, there has been a lack of shared understanding of volunteer passports, which this study seeks to address through mapping these different experiences and offering a definition of volunteer passports that is grounded in this landscape.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the surge in volunteering during the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK prompted more organisations to collaborate and develop joined-up approaches to volunteer recruitment and onboarding. In some instances, this led to elements of volunteer passporting being adopted, for example, where one-point entry was set up for volunteers to help across different organisations. These experiences and the renewed focus on the vital importance of volunteering during Covid-19, including specific references to the potential of passporting initiatives in the Danny Kruger MP review *Levelling up communities: proposals for a new social covenant*<sup>2</sup>, has provided a fresh context in which to explore the demand for passports among volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs)<sup>3</sup>, and their potential for supporting and unlocking further voluntary activity.

This study was commissioned by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to help build an evidence base for understanding the present landscape of volunteer passports and passporting: the drivers, key elements and models, achievements and challenges involved in such initiatives. The research was also required to identify areas of demand and opportunities for volunteer passports and passporting to support volunteering, as well as expectations in terms of policy actions and support required to realise this potential.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.2. Research objectives

The overall research objectives were to understand:

#### 1) What progress has been made to date in developing volunteer passporting initiatives:

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<sup>1</sup> See Section 2.6 for the definition of volunteer passports resulting from this research. This definition is derived from the range of initiatives found in this study.

<sup>2</sup> Danny Kruger MP, 2020, *Levelling up our communities: proposals for a new social covenant*. <https://www.dannykruger.org.uk/communities-report>

<sup>3</sup> Volunteer-involving organisation (VIO) is defined here as any organisation that involves volunteers to help the organisation deliver its activities and work. VIOs can be very diverse and include organisations from the third sector, public sector or private sector. VIOs included in this research were charities or public sector organisations.

<sup>4</sup> The renewed interest in volunteer passports and passporting has also prompted consultations within the voluntary sector over the demand for such solutions. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and Volunteering Matters have started a consultation that has been ongoing parallel to this research. Volunteer Now in Northern Ireland also had a webinar consultation with VIOs to understand the range of views on this topic. See: NCVO, 2021. *Developing a national volunteer passport scheme*. <https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2021/02/19/developing-a-national-volunteer-passporting-scheme/>. Volunteer Now, 2020. *VOLT Session: Sharing Volunteers – Could Volunteer Passports Work?* <https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/training/recorded-webinars/volt-session-sharing-volunteers-could-volunteer-passports-work/>.



- What is the range of initiatives in terms of: drivers for their development, their aims and beneficiaries, sectors they are designed to support, approaches and experiences to date?
- What are common challenges in designing and implementing passporting solutions, as well as key lessons learned from existing systems and schemes?
- What types of passport schemes or passporting solutions have been effective and why?
- How do passporting experiences vary by different volunteering sectors and different groups of volunteers?

**2) What are the perceived opportunities and demand for passporting solutions, as well as the perceived challenges, across volunteers, VIOs, stakeholders and digital platform providers:**

- What are the perceived benefits and opportunities driving demand for passporting solutions?
- What are the perceived challenges and barriers to developing effective passporting solutions?
- What further action is wanted with regards to volunteer passports and/or passporting solutions and why?
- How do perceived opportunities, challenges and needs for further action vary by different types of VIOs (sectors) and volunteers (demographics, roles, frequency of volunteering)?
- What do VIOs, volunteers, digital platform providers and sector stakeholders think is the role of the government in supporting volunteer portability and passporting solutions?

In addition, the research needed to produce a working definition of volunteer passports and passporting systems to bring clarity to future discussions with VIOs, stakeholders and policy makers.

### **1.3. Methodology**

The research included two main elements: a literature review and primary qualitative research with volunteers, VIOs, digital platform providers and sector stakeholders.

The **literature review** involved both searches of academic databases and purposive searches of research and grey literature published online or held internally by relevant organisations within the voluntary sector and more widely. Searches revealed a very limited amount of prior research on volunteer passports and passporting and the related issue of volunteer portability, with no academic or applied research identified evaluating existing initiatives and experiences in this respect.<sup>5</sup> Where research-based reports were identified, they mainly considered some other aspects of volunteer passports, namely validation of non-formal learning acquired through volunteering: four research reports were identified covering volunteer passports in this context.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, the research identified an array of grey literature describing individual volunteer passport initiatives, which sometimes also provided some basic statistics on those initiatives. Due to the recent interest in this topic, the research also found interesting discussions of issues related to volunteer passports and passporting online, through a range of formats including blogs, presentations and webinars. Given the scarcity of existing evidence, the research used the small number of studies and wider grey literature as a starting point to map out the volunteer passport and passporting landscape and inform the qualitative research. This was complemented with

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<sup>5</sup> However, an evaluation of the NHS Volunteer Responders programme is currently taking place. As this initiative involved elements of volunteer passporting, it may help fill some of the evidence gaps in this area.

<sup>6</sup> There was a wider literature exploring validation with regards to volunteering, but for the purposes of this research we limited our interest to research specifically engaging with volunteer passports.

qualitative interviews with 7 VIOs, 3 digital platform providers and 2 sector stakeholders involved in passporting initiatives, who were interviewed as part of the broader qualitative research discussed below.<sup>7</sup>

**Qualitative research** was carried out with 58 respondents in total, who were interviewed through a mix of mini-group discussions and individual or paired depth interviews as follows:

- 8 x mini-group discussions with volunteers (90 minutes long; three participants per group)
- 18 x individual or paired depth interviews with VIOs (45 minutes long)
- 5 x individual depth interviews with sector stakeholders (45 minutes long)
- 3 x individual depth interviews with digital platform providers (45 minutes long).

Volunteers, VIOs and sector stakeholders were selected to represent a mix in terms of voluntary sectors. In addition, VIOs and sector stakeholders included both those with and without experience of volunteer passports and passporting. Volunteers were also recruited to ensure diversity in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, region and frequency of volunteering. The tables below show some key information in terms of how these different samples were structured:

<b>Volunteer sample (No of respondents = 24)</b>		
<b>Area</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Volunteer sector</b>
South West	18-24	Culture and Sport
West Midlands	18-24	Mix of sectors
South East	Mixed age 25+	Health
North West	Mixed age 25+	Health
East Midlands	Mixed age 25+	Social services
North East	Mixed age 25+	Social services
North West	Mixed age 25+	Culture and Sport
South East	Mixed age 25+	Mix of sectors

*Table 1: Volunteer sample*

<b>VIO sample (No of respondents = 26)</b>	
<b>Sector</b>	<b>Number of depth interviews</b>
Health	2
Community and social services	4
Culture	3
Sport	1
Education	1
Youth	2
Police	1
Cross-sector	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>

*Table 2: VIO sample*

<sup>7</sup> More detail on the literature review methodology is provided in Appendix 1.

The VIO sample further included: 7 organisations which have developed volunteer passports or passporting initiatives that were explicitly named and described in this way; 4 who developed volunteer passporting systems and processes that allowed for volunteer portability, but without explicitly referring to them in this way; and 7 with little or no direct experience of volunteer passports and passporting. While most of the passporting initiatives identified and explored were from the UK, the research also included participants from France and Australia, who discussed volunteering passport schemes in those countries.

In addition, the research included interviews with 3 digital platform providers with experience of volunteer passports and passporting, as well as 5 sector stakeholders, including 1 from the health sector, 3 from strategic, voluntary sector organisations supporting VIOs, and 1 organisation working in the field of validation of volunteers' skills, knowledge and experience.

The research was led by Dr Danica Minic at Research Works Limited and the team included: Gemma Haddock, Amy Smith and Jill Barnett. Fieldwork was conducted in February and March 2021.

More detail about the qualitative research methodology and sample structure is provided in Appendix 1.

#### **1.4. Interpreting qualitative research findings**

Qualitative samples are purposive and quota-driven in nature; they are designed to achieve specific outcomes. Consequently, they have no quantitative accuracy in terms of identifying proportions of populations holding stated views. For these methodological reasons, it is not appropriate to present qualitative findings in terms of the numbers of respondents expressing certain views. The findings in this report are therefore described in qualitative terms to capture the range of reported experiences and views rather than the proportions to which they were represented.

Two other issues need to be considered with regards to the findings of this study. Firstly, the lack of evaluations of existing and past volunteer passport initiatives posed limitations for assessing their impact on volunteers or VIOs. The findings on the impact and achievements of individual initiatives in this report are, therefore, based on respondents' reported experiences, perceptions and views complemented with some basic statistics regarding the uptake and longevity of these initiatives. Secondly, in presenting the current landscape of volunteer passport initiatives, the report offers a detailed snapshot of different types of volunteer passport initiatives and key issues and perspectives across different voluntary sectors. However, it does not provide an all-exhaustive account of past and present initiatives in this space or an in-depth analysis of experiences and needs within individual sectors.

In terms of future research in this area, this study highlighted the need for evaluations of existing and future volunteer passport initiatives and more in-depth analysis of the demand for such solutions within individual voluntary sectors, as this is likely to vary.

## **2. Volunteer passports and passporting landscape**

### **2.1. Mapping types of volunteer passports and passporting**

A review of available literature and information on existing volunteer passport initiatives found a great variety of ways in which volunteer passports were approached and used. For example, some schemes were driven by the need to standardise volunteer training and improve 'volunteer

portability', that is, make movement of volunteers easier across different organisations and roles. Others aimed to validate and value volunteers' experience, knowledge and skills or provide rewards to volunteers. Four of the schemes explored in this research have existed for over a decade, whereas three others studied here were only being developed. In some instances, the term 'volunteer passport' was used, but other examples involved elements of volunteer passporting without using this terminology.

Within this variety, certain types of volunteer passports and passporting have emerged that could be linked to two broad themes – that of 'volunteer portability', on the one hand, and 'validation and valuing' of volunteers' work and knowledge, on the other hand. These two broad themes offer a potential framework for describing different types of volunteer passports and passporting initiatives. Within each theme, the research found further variety. Individual schemes also sometimes straddled the two categories and aimed both to improve volunteer portability and validate volunteers' knowledge and skills. But as two overarching aims of current volunteer passport and passporting initiatives, the themes of volunteer portability and validation can be useful for mapping existing schemes. This section attempts to offer such an emerging typology and provide illustrative examples for each of the types identified.

#### 2.1.1. Volunteer portability

The concept of volunteer portability refers to the ease of movement of volunteers across different organisations and roles. For example, if VIOs had shared standards for volunteer recruitment and training, this may reduce the need for repeated volunteer checks and training, thus making volunteer movement between organisations easier. Portability has, therefore, mainly been considered with regards to: volunteer checks; training; and in terms of matching volunteer supply and demand across multiple organisations.

Portability of volunteer checks has been recognised in various instances as important for enabling volunteering. For example, DBS checks have been considered in this context to ensure requirements from volunteers and VIOs were proportionate and did not pose barriers to volunteering. For this reason, a new service was introduced in 2013 allowing annual updates to existing DBS checks, without the need to go through the same process for new roles which involved a comparable activity.<sup>8</sup> The service is free for volunteers, in the hope of cutting down the barriers to volunteering posed by the cost, time and bureaucracy involved in applying for multiple DBS checks.

Furthermore, various local authorities in the UK have developed local volunteer passports that aim to standardise basic volunteer training within local areas, thus potentially making it easier for volunteers to move from one organisation to another. Volunteers are awarded training certificates and ID/passports upon completing free, standardised training, typically covering the following modules: equality, diversity and inclusion; first aid; keeping yourself and others safe; health and safety; and person-centred approach. In local authorities with such schemes – for example,

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<sup>8</sup> Home Office, 2012. *Free portable criminal records checks announced for volunteers.*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-portable-criminal-records-checks-announced-for-volunteers>;

Community First New Forest, *Do I need to DBS check my volunteer.*

[https://www.cfnf.org.uk/PDF\\_Files/Community\\_Development/Do\\_I\\_need\\_to\\_DBs\\_check\\_my\\_volunteers.pdf](https://www.cfnf.org.uk/PDF_Files/Community_Development/Do_I_need_to_DBs_check_my_volunteers.pdf)

Derbyshire, Blackburn, East Suffolk, Doncaster and Slough<sup>9</sup> – the training has been delivered across different sectors, including: health, children and youth activities, heritage and arts and so on.

Similar initiatives have been considered in the health and care sector, driven by the need to standardise volunteer training across health and care VIOs in the context of the shift towards Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs). For example, Lancashire and Pennine ICP and Health Education England (HEE) piloted a Volunteer Learning Passport<sup>10</sup> in 2018, which provided volunteers with certificates upon completing the core training modules. In addition, HEE have also developed The National Volunteer Certificate<sup>11</sup> which is awarded to volunteers who complete training developed for the Volunteer Learning Passport cited above and 60 hours of volunteering.

Volunteer portability has also been considered in terms of the need for better co-ordination and matching of volunteer supply and demand, particularly in the time of crisis such as those caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, floods or other natural disasters. For example, the need for a joined-up approach to the Covid-19 emergency led some local areas to set up Covid-19 Hubs, with one-point-entry for service users and volunteers across partner VIOs.<sup>12</sup> Their experiences suggest this helped foster volunteer portability across VIOs, enable a faster and more agile response and reduce duplication of work across the sector. The national NHS Volunteer Responder (NHSVR)<sup>13</sup> scheme similarly involved a joined-up approach to volunteer recruitment and onboarding developed by the Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) and St John Ambulance. This meant NHSVR and St John Ambulance volunteers were onboarded through the same process and could be passported across different roles.

In this context, volunteer passporting was also perceived to offer a technological solution for agile matching of volunteer supply and demand in the context of emergency response, but also wider community volunteering. For example, the 2020 Danny Kruger MP review on ways to sustain community spirit shown during the first Covid-19 lockdown suggested that a volunteer passport system could evolve from the existing database created for the NHSVR Programme in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Elaborating on how this system could work, the review envisioned holders of

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<sup>9</sup> More information on these individual volunteer passport initiatives is available at: Derbyshire - <https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/community/volunteering/volunteer-passport/volunteer-passport.aspx>; Blackburn - <http://www.communitycvs.org.uk/resource/volunteer-passport/>; East Suffolk - <https://volunteersuffolk.org.uk/volunteer/opportunities/32180>; Doncaster - [https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/schools/volunteer-passport#:~:text=The%20course%20is%20a%20good,impact%20on%20your%20volunteering%20work.](https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/schools/volunteer-passport#:~:text=The%20course%20is%20a%20good,impact%20on%20your%20volunteering%20work.;); Slough - <https://sloughcvs.org/volunteer-passport-scheme/>.

<sup>10</sup> *Volunteer Learning Passport*.

<http://www.communitycvs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/VLP-Guidance-for-Organisations.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> *Volunteer Learning*. <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/volunteer-learning/>

<sup>12</sup> For more information on Covid-19 hubs and such partnerships, see: Shukra, Kalbir, 2020. Learning from the Lewisham Covid-19 Hub. Goldsmiths University.

<https://www.lewishamlocal.com/learning-from-the-lewisham-covid-19-response-hub/>. Coutts, Pippa et al.

*Pooling Together: How Community Hubs have responded to the COVID-19 Emergency*.

[https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie\\_uk\\_trust/2020/09/30090419/LOW-RES-4685-C19C-Community-Hubs-Case-Studies-1.pdf](https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie_uk_trust/2020/09/30090419/LOW-RES-4685-C19C-Community-Hubs-Case-Studies-1.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> The NHSVR programme was established by NHS England and NHS Improvement at the start of Covid-19. Royal Voluntary Service and the GoodSAM app were jointly commissioned to enable place-based matching of volunteers with volunteering tasks and volunteer management. Task allocation is based on volunteer availability to help, relevant background checks and training. NHS volunteers have completed over 1.7m tasks since the inception of the scheme. For more information see: <https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/>

volunteer passports would record their skills and availability on the system so they could be matched with opportunities either in the times of crisis as ‘national volunteer reserve’ or for ‘community support’ and ‘public service’. Such volunteer passport systems could be supported by digital platforms that “adapt to volunteer preferences and organisations’ need to allocate tasks and shifts effectively”.<sup>14</sup>

There are, nevertheless, many digital platforms and organisations that already perform similar roles. For example, volunteering websites such as DoIt and Reach<sup>15</sup> function as mediators between volunteers and VIOs, by publicising volunteering opportunities and allowing volunteers to find those that match their interests, skills and time they have. Local authorities or national councils for volunteering use similar volunteering portals, for example, Lewisham Volunteering, Cornwall Volunteering or Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) portals. In addition, local volunteering centres have long performed the same role in matching volunteers and organisations who need their help, both digitally and in other ways.

While not all of these different ways of matching volunteer supply and demand would involve passporting, some can be seen in this context as they help match the demand for volunteers to volunteers’ interests, skills and time. In doing this, they help co-ordinate volunteer supply and demand more globally across different organisations and potentially improve volunteer portability.

#### 2.1.2. Validating and valuing volunteers’ knowledge and work

Validation and valuing of volunteers’ experience and contribution is another major framework for approaching and understanding volunteer passports and passporting. From this perspective, volunteer passports have arisen as a tool to record volunteers’ work, skills and knowledge, recognising their achievements and giving them evidence they can use for future volunteering roles or employment. Many such initiatives have been developed in Europe driven by the need to validate learning in non-formal and informal settings, particularly as a way to support employment of young people, those returning to employment and vulnerable and marginalised groups.<sup>16</sup>

Typically, volunteer passports focusing on validation include two main elements: a ‘product’ owned by the volunteer as evidence of their experience and learning; and a ‘process’ of reflection on their learning through volunteering to identify the skills, experience and knowledge they acquired. This process is often based on particular core competencies, which are sometimes linked to national or international skills frameworks or other formal mechanisms to validate skills in the labour market.

Over the last two decades, a variety of validation tools have been adopted both at national and international levels. For example, a recent compendium of validation tools for volunteers in Europe found 46 tools across different European countries.<sup>17</sup> 25 of the tools listed in the compendium involved volunteer passports used to validate skills and knowledge gained through volunteering. Development of such tools has been partly driven by new laws and policies in this area, for example,

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<sup>14</sup> Danny Kruger MP. *Levelling up our communities*, page 31.

<sup>15</sup> See: <https://doit.life/>; <https://reachvolunteering.org.uk/>. There are also other platforms performing similar roles, for example a smartphone application Tribe helps match users of social care services and support with voluntary or paid providers of those services in their local area. See: <https://tribeproject.org/>

<sup>16</sup> Joklová, Mária . 2019. *Validation tools for volunteers: Compendium*.

[https://www.improval.eu/images/ImproVal\\_Compndium\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.improval.eu/images/ImproVal_Compndium_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

through adopting national legislation or recommendations on validation of non-formal and informal learning.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, such tools have been seen as beneficial for addressing (youth) unemployment – particularly, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis – through recognising the skills acquired through non-formal learning in the labour market.<sup>19</sup>

French Passeport Bénévole<sup>20</sup> (Volunteer Passport) is one such example. The passport was created in 2007 by France Bénévolat, a national network dedicated to promoting and supporting volunteering. Its creation was partly driven by the new 2002 legislation in France that provided mechanisms for validating learning through experience, as well as realisation that volunteers lacked support to express and record the learning they acquired through volunteering. The passport was, therefore, designed both as a booklet owned by a volunteer and a skills framework to help the VIOs and volunteers reflect on, and record, the learning that took place.

The Passeport Bénévole allows volunteers to record their volunteering roles, training and certificates, as well as skills and knowledge they developed through volunteering. The aim of the scheme is to impact positively on the volunteer's confidence, offer public recognition for their contribution, and support them in finding employment. For this reason, the scheme has a significant focus on volunteers in particular groups: young people, the unemployed, people returning to work, refugees and other vulnerable and marginalised groups.<sup>21</sup>

Another established example with an exclusive focus on young people is Youthpass<sup>22</sup> – a volunteer passport scheme for young people in the EU. Also launched in 2007, Youthpass has a similar design as Passeport Bénévole, as it involves a volunteer-owned product and a process that supports it. The 'product' is a certificate awarded to the volunteer, evidencing their volunteering activities and learning. The process is a skills framework for reflecting on, and recording, volunteers' learning they gained through volunteering or youth projects. This skills framework is linked to eight key competencies related to lifelong learning and adopted by the EU in 2006.<sup>23</sup> In addition to supporting young people's entry in employment, the scheme also promotes recognition of non-formal learning in the labour market.

The two examples – as well as other similar projects<sup>24</sup> – point to the importance of distinguishing between valorisation and validation of volunteers' experience, skills and knowledge. France

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<sup>18</sup> For example, a law on the 'Validation of Acquired Experience' was adopted in 2002 in France. This law was one of the factors leading up to setting up of the French Passeport Bénévole (Volunteer Passport) scheme. More broadly within the EU, a number of policy documents were issued promoting validation of non-formal learning, including "Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning".

<sup>19</sup> Taru, Marti and Kloosterman, Paul, 2013. *Youthpass Impact Study: Young people's personal development and employability and the recognition of youth work*, page 9.

<https://www.youthpass.eu/en/about-youthpass/youthpass-impact-study/>

<sup>20</sup> The Volunteer Passport. <https://gr-eat.eu/the-volunteer-passport-france-benevolat/>;  
<https://www.francebenevolat.org/actions-et-programmes/valorisation-de-l-experience-benevole/passeport-benevole>.

<sup>21</sup> France Bénévolat, 2021a. *Le Passeport Bénévole*; 2021b. *Valorisez les compétences expérientielles*.

<sup>22</sup> *What is Youthpass?* <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/about-youthpass/about/>

<sup>23</sup> Taru, Marti and Kloosterman, Paul, 2013. *Youthpass Impact Study*. See also: The European framework for key competences, 2006, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/key\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/key_en.htm).

<sup>24</sup> For more information on similar projects, see: Joklová, Mária . 2019. *Validation tools for volunteers: Compendium*. See also: Edos Foundation, 2019. *Upgrading validation: Assistance For Introducing / Strengthening Validation In The Voluntary Sector*.  
[https://www.edosfoundation.com/images/UpVal/Upval\\_I01\\_-\\_for\\_publication\\_.pdf](https://www.edosfoundation.com/images/UpVal/Upval_I01_-_for_publication_.pdf).

Bénévolat, for example, explains that their passport scheme provides valorisation as recognition that aims to increase the volunteer's confidence, as opposed to validation as formal recognition of knowledge and skills, for example, through officially recognised diplomas and certificates.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the Passeport Bénévole can also be used for the purposes of validation, as volunteers can use it as evidence they put forward to obtain all or part of a higher education or professional qualification based on the learning through experience. To further link valorisation and validation, these types of schemes often relate their skills framework to existing national or other relevant skills frameworks used in the labour market.

For example, a similar Romanian Volunteer Passport scheme, VoluntPass, uses the National Qualifications Framework as a reference, so skills and knowledge acquired through volunteering can be linked to academic and professional qualifications recognised in the country.<sup>26</sup> The previously mentioned UK National Volunteer Certificate in the health and care sector is also linked to the Core Skills Training Framework used in healthcare, which volunteers wishing to work in this sector can use the Certificate as evidence of training.

Finally, other ways used to recognise volunteers' achievements and value their contribution involved various reward schemes for volunteers. Volunteer passes or cards have been used to reward volunteers by giving them access to free or discounted events, services, products or learning opportunities. In some instances, such schemes also allow volunteers to record their volunteering experiences and develop a volunteering portfolio.

For example, volunteer passes have been used in the culture and heritage sectors in the UK, as a 'thank you' and incentives for volunteering. Such a scheme operates in the National Trust<sup>27</sup>, as well as regionally across museums in the Northern England<sup>28</sup>. In both cases, the volunteer pass allows volunteers free entry to participating museums and sometimes also additional discounts. The Northern Museum Volunteer Pass also aims to support continuous professional development (CPD) for volunteers by removing barriers to visiting, and learning from, other museum venues.

Elsewhere, similar initiatives have emerged in other sectors involving volunteers. For example, a Lewisham Local card<sup>29</sup> was introduced recently to reward volunteers by giving them access to discounts at local shops and businesses. A survey of card users found that 45% felt the card encouraged them to continue volunteering and 10% reported it encouraged them to volunteer more.<sup>30</sup> In another similar example, young volunteers in Scotland can access a range of rewards. The Saltire Awards scheme allows volunteers to record their voluntary work and get certificates. With each Saltire Award certificate, young people can earn up to 3000 Young Scot Reward points, which they can exchange for rewards and activities for young people.

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<sup>25</sup> France Benevolat, 2021a. *Valorisez les compétences expérientielles*.

<sup>26</sup> Edos Foundation, 2019. *Upgrading validation*.

<sup>27</sup> National Trust. *Volunteer with us – Benefits of volunteering with the National Trust*.  
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/nymans/features/volunteer-with-us>.

<sup>28</sup> *Northern Museums Volunteer Pass Scheme*. See:  
<https://www.museumdevelopmentyorkshire.org.uk/about-us/northern-museums-volunteer-pass-scheme/>.

<sup>29</sup> Lewisham Local card is run by Lewisham Local, a network of local organisations. Lewisham Local is also part of [London's Giving](#), a pan London place-based giving movement. See: *Lewisham Local Card*.  
<https://www.lewishamlocal.com/card/>.

<sup>30</sup> *Lewisham Local Card Evaluation, June 2015-June 2019*.



While such volunteer reward schemes do not always involve passporting per se, they do relate to volunteer passports in several ways. Firstly, the reward cards are sometimes directly linked to certain elements of passporting, for example, volunteer portfolios or time banks providing a record of someone's volunteering. For example, rewards may be accessed based on the volunteer's record of time spent volunteering. Secondly, in some instances they do encourage some aspects of portability: for example, the Northern Museum Volunteer Pass encourages volunteer learning across participating museums and exchange of volunteer skills across the network. Thirdly, volunteer reward schemes share the broad aim of valuing volunteers and their contribution, which is central in the validation-oriented volunteer passports.

## 2.2. Drivers for developing passporting products and systems

Qualitative research with VIOs, sector stakeholders and digital platform providers involved in volunteer passport and passporting initiatives gave further insight into the drivers for their development. In their experience, passporting initiatives broadly aimed to address the following key issues in volunteer recruitment, management and development:

- **Speed of volunteer recruitment, onboarding and deployment (surge volunteering):** Respondents involved in the health and social care or community volunteering discussed passporting in the context of emergency response volunteering, as in the current Covid-19 pandemic or in response to the flooding in the UK or bush fires in Australia. Passporting was used in this context in several initiatives as a mechanism to recruit, onboard and match large numbers of volunteers with local needs for their help at speed. Examples of such initiatives included: NHSVR in the UK, which created a large pool of volunteers who were identity checked and could be deployed rapidly against local needs; a pilot in Australia to create a volunteer passport system that could be used for surge volunteering; and smaller-scale, local collaboration between volunteer centres and/ or VIOs to provide a single-entry point for volunteers across participating VIOs, for example, as in the case of the Lewisham Covid-19 Response Hub.<sup>31</sup>
- **Tailored and agile matching of volunteers with volunteering opportunities:** The need to improve the effectiveness of matching volunteer supply and demand and make it more tailored has been another driver behind developing some passporting solutions. In these instances, volunteer passports or passporting systems were hoped to: enable re-deployment of volunteers who may not be utilised to tasks and places where they were needed; allow VIOs to be more proactive in matching volunteers with opportunities based on their interests and skills; and support micro, ad hoc, event- and place-based volunteering across different organisations.

Tailored matching of volunteer supply and demand was, thus, an integral part of several initiatives with passporting elements discussed in this research. For example, some VIO respondents have reported using passporting solutions for event-based volunteering, where a pool of volunteers with experience and interest in this type of volunteering could be accessed and matched with events across different organisations or within a particular area efficiently. Similarly, some health volunteers in this sample found using the GoodSAM app utilised by the NHSVR programme or other similar platforms an easy way to receive tasks to help those in need during the pandemic based on the tasks and location they specified. Tailored matching where

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<sup>31</sup> Shukra, Kalbir, 2020. *Learning from the Lewisham Covid-19 Hub*.

volunteers are sent notifications based on their criteria was also an essential element in a couple of other volunteer passports which are being developed within the healthcare and community volunteering sectors in the UK and Australia.

*On my GoodSAM app, I had to fill in a load of stuff and then it gives me tasks. So, you can then open the tasks based on what you've said you can do. [...] With the GoodSAM app, when you log on to the app you can say you're on duty, and that means you're available. I work full time, so if I get something that says it's 3 o'clock on a Tuesday, I'm not going to be able to do it. So, [being able to specify availability] is really good. [Volunteer, health]*

While tailored matching is not new – and has been done by volunteering websites and volunteer centres – doing this in ways that allow for volunteer portability across organisations and micro, task-based volunteering has been an additional dimension of matching within volunteer passporting solutions.

- **Reducing duplication in volunteer recruitment and onboarding:** VIO respondents and stakeholders explained passporting reduced duplication in volunteer vetting and training, thus saving time and cost to both volunteers and VIOs. For example, a volunteer management system in the museum sector involved some elements of passporting of this kind. The system allowed for centralised checking of volunteer identity, DBS and right to work, so volunteers could take up volunteering opportunities across participating museums without having to repeat the same administrative tasks each time. The respondent stressed this reduced administrative burden on both volunteers and VIOs, saving time and cost and potentially reducing barriers to volunteer recruitment. A similar role was performed by a local volunteer centre as another respondent explained, so their member VIOs did not have to repeat some of the basic checks they did for volunteers.

*We wanted to make it easier for volunteers [with our volunteer passport], based on the research we had showing volunteers wanted to volunteer for more than one organisation. Volunteers have been making the case for decades because of the frustration of the administrative burdens of volunteering, going through the ID checks, police checks and everything else with every single organisation they volunteer for. [VIO, cross sector]*

- **Standardising volunteer training and management:** Several different passporting initiatives explored in this research stemmed from attempts to standardise volunteer training in a local area and/ or within a particular sector. The place-based initiatives focused on providing centralised and standardised entry-level training that was delivered across different sectors. The sector-based initiatives focused on standardising training in more specialist, sector-specific ways, for example, standardising volunteer tour guide training across a group of museums or developing shared training resources, standards and certificates for volunteers in healthcare.

*We commissioned e-learning for Health (e-LFH). It's the main body that does all the e-learning for the NHS. When we set out to develop the volunteer learning, we particularly wanted to make this learning applicable to all volunteers in Health and Social Care, not just NHS, bearing in mind the purpose of the project was all about integration. [VIO, Health]*

Respondents involved in these diverse initiatives to standardise volunteer training highlighted several main drivers for this. Firstly, respondents explained these initiatives sought to improve the consistency of training volunteers in particular areas or sectors had and were provided by VIOs, as well as overall messages being given to volunteers. This consistency of training was also meant to provide some quality assurance over volunteer preparedness to take up particular volunteering roles. Secondly, standardising training also aimed to allow more volunteer portability and sharing of volunteers across different local or sector-based organisations. Thirdly, standardisation – and in some instances also centralisation – of training was hoped to bring cost savings for VIOs and save time to volunteers by reducing duplication in training.

- **Developing, supporting and valuing volunteers:** Finally, some passporting initiatives discussed in this research focused on volunteer development and benefits from volunteering, rather than the benefits for VIOs or VIO service beneficiaries. This involved volunteer passports as portfolios of volunteer experience and skills, which they could use as evidence to validate their learning with other volunteering organisations or employers. Respondents involved in such initiatives stressed the confidence-building and public recognition aspects of such passports, as well as their role in supporting young people, unemployed people or marginalised groups in terms of personal development, wellbeing, employment and social integration. Wanting to value and thank volunteers was also cited as a driver for volunteer award and reward initiatives.

*The reason [for the volunteer passport] was because quite a few unemployed people going to this Employment Bureau were also people doing volunteer work. The purpose at the beginning was, is it possible for the Employment Bureau, that is the government, to acknowledge volunteering as something instrumental to lead to a real job? That was the very beginning. [VIO, infrastructure organisation]*

### **2.3. Elements and models of volunteer passports and passporting**

Respondents across our VIO, digital and sector stakeholder sample described some key elements of volunteer passports and passporting. This included the organisational, technological and policy infrastructure needed to support volunteer passports and passporting, as well as how particular volunteer passports as products owned by the volunteer were conceptualised or worked. These different elements served two key functions within volunteer passports: 1) enabling volunteer portability and 2) validation and valuing of volunteers, as previously mentioned.

The diagram below shows the organisational infrastructure sitting behind passporting centred on portability and key components and processes involved in volunteer passports as products owned by the volunteer. However, it is worth noting that often these elements were not all included in individual volunteer passport initiatives. Rather, different volunteer passports and passporting projects resembled jigsaws that combined these elements in different ways. Due to the complexity of different infrastructures required, the diagram does not include technological solutions respondents linked to passporting, but these are discussed later in this section.

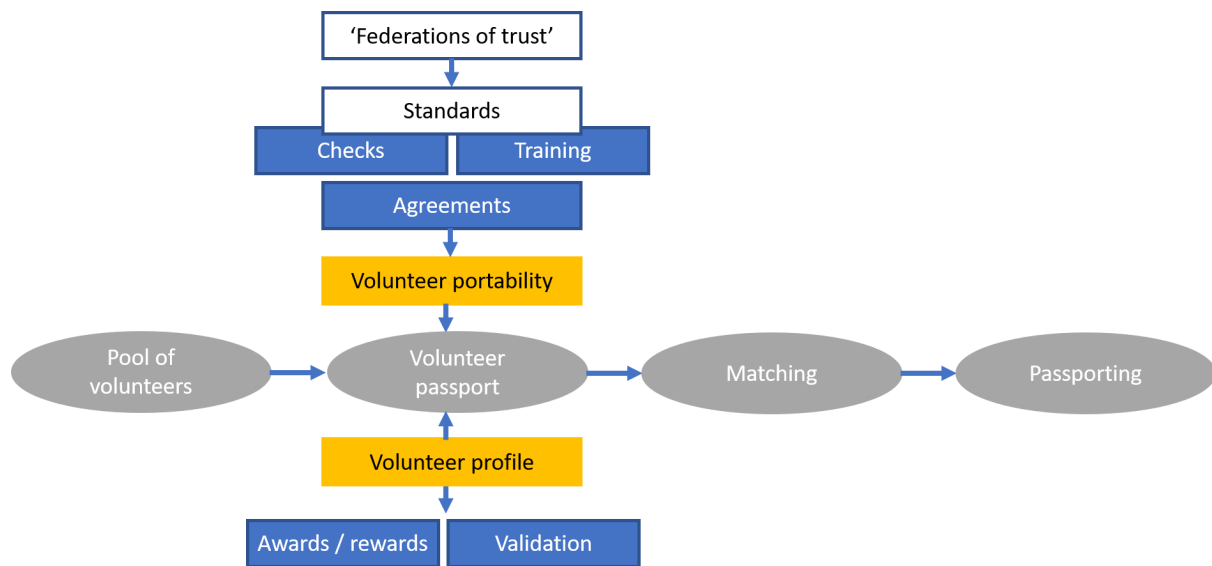


Figure 1: Elements of volunteer passporting

The key elements of volunteer passports and passporting shown in the diagram are explained in more detail below, as well as relationships between them.

- **‘Federations of trust’:** In the context of volunteer passporting, this term was used to refer to groups of organisations with some aspects of shared volunteer recruitment and onboarding. In the initiatives explored in this research, organisations in ‘federations of trust’ had either a same local area or sector in common or both. Their collaboration involved a joined-up approach to volunteer recruitment and onboarding which allowed organisations to trust and accept each other’s volunteers or have centralised recruitment and onboarding systems and processes.

*It’s about the different systems and about people trusting the system. So, if I recruit a volunteer through the system and that person pitches up at your door to volunteer, you trust that what we’ve used to recruit that volunteer is reliable. It’s tamper proof, it’s safe, it’s solid and it does what it says on the tin. [VIO, Health]*

The extent, scale and levels at which this collaboration occurred varied greatly. In one example from the UK, 3 local organisations came to an agreement to have a one-point entry for their volunteers during the Covid-19 pandemic, so volunteer vetting and training would be centralised. In another example from Australia, 20 organisations across one state joined the volunteer passporting system, with vetting of volunteers conducted centrally by the technological partner on the scheme. Importantly, each of these ‘federations of trust’ needed to agree who will perform the role of a verifier confirming that information listed on volunteer profiles was genuine and up-to-date.

- **Standards and agreements:** Shared standards in terms of volunteer vetting and training requirements were mentioned by VIOs and stakeholders involved in passporting initiatives as another building block required for volunteer portability. Respondents explained that shared standards and data sharing and governance agreements would be critical for organisations to be able to trust that volunteers vetted and trained by another participating organisation would meet their requirements.

*It's about standardisation of learning, so all volunteers were getting that basic learning, and also that volunteers could pull down a certificate to show they've done the training and it was portable. The portability was the most important aspect of it, which is why we worked with e-LFH because they had the infrastructures, the database and technology to do that. [VIO, Health]*

The extent to which shared standards were developed and implemented varied greatly. For example, where entry-level volunteer training was developed and offered centrally, local VIOs often welcomed this training as standardised volunteer induction. Similarly, specialist training was sometimes standardised and used by participating organisations, for example, tour guide training in the museum sector. In the volunteer passport example from Australia, the volunteer passport platform included libraries of accredited training that volunteers could add to their profile and VIOs could choose to accept or not.

*The core content remains the same, so we have equality, health and safety, safeguarding, first aid and person-centred working as the core units, but really flexibly delivered in terms of, you're drawing on your cohort for their experiences and where they're based as volunteers. [VIO, local authority]*

- **Volunteer portability:** VIOs and stakeholders involved in passporting hoped the elements above would provide an infrastructure that would allow for volunteer portability, although this was sometimes achieved in fragmented and limited ways. For example, where there was a centralised volunteer management infrastructure through volunteer centres or teams serving participating organisations, portability worked as member organisations accepted centralised vetting and certain kinds of training for volunteers. In local areas with standardised volunteer training offer, this provided portable basic training for volunteers and VIOs, but portability in this context did not also include volunteer checks and vetting. In another example, where three organisations embarked on collaboration in volunteer management, they achieved a one-way portability from an organisation with most stringent standards into the other organisations but not the other way round.

*We want a core list of things like police check, working with children checks, for the volunteer to be able to do that once, to be able to have a system that is trusted by the VIOs, so they don't request that they do it again. This requires some broader systemic change with VIOs so that there's some agreement, and probably some extra standards on what those key elements are that people will be able to trust. [VIO, cross sector]*

Nevertheless, portability of volunteer checks and training remained a goal that VIOs and stakeholders involved in such initiatives shared and were working towards. In particular, respondents within the health sector in the UK reported they were in the process of developing a proof of concept for volunteer passport models that would allow for volunteer portability. In one such model, volunteer checks would be performed centrally – for example, by a local volunteer centre – and would be stored digitally on the volunteer profile, along with any training and certificates. Volunteers would control their profile and consent to share with VIOs if they were interested in volunteering with them.

*Strategically and culturally, this is the most important part of this. If we use the existing CVS's, one CVS in each of the ICPs becomes the verification centre for that ICP, so they're then responsible for all the recruitment of all the volunteers in that ICP, including for that statutory sector as well. That puts the voluntary sector in a very strong position of responsibility, and in terms of integration I think it's probably the icing on the cake. [VIO, Health]*

- **Pool of volunteers:** Another key element in the passporting models centred on portability – particularly in the context of emergency response – was having a pool of volunteers that VIOs can access to promote their volunteering opportunities based on criteria set by volunteers within their profile. Such pools of volunteers were created in several passporting initiatives, including: the NHSVR scheme and a local Covid-19 hub where several VIOs organisations had one-point entry for volunteers in the UK; and an Australian volunteer passport pilot project where all volunteers who registered on the online passport system comprised this pool.
- **Matching:** Agile and tailored matching of volunteers to relevant volunteering opportunities and tasks was another common element of passporting solutions focused on portability. Some VIOs explained this worked particularly well for certain types of volunteering, for example, event volunteering which was ad hoc and limited to a particular set of volunteer tasks and skills.

Some VIOs developing passporting models within the health sector or emergency response context also argued matching across different organisations was suited to localised, place-based volunteering, particularly in the emergency response context. These respondents suggested place-based volunteering was agnostic to individual organisations as some volunteers wanted to help out locally without necessarily being attached to particular organisations. Some volunteers in this sample also talked about volunteering in similar, place-based ways during the pandemic, often under the radar of the voluntary sector and without any vetting or training. For example, a respondent explained how they used the Nextdoor<sup>32</sup> app to help local people who posted they needed support with particular tasks during the pandemic.

*One of the recurring things that comes up persistently and continuously is the sense that, for this new group of volunteers, they are volunteering primarily for their community, for their locality, for people who live near them and the NHS in their region. And actually, what they're really delighted about is that NHS Volunteer Responders enables them to do that with support safely. Actually, they would want from us and from the wider system the ability to take all of that great work that they've done, their DBS's, their training and all the other things, and move to other providers in their locality that are delivering and doing similar things. [VIO group, health]*

- **Volunteer profile (portfolio):** This element straddled the portability and validation agendas, as it was central to both types of initiatives. In the portability-oriented passporting, the volunteer profile was intended to provide proof of their ID, DBS and any other checks, and potentially training and volunteer certificates they had. It was also meant to filter volunteering tasks and opportunities so that these could be promoted to volunteers in targeted ways. In the validation-oriented volunteer passports, the profile served some additional purposes. For example, as respondents familiar with these types of passporting explained, the profile provided

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<sup>32</sup> Nextdoor is an app that can be used to connect to neighbours and local businesses, organisations, services, recommendations etc.

a verified record of the volunteer's experiences, knowledge and skills which they could then use as evidence for the purposes of volunteering, employment or validation.

*What we want to do is collect volunteering opportunities, so that in one place, people can browse, apply, and then when they volunteer, that is recorded in their volunteer passport as well. So, the passport will be able to be developed to have a bit of a record of their volunteering. [VIO, cross sector]*

- **Validation and valuing:** The volunteer profile as a record of their volunteering was sometimes linked to additional mechanisms to validate their learning or value their contribution. As VIO respondents explained, using the volunteer passport for these purposes was enabled by the broader policies recognising non-formal learning and developing routes to validation. For example, a respondent explained that in France the Passeport Bénévole could be used as evidence towards a Diploma based on non-formal learning.

*We have a validation of prior learning and the work written down in the Passeport Bénévole, will be taken into account for achieving a diploma, or part of a diploma. What is interesting is that the Ministry of Education, with what we call VAE, Valorisation of Acquired Learning, takes into account every experience, every volunteer experience, to help the person get part of a diploma or to get the full diploma. [VIO, cross sector]*

In addition to validation, there was a strong element of recognition and valuing of volunteers associated with some volunteer passport schemes. For example, some VIO respondents talked about the public and celebratory nature of ceremonies in which volunteer passports were awarded to volunteers. For example, the ceremonies would often be held in town halls to mark the achievement of volunteers and families and friends would attend. In some instances, volunteer profiles as records of their volunteering contributions and achievements were also linked to different award and rewards schemes.

As mentioned earlier, these different elements were combined in different ways in examples of volunteer passports and passporting respondents discussed. VIOs' experiences also varied in whether these elements were combined as part of the same product and platform or whether they had different systems and processes that performed some of the functions associated with volunteer passports and passporting. Another variation concerned the extent to which respondents felt volunteer portability was realised through their passporting or other systems: while some felt this was achieved in partial or specific ways, for others this was still a goal they were hoping to achieve in the future. The diagrams below illustrate these diverse models uncovered in which the different elements described above were combined in differing ways:



*Figure 2: Model A: Shared standards and centralised volunteer management*

*Description:* This was the most comprehensive volunteer passporting model uncovered in this study. In this example the federation of trust between organisations had led to agreed checks and training standards which were then managed centrally and were portable across roles and VIOs. This linked into a volunteer profile and matching of volunteers with opportunities. In some instances, however, volunteer vetting was not centralised but participating organisations accepted each other’s checks.

The motivations behind creating this passporting model ranged from adoption in response to COVID-19 for surge volunteering purposes, to speeding up the on-boarding of volunteers through avoiding duplication of training and checks.

This model was used in a diverse range of ways when considering sector and geography:

- For local or regional schemes that operated across sectors but focussed on community tasks;
- For a sector-specific scheme within culture;
- The only national scheme that fits within this model to some extent was NHSVR, as it involved a joined-up volunteer recruitment and onboarding process for participating organisations.

It is worth noting that while some schemes had implemented all of the jigsaw pieces of the diagram above, others were still developing some aspects. For example, in one the organisers were looking to improve on the matching element and another was in the process of developing volunteer profiles. To that extent, the diagram above is showing an idealised version of this model that different actual examples have achieved to different extent but were striving towards.

These schemes were not aimed at any one type of volunteer; though central to them all was the idea that volunteers were in a ‘pool’. To that extent, they would only appeal to volunteers who were not put off by the idea of being in a pool, which is one of the challenges discussed in the next chapter.





*Figure 3: Model B: Training-based volunteer passport*

*Description:* This model focuses on setting common training and standards across organisations which allows for portability of this training across VIOs, and validation of volunteer experience.

The motivations behind developing this model of passporting were both the efficiency benefits for VIOs of sharing the training and the portability of volunteers. This model also aimed to recognise the value volunteers add and reward volunteers in the form of validation and learning.

This model was used in instances where there was a common sector (e.g. in healthcare) or a local region (e.g. local authority volunteer passport). No examples of a national scheme of this type were discovered, although with the HEE volunteer learning passport may yet become more widely used across the NHS as it is integrated with the NHS Volunteer Certificate.

This type of scheme was again not aimed at a particular type of volunteer though the training focus (and time commitment this entailed) meant they tended to appeal to those who wanted to invest time in volunteering and volunteer for more than one organisation or were attracted by the idea of having a training certificate.



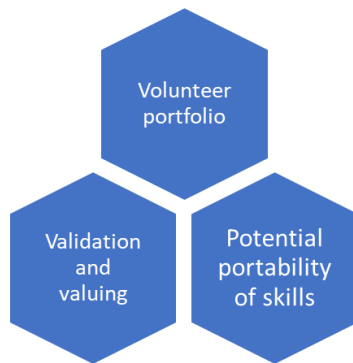
*Figure 4: Model C: Matching and potential portability of skills*

*Description:* This model links together matching volunteers with opportunities alongside allowing volunteers to create a profile or portfolio of their skills. These initiatives did not include common training or standards, rather put this in the hands of volunteers allowing them to update their skills and experience.

This model was often derived from the needs of the volunteer and allowing them to connect with their local community, grow experience to help them find paid work. The schemes were also motivated by a desire to help VIOs find volunteers.

Digital systems were often central to these types of schemes and they could be national or regional but those discovered tended to cover a wide geographical area. They also tended to be cross-sector but those which have grown more recently had a community or health focus in response to Covid-19. Examples included various volunteering websites and platforms matching volunteers with VIOs.

These initiatives tended to be aimed at volunteers who were actively looking for opportunities.



*Figure 5: Model D: Volunteer validation for entry to the workplace*

*Description:* The final model outlines how a passporting scheme with an employment angle works; the focus here is on the volunteer creating a profile (or portfolio) of their volunteer experience which they use as evidence for validation of their learning. This has the potential then to allow portability of skills across VIOs and in the labour market.

The motivations behind this type of scheme are focussed on the benefit to the volunteer; valuing the volunteer and assisting them with finding paid work.

The scheme that followed this model was national and cross-sector.

This scheme's focus on employment meant it was aimed at a youth audience, those who are out of work and looking for employment, or marginalised groups that may need support with employment.

Additionally, the research also found examples of volunteer passporting initiatives which were similar to the models above, but delivered certain elements separately rather than as part of the same scheme. Two examples of volunteer passporting where elements were delivered separately are shown below (Models E and F):

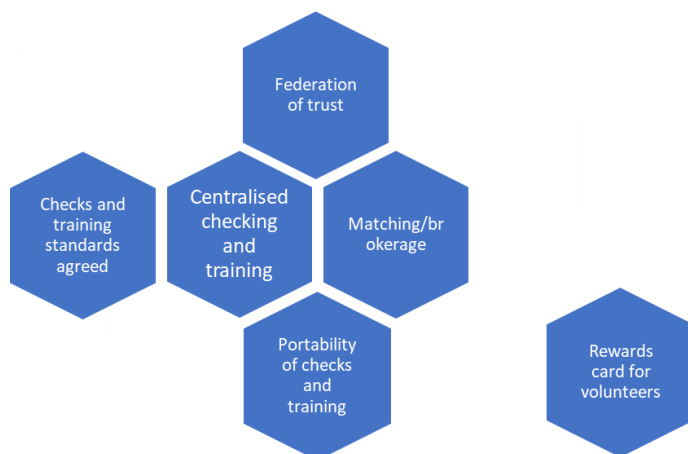


Figure 6: Model E: Shared standards and management with a separate reward feature

*Description:* This example is similar to Model A, as it is based on an initiative involving shared standards and centralised checking and training of volunteers, however, with a separate rewards card for volunteers.

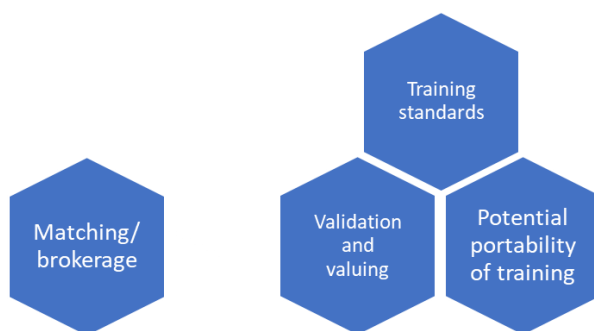


Figure 7: Model F: Training-based volunteer passport with matching separate

*Description:* In some instances, the training-based model (Model C described earlier) includes matching and brokerage separately. This is often because a local area may have outsourced the training aspect but retained volunteer matching within their existing systems.

## 2.4. Digital infrastructure involved in volunteer passports and passporting

In addition to the main building blocks of volunteer passports discussed above, VIOs, stakeholders and digital platform providers also highlighted the technological infrastructure needed to enable volunteer passporting. In particular, digital stakeholders pointed out a range of digital products and services involved that would be required to enable volunteer portability. This included:

- Digital identity software:** For digital stakeholders and some VIOs, this was one area of interest with regards to the technology required for volunteer passporting. One respondent explained digital identity software was already integrated within their volunteering brokerage platform. Volunteers could therefore verify their identity online and share that with VIOs as third parties. In another passporting project that is currently at a proof of concept stage, digital identity software was also planned to be included as part of the volunteer passport.

*These two pieces of software allow us to verify someone's identity, and then create a passport that sits outside of our system that can be moved around via API to different organisations.*  
[Digital platform provider]

- **Online DBS service and online DBS updates:** Some VIOs and stakeholders discussed that for passporting to be possible, there would need to be a better awareness and capacity to use the existing online DBS service and updates by VIOs and volunteers. As one VIO respondent explained, even many volunteer managers are not aware of these services. A digital stakeholder also pointed out any volunteer passport would need to be integrated with the online DBS service and updates.

*If we had the passporting idea, what we'd be able to do is, attribute the DBS number to the volunteer's profile, and if they went somewhere else, they'd be able to take that, which is logged against their passport. [...] To achieve that, you've got maybe four stacks of technology to align. 1. DBS online, 2. Access the update service for that volunteer, 3. Link it to their passport, 4. The organisation that they take that passport to has also got to have that technology in place so they can take that passport, scan it and upload it on to their system.* [Digital platform provider]

- **Volunteer passport application:** The volunteer passport application would include the volunteer profile and enable notifications of volunteer opportunities based on that profile. The passporting initiatives respondents discussed varied in whether the data within the volunteer profile was only stored in their app and device, or it was also stored in a centralised volunteer management system of an organisation managing the platform, for example, a volunteer management team for a federation of trust or a digital platform provider. In both instances, however, respondents stressed the importance of the passport being controlled by the volunteer, who would then decide to share their information with VIOs they were interested in.

*We're doing some work with an organisation [name redacted], using a third-party piece of software that would allow us to have a floating ID-That would be useful for us because it gives an independent trusted source to be able to pin certain attributes against. So, rather than not having re-write access to the core source, there would be a little bit of data that would sit within this passport area that people would have re-write access to, without necessarily affecting this person's private information that's held by this organisation.* [Digital platform provider]

- **Integration with VIO volunteer management systems:** Respondents stressed the importance of using open-data technologies for volunteer passporting systems, which would allow integration with diverse volunteer management software already used by VIOs and data sharing. VIOs' systems would also need to be able to 'read' the passport – for example, using QR codes – and import the information from the passport into their system.

*I think the added level of complexity is, every one of the organisations have got digital solutions that they have themselves, so it's then about the integration and the connection between how the systems work.* [VIO group, health]

- **Integration with other relevant schemes, services and software:** Some respondents also raised the possibility to integrate volunteer passports with other related schemes, for example, youth cards providing access to a range of opportunities and rewards for young people. A respondent

who was involved in the early stages of developing such a youth card explained the card could provide access to volunteering opportunities for young people too. In this context, the respondent felt that the integration of the youth card and the volunteer passport system would be a plausible and interesting avenue to explore.

In addition, a VIO and a digital platform provider emphasized the value of having a social networking as part of any volunteer passport platform. This element was already built in some existing digital brokerage platforms allowing volunteers to connect with each other and build communities.

*I think the other thing that would need to be included is that sense of, how do volunteers connect with other volunteers and form a community in their locality, or a community of interest. My experience [...] is, volunteers are brilliant at enabling, supporting and sharing other volunteer experiences. [VIO group, health]*

Other examples of features that VIOs, stakeholders and digital providers thought could potentially be integrated with the volunteer passport included: time credits software to record volunteer's activities that could be redeemed against rewards, digital badges as evidence of non-formal learning, and payments so volunteer expenses could be also managed in the same place.

## 2.5. Related and alternative practices

The research highlighted there were other systems, practices and platforms that already meet some of the needs that volunteer passports would try and address. Exploring how these other systems relate to passporting is beyond the scope of this study, however these need to be considered as volunteer passports may need to integrate with these complementary practices or they may be in competition. Respondents in this sample highlighted the following examples of related and alternative systems, platforms and practices in some key areas relevant to volunteer passports and passporting:

- **Matching of volunteers with volunteering opportunities:** The research found a range of existing practices in terms of volunteer recruitment and brokerage, which volunteer passports could potentially compete with. There were instances where local volunteer recruitment was supported by volunteer centres, but individual VIOs also relied on a mix of methods, including email, newsletters and word of mouth. Some VIOs in the sample also used the brokerage websites such as Do It or one of the many volunteer management platforms to develop volunteer portals for their local area and tailored to their needs.

*We have historically done more to help people with matches between volunteers and organisations. We've also done quite a lot in terms of training for our volunteers, we've done a lot in terms of a more thorough recruitment process. [...] With that in mind, we had already started to design a bespoke system for recruiting volunteers, which we were hoping would be a stepping stone to people who signed up with us being able to more easily move between one organisation and another, and to build up, essentially a profile of their volunteering activities. To log their hours, to log their achievements, to log their training, to basically develop as a person*

*and a volunteer, and move and take that experience to whichever organisation they choose.*  
[VIO, CVS and volunteer centre]

Volunteers also stressed the organic nature of finding their volunteer roles and the centrality of word of mouth in this process. For some volunteers, their volunteering stemmed from their interests in particular activities or social connections to particular organisations, for example, through their children. For these respondents, digital methods of finding volunteering opportunities seemed unnecessary as they felt they accessed these more organically.

*I used to go to the drama school that I now volunteer at, so that followed on from that. I used to do it when I was there. Then, the chaperoning, I just applied for, it was a part of my school, but an extension. Whenever shows came with children, they'd always ask the kids from my school to go do it. They needed chaperones, and I applied, and I had to get checked and everything. The Africa school [volunteering] was just through a friend. None of it was random, I knew people and I've been asked by them.* [Volunteer, culture]

As these existing practices of volunteer recruitment are ingrained in the infrastructure of the voluntary sector and volunteer behaviour, any volunteer passport system would need to consider how it integrates with these where possible.

- **Shared standards:** The research also found examples of some joined-up or standardised approach to volunteer training, either locally or within particular sectors. For example, a VIO respondent from the museum sector reported how museums in their area networked to provide joint training to volunteers and enable volunteer skills exchange. Volunteers in the sport sector also explained they held coaching qualifications which were portable across VIOs in particular sports. Similar comments were made by a volunteer in the education sector, who pointed out standardised training for certain volunteer roles, for example, school governors. The existing standardisation of training in some sectors or areas may mean that volunteer portability through passporting could be achieved more easily in those sectors than in others where shared standards would first need to be developed.

*Sport is slightly different because in sport there's already a framework of qualifications that's recognised. You have a clearly defined qualified body that is national, and under that there's Level 1, Level 2, Level 3. Within sport, when you talk about coaching and workforce, it's slightly ahead in that respect as there are specific elements that make that federation of trust easier.*  
[Digital platform provider]

- **Volunteer profile:** The research underlined the existing offer in this respect, as various volunteer brokerage and management platforms offered a facility for volunteers to develop and build their profile. Some volunteers in this sample also emphasised this was already achieved through other means, including CVs and LinkedIn. For these volunteers, the volunteer profile element of volunteer passports may be addressing the need that they feel is already met.

*What's the point? I guess most places ask for a CV, and usually you tend to put most of your volunteering experience on your CV.* [Volunteer, culture]

- **Validation:** This was another area where some respondents highlighted existing mechanisms to validate volunteers' experiences, knowledge and learning. As mentioned, some sectors such as

sport already had a system of coaching qualifications that validated volunteers' skills. An example from a different sector was a project to validate the skills of informal carers in order to support carers interested in working in the sector. Various VIOs further mentioned they asked volunteers to provide references as part of the recruitment process, which was another established practice to verify – if not validate – volunteers' previous experience and skills. Open digital badges were another existing mechanism to recognise non-formal learning mentioned by a stakeholder and a digital platform provider.

- **Awards and rewards:** Various related schemes designed to recognise volunteer achievements or provide access to rewards were cited. For example, some volunteers highlighted the Duke of Edinburgh's Award as a well-known scheme to celebrate young volunteer achievements, which young people also referenced on their CVs in job and other applications. Some VIO and stakeholder respondents also discussed related schemes based on time banks and time credits, where volunteer time was recorded so it could be redeemed against rewards. Another example of related schemes were youth cards – for example, the Young Scot or a similar youth card being developed in England – which gave young people access to a range of opportunities but also discounts.

*I think the overall aim of the youth card is much broader than just young people access to volunteering and they can passport their skills and knowledge. It's much broader than that. [...] [It will be] things like work experience opportunities, potentially volunteering, opportunities in local youth services, like attending a youth club, training or sports activity. Discounts on brands, it could be things like TED talks or things linked to work experience, residential opportunities, etc. [...] However, the opportunities to think about how it could be integrated as part of that, I think is interesting. [VIO, Youth]*

## 2.6. Towards a definition of volunteer passports and passporting

Based on the literature and qualitative research with volunteers, VIOs and stakeholders, this study would suggest the following definition of volunteer passports and passporting.

Volunteer passports and passporting involve initiatives that aim to achieve one or more of the following:

- 1) **Improve 'volunteer portability' by making it easier for volunteers to move between different roles and organisations.** This can be achieved through different ways, including:
  - Having shared standards for volunteer checks and training for different organisations, as well as one-point entry for volunteers into a network of participating VIOs – this would enable volunteers to use their checks and training from one organisation with others, making it easier to move between different organisations and making the recruitment and training process easier and more efficient;
  - Digital platforms, databases or volunteer centres that help manage volunteer supply and demand by matching volunteers with volunteering opportunities and potentially also taking on the role of centralised verifying of volunteer checks and training.
- 2) **Validate and value volunteers' experience, knowledge and skills.** This can be achieved through:

- Issuing 'volunteer passports' (or certificates, portfolios) that list experiences, knowledge and skills acquired through volunteering. Volunteers can then use this to prove their skills and experience to other organisations or employers.
- Attaching 'rewards' to volunteer passports (or passes, cards), including access to free or discounted events or goods, learning opportunities etc.

In addition, the research underlines the importance of distinguishing between '**volunteer passports**' as **products** and '**volunteer passporting**' as **systems, processes and mechanisms**:

- Volunteer passports can be defined as products, owned and controlled by the volunteer, which can potentially include: their ID and DBS checks; training and certificates; record of volunteering and skills; and facility to be matched with volunteering opportunities based on their interests, location and availability.
- Volunteer passporting, on the other hand, includes a range of systems and processes that improve volunteer portability or validate their experience, skills and knowledge. Examples may include online services that enable portability of DBS checks, shared standards on volunteer checks and training or qualifications that allow volunteers to validate their skills and make them more transferable.

### **3. Benefits and challenges of volunteer passports: experiences and views**

#### **3.1. Achievements of existing passporting initiatives**

Given the diversity of volunteer passport initiatives, experiences of what worked well in developing and delivering these projects also greatly varied. What respondents with experience of these schemes felt they achieved depended on the type of passporting they developed and the contexts in which these were delivered. The section below outlines some common themes in terms of measures and enablers of success respondents felt applied to their passporting initiatives.

##### **3.1.1. Measures of success: uptake, longevity, benefits**

Respondents involved in various volunteer passport initiatives typically used the following main measures as evidence of the schemes' success: the scheme uptake; longevity and sustainability; trend-setting; and positive feedback from volunteers and VIOs.

For example, the Derbyshire training-based volunteer passport was issued to over 3000 volunteers since its creation in 2010;<sup>33</sup> 160,000 Passeport Bénévole were issued in France since the scheme's start in 2007;<sup>34</sup> 161 museums are currently members of the Northern Museums Volunteer Passport, representing 8000 volunteers;<sup>35</sup> the HEE and Lancashire and Pennine ICP volunteer learning resource developed within the health sector has 15,430 active users;<sup>36</sup> the NHSVR scheme had 384,896 volunteers whose identity was verified and who went on to be 'on duty' to receive tasks through the

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<sup>33</sup> Derbyshire Volunteer Passport Statistics.

<sup>34</sup> France Bénévolat, 2021b. *Le Passeport Bénévole*.

<sup>35</sup> Northern Museums Volunteer Pass Statistics; Waters, Gillian. 2020. *Geographical Footprint of: The Northern Museums Volunteer Pass Scheme*. Museum Development Yorkshire.

<sup>36</sup> e-Learning for Health. 2021. *Volunteer Learning: Overview*.



programme.<sup>37</sup> In these different examples, the schemes' uptake and/ or longevity were cited as evidence for successful delivery of these projects.

*What's worked well, is, and this is looking at it from our perspective, we've had a product we've been able to deliver consistently over 10 years and grow it and have consistently positive feedback.* [VIO, Museums]

Additionally, some VIOs cited examples of trend-setting as evidence of their scheme's success, where their initiative inspired the creation of other similar projects. For example, the French Passeport Bénévole scheme inspired the creation of a similar scheme in Romania.<sup>38</sup>

Positive feedback from volunteers and VIOs involved in different passporting initiatives was also cited as evidence of aspects that worked well. Respondents discussing portability-oriented initiatives reported the following positive feedback from volunteers and perceived benefits for volunteers:

- **Making volunteering easy:** For example, one respondent stressed the NHSVR scheme and the GoodSAM app made it easier to volunteer in a place-based rather than organisation-based way, which they felt was how many volunteers wanted to help during the pandemic. This was echoed by some volunteers in our sample who used the GoodSAM app and found it an easy way to help those in need during the pandemic in the ways that suited their availability or preferences.

*I was on the phone with somebody and if they said, 'I need to get my prescriptions, I've got a bad back.' I could talk to this person for as long as they wanted to talk, and then put a report in, and then they get the next person, who is a person in the area that goes out on the bikes or walks, and they pick it up. It's communication, to say that lady's spoken to somebody, which has cheered her up a bit, then she's got her prescription delivered by someone else, within this GoodSAM group.* [Volunteer, health]

- **Reducing administrative burden:** For example, respondents explained how the centralised volunteer vetting for a group of museums or in a local area reduced the administrative burden on volunteers. In these instances, volunteers only went through certain kinds of vetting once, which they could then use for volunteering in other participating organisations rather than going through the same administrative process again.

*Once we've got their references, we don't have to do them again. If we've done a Right to Work check for them once at the beginning, or an ID check, we don't have to do it again.* [VIO, Museum group]

- **Personal development:** Additionally, a respondent from the museum sector felt that passporting enabled volunteers to discover and take up new similar roles, as the joined-up approach raised volunteers' awareness of volunteering opportunities across the network of organisations and made transfer between them easier.

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<sup>37</sup> This data is for the period from the launch of the programme in April 2020 to September 2020. See: RVS, 2020, *Findings from volunteers participating in the NHS Volunteer Responder (NHSVR) Programme During Covid-19 – April to August 2020. Working Paper Two.* [https://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/Uploads/Documents/About%20us/Working\\_Paper\\_Two\\_Patient\\_Findings\\_271120.pdf](https://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/Uploads/Documents/About%20us/Working_Paper_Two_Patient_Findings_271120.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Edos Foundation, 2019. *Upgrading Validation.*

*People might have come forward saying I want to just help at the Museum of Natural History, but actually maybe they've not been able to get a spot there, so they've tried it somewhere else and discovered, I really like it here actually, it's really good. I think it's meant that there's more opportunities for the volunteers, and there's more chance for the museums to get help. [VIO, Museum group]*

Respondents involved in the passporting initiatives with elements of training, validation or public recognition of volunteers also reported these schemes had various positive impacts on volunteers:

- **Confidence-building:** In their experience, this type of volunteer passport helped with volunteer confidence-building and in some instances social integration of marginalised groups. Respondents cited examples where training-based or validation-oriented volunteer passports were used with various groups with barriers to employment or social integration, including disadvantaged young people or marginalised groups, such as refugees or prisoners.

*What's very important is giving confidence to someone. It means that you are valuable. You're not just someone marginalised, or someone in a corner. You are someone who takes part in the activity of society. You are someone who can also push for new ideas. These are some of the essential aspects of [our volunteer passport]. [VIO, cross sector]*

- **Learning and development:** In addition, respondents reported they had positive feedback from volunteers on training-based volunteer passport initiatives. As one respondent explained, their local, entry-level volunteer training passport was felt to give a good grounding to volunteers in terms of what volunteering was and what was expected of volunteers. Another respondent reported volunteers felt this training gave them useful transferable skills. In the healthcare training-based passporting initiative, a respondent explained volunteers felt the learning content was of high quality, relevant, accessible, and pitched at the right level. In the museum sector, respondents reported that a volunteer pass allowing free access and discounts at participating venues enabled CPD and learning opportunities for volunteers as they could observe different museum practices.

*They wanted to remove the barrier to volunteers visiting other museums as part of their learning journey, because they recognised that paying an admission fee was a barrier to some volunteers using other sites. They wanted to remove that so people could engage in some form of CPD. And also, a little bit as saying thank you to the volunteers who had given up a lot of time and effort. [VIO, Museums]*

- **Practical help with work, volunteering or studies:** Respondents further reported such volunteer passports were used by volunteers for practical purposes in relation to work, volunteering or studies. For example, respondents explained how students used the accreditation they obtained through a local volunteer passport training for UCAS points or how it helped individuals in challenging circumstances start their own charity work.

*The young chap I mentioned, he came to the celebration evening with his mum and his gran who did the award together, and they then set up this grassroots football thing, and on he went. For him to have been excluded from school and to be not on a pathway to achieving in a traditional academic sense, I think that's really powerful. [VIO, local authority]*

- **Feeling appreciated:** In respondents' view, volunteers also appreciated VIOs' efforts to recognise and thank volunteers for their contribution, whether through validation of their learning or reward schemes for volunteers, for example, the volunteer pass for museum volunteers.

Respondents across these different initiatives further highlighted the ways in which VIOs benefitted from volunteer passports and passporting. The main benefits respondents highlighted centred on getting better-skilled volunteers, making cost and time savings and giving back to their volunteers:

- **Better skilled volunteers:** VIO respondents reported how training-based passport initiatives benefitted VIOs by providing better-skilled volunteers. Where the schemes encouraged volunteer portability across different organisations, for example, with the two museum sector initiatives, respondents also felt this helped VIOs build their volunteers' skills as it fostered skills exchange between different museums.

*To see the practise of others, to exchange ideas, to make contacts that they can then use and develop as well in the work that they're doing. So, they get upskilled and they can bring good ideas back. [VIO, Museums]*

- **Cost and time savings:** Respondents reported how local training-based passport initiatives reported saved cost and time to VIOs by using centralised training as part of their volunteer induction. This was also the case with portability-oriented passporting systems, as centralising some aspects of volunteer vetting also saved cost and time to participating organisations.

*We are looking at making it easier and cheaper for VIOs and volunteers, I think that's at the core of why we're doing this. [VIO, cross sector]*

- **Volunteer recognition and retention:** Other respondents also stressed the benefits of passport initiatives focused on validation and valuing in giving VIOs a way to thank their volunteers, recognise their achievements which could also help with volunteer retention.

*It's just nice to be able to offer that out to the volunteers. Whether they use it or not, it's to show that the volunteer time is respected and valued, and as a volunteer provider you're wanting to invest in them as well. [VIO, Museums]*

Some respondents also discussed wider benefits and achievements arising from volunteer passport initiatives:

- **Consistency of standards:** For some, ensuring that volunteer training and standards were more consistent was one such wider benefit at a local authority level, across participating organisations, or in a particular sector. Another potential benefit from greater standardisation was thought to be the ability to recognise competencies and skills from other related professional domains, for example, transferable skills someone has from working in education for youth volunteering.

*As museums worked together more, I think that there needed to be some kind of consistent approach to have relationships with volunteers. To try to make sure that different supervisors were giving consistent messages or consistent things out to volunteers. That volunteers had a consistent, what can you expect from the organisation, in terms of, you will have a supervisor, you will have a role description. [VIO, Museum group]*

- **Efficient emergency response:** For others, the technologies enabling matching of volunteers with volunteering opportunities and portability across organisations also led to some additional benefits. For example, the respondents involved in emergency response during the pandemic stressed this enabled huge mobilisation of volunteers and place-based volunteering. Another respondent stressed how a volunteer passporting pilot in Australia – also developed with the emergency response in view – led to a first state-wide, central database of volunteers which they thought would be instrumental in efficient emergency response.

*Everyone who's registered with a volunteer passport has said, I'm ready to help. That's the new concept across the whole state. We've never had one central database for a whole state. [VIO, Australia]*

- **Diversifying volunteering:** Finally, a respondent from the museum sector thought that volunteering brokerage platforms also potentially made volunteering recruitment more transparent and open to all sections of the community rather than those with personal links to museums, which could potentially help make volunteers in the sector more diverse. This was seen as particularly important in the sector, as volunteering was increasingly a route into employment within the sector and, thus, volunteering roles can be oversubscribed.

*There's quite a lot of people that want to work in the sector, lots of people have to get in. It takes a lot of volunteer experience to put on your CV, because it's very competitive. Having a route through means, where we are actually advertising, and it isn't just, 'My niece wants to be a volunteer.' It's more open and transparent how you get a volunteering role. So, that was one of the drivers as well, to open-up access more, and to allow more flexible volunteering too, so people can move between roles. [VIO, museum group]*

### 3.1.2. Enablers of success of volunteer passport and passporting initiatives

VIOs, stakeholders and digital platform providers familiar with examples of volunteer passports or passporting highlighted some key enablers that helped these schemes work well. These included:

- **Commonality between participating organisations:** Local- or sector-based passporting initiatives were helped by existing familiarity and commonality between organisations, stemming either from working in the same local area or in the same sector. This commonality helped build trust so different organisations could accept elements of volunteer vetting and/or training conducted by others.

*It seems, in certain sectors, there will be shared characteristics that it would be useful to have that federation of trust model, but I don't think you can have a universal federation of trust model because of the difference in the type of volunteering that people can do. [Digital platform provider]*

- **Endorsement:** In some instances, endorsement by relevant institutions and/ or local and central government also helped build trust and interest in particular volunteer passport initiatives. For example, where a volunteer passport project was endorsed by an infrastructure body within the voluntary sector, this helped build the credibility of the scheme with VIOs. In another example, an international volunteer passport scheme was endorsed by various local authorities, which funded and ordered volunteer passport booklets to be distributed across local VIOs.

- **Accreditation:** Training- and skills-focused volunteer passport schemes also benefited from accreditations, which respondents explained attracted some volunteers. For example, a respondent explained how having an accredited volunteer passport training was a draw for some volunteers. Respondents familiar with validation-oriented passports also stressed the official recognition of the passport as evidence of non-formal learning made them more relevant, credible and attractive to volunteers. For example, the French volunteer passport is recognised by the Ministry of Education and the Job Centre and the Association for Professional Training of Adults.

- **Flexibility:** Various VIOs involved in passporting initiatives stressed the importance of flexibility in adapting their schemes to diverse audiences and VIOs. For example, a respondent explained how they adapted language, teaching approaches and case studies to different audiences used within the training for their local volunteer passport scheme. The respondent felt this flexibility was needed to make the same volunteer training work across different local voluntary sectors and audiences, ranging from school children, through prisoners, to police volunteers.

*I think the flexibility is really important, [that it's working for] the different types of people. [...] You adapt to the groups you're dealing with, so you change your language rather than having different courses. [VIO, local authority]*

- **Funding:** Respondents explained that the funding they received enabled them to develop the volunteer passport projects in question. Where this funding was for one-off projects – as it was often the case – this raised questions around the sustainability and longevity of volunteer passport projects. It also sometimes meant their passporting initiatives had to be developed in stages, as and when the organisations secured further funding. Where particular initiatives had low costs, as in the case of some volunteer pass and card reward schemes, respondents felt this was an important enabler for the sustainability of the scheme.

*It's relatively low cost, and actually in a way it delivers quite a lot for that, in terms of that sense of benefit that participants and organisations get out of it. [VIO, Museums]*

- **Voluntary sector resource:** The theme of voluntary sector resource was recurrent in interviews with VIOs and stakeholders. Respondents stressed that volunteer passporting systems required an investment in the volunteer management resource and infrastructure. Respondents thought that creating networks of organisations which would operate as 'federations of trust' required substantial HR resource, skills and infrastructure. This resource would be needed to first build the shared standards either locally or in a sector-specific ways and then to have an ongoing capacity to verify (and potentially also deliver some) volunteer checks or training for those networks.

*I don't think there's any difference in doing this for volunteers and running an HR department for many organisations. The professional skills required to do this are really quite considerable. It's the trust required across organisations. [VIO, Police]*

- **Technology:** Respondents also highlighted different pieces of software, existing digital platforms or online services as technology that could enable a volunteer passporting system. As mentioned earlier, this included: digital identity, online DBS and DBS update service, and a range

of existing volunteer management platforms and software. There was also a sense from some VIOs and stakeholders that usage of such platforms was becoming more pervasive in the voluntary sector, which may bring about a tipping point when volunteer recruitment through digital platforms would become normalised across different voluntary sectors.

*It will become a tipping point once you get to a point where actually, it becomes the norm for people to say, 'Oh, I've got this role coming up,' give some strategic thought to it, share it through open data, and therefore increase visibility of the types and availability of roles. [...] I think it would be where the technology feels accessible, easy and quick enough to do.*

[Stakeholder, sport]

### 3.2. Areas of challenge and difficulty in existing passporting initiatives

Respondents involved in volunteer passport and passporting initiatives also discussed aspects that were more challenging or required improvements. Some of these challenges were more specifically related to certain types of volunteer passports and passporting, whereas others were more generally relevant across different types of initiatives. Below, respondents' experiences of challenges are first discussed with regards to volunteer portability, training, validation and rewards for volunteers, and then more generally.

#### 3.2.1 Portability challenges

Respondents highlighted several key challenges involved in volunteer portability:

- **Diversity vs. standardisation:** VIOs working to create 'federations of trust' with shared standards on volunteer vetting and training stressed this as a challenge and often a significant undertaking. Challenges typically stemmed from differences in the levels of risk involved in volunteering for different organisations in the network and their different risk appetites. Respondents reported examples of such 'federations of trust' where one organisation within the group had more stringent standards for volunteers' vetting and training. This made it difficult to align standards within the group. This challenge was overcome in one such case, but only partially in another.

*It was an issue, the different standards, I guess that's where the DBS [problems] really came from. One of the organisations had a much firmer line on, 'We will treat our volunteers in this way, even though it's a crisis. We have our procedures and standards.'* [VIO group, cross sector]

In the health sector in particular, VIOs and stakeholders highlighted the challenge of achieving shared standards between the NHS and other organisations. This was in their view very difficult as the NHS standards for volunteer training were aligned with their employee training processes and therefore made NHS employers less flexible in accepting other volunteer training.

Similar challenges of marrying diversity with standardisation were reported in relation to the local, training-based volunteer passports for entry-level volunteer skills. For example, a respondent explained how they had to re-write the training programme to adapt it to volunteers with English as a second language.

- **National vs. local:** Some VIOs discussed their concerns over competition for volunteers between local VIOs and a national scheme such as the NHSVR. Respondents reported that local VIOs were sometimes concerned that this national scheme was diverting local volunteers – who would otherwise be locally managed – into a national pool, thus severing their links to local VIOs. The concern that local volunteers were potentially diverted from local organisations was further compounded by VIOs’ perceptions that the national scheme lacked local connections needed to match volunteers to local needs. In these respondents’ view, this led to problems where a proportion of volunteers who signed up to NHSVR never got matched with tasks or waited a long time, potentially putting them off volunteering.

*In the first week of the pandemic lockdown, we had 1,000 people come to our volunteer centre to register. [...] That was really positive, and we were able to work with the local council and others really early days about how they supported community hubs, food distribution, whatever else. As soon as the [NHS] Volunteer Responders programme launched, it all shifted there. They didn’t have the links that we had, in terms of the local connections to community groups that would be able to take on volunteers quite quickly, train them up and utilise them effectively. What happened was, people went there and said I’m not being utilised. It’s almost like, they created this massive thing that couldn’t deal with the capacity it had. [Stakeholder, cross sector]*

- **Geographical limitations:** A VIO from the health sector highlighted some geographical limitations to volunteer portability across different NHS trusts and organisations. While the respondent could see this working in bigger cities, they did not think it would work in their area due to the remoteness of different NHS trusts and sites. Instead, the respondent felt volunteer portability in their and similar areas would be more helpful and practically achievable between local statutory and non-statutory organisations in the health and care sector, especially in the context of integrated care partnerships.

*Why would an NHS volunteer in Blackpool pitch up in Blackburn? It just wouldn’t happen. [VIO, health]*

### 3.2.2. Training and validation challenges

Respondents involved in training- based and validation-oriented volunteer passports also highlighted different issues they encountered in terms of accessibility of their schemes:

- **Accessibility of training:** A VIO respondent raised concerns over accessibility of training underpinning the local volunteer passport programme, which required a 10-hour commitment and involved an accreditation. While the respondent stressed the accreditation was a ‘hook’ that attracted some volunteers to the training, they wondered if others were put off by the time commitment and accreditation. In particular, the respondent wondered if that may be the case with some marginalised groups of young people. Instead, they thought that a more flexible approach where volunteers could ‘mix and match’ different elements of training delivered through diverse media may be more appealing and accessible to those groups.

*The accredited side has been successful, it has been a hook for many of the people that have come on board. They have enjoyed it and it has been good, but we’re also interested in the many people that haven’t come on board [...] and we’re wondering why that is. Whether it is the*

*10-hour commitment and the accreditation, on top of everything else. So, we're trying to make it so we reduce the barriers as much as we can. [VIO, strategic infrastructure organisation]*

- **Accessibility in technical terms:** Some respondents underscored the importance of technical accessibility of any volunteer passport products and platforms. For example, a respondent explained how the technical accessibility of their healthcare volunteer training platform was an issue because the registration process for volunteers was very cumbersome. This has prevented the platform from being fully launched and rolled out more widely across the country, until the registration process was simplified and improved. This experience offered a reminder of the importance of technical accessibility, as it showed how a good product in terms of the content could be hindered due to technical issues. It also related to a broader point that some VIOs raised of ensuring the system is as easy as possible to use for volunteers to ensure take-up.

*A good example is a comment from one of the volunteers in a recent group we had, which was, 'We really welcome the idea of passporting, but if it means another layer of logins and passwords, it will never work.' [It shows] some very practical things about the tolerance levels of volunteers for different systems. [VIO group, health]*

- **Accessibility and relevance of language and content:** In validation-oriented volunteer passports, the language and guidance accompanying the passport sometimes needed improvements to make it more accessible. For example, a respondent explained how the guidance for identifying volunteer skills and completing skills sections of the passport was not sufficiently self-explanatory, but often required further explanation and support for VIOs and volunteers trying to complete the passports. This experience underlined the complexity of skills frameworks accompanying this type of volunteer passports and the challenge of translating that into accessible templates and guidance for volunteers and VIOs.

*For instance, if you look at the passport, the explanation concerning the skills is something too complex. This is why we're working on that. [VIO, France]*

Another challenge in validation-oriented passports was to understand what skills volunteers were interested in gaining and make sure this was reflected in the skills framework and guidance. As some respondents stressed, volunteer passport schemes needed to avoid framing volunteer skills in terms of what employers or VIOs wanted, rather than what skills volunteers cared about.

### 3.2.3. Reward challenges

Respondents with experience of volunteer reward initiatives also highlighted some common challenges involved:

- **Legal uncertainty:** Respondents within the culture and heritage sectors reported uncertainty over what rewards for volunteers were legal and which could be seen as benefits in kind and therefore in breach of employment law. This uncertainty gave rise to different approaches to reward schemes for volunteers. While some museums had volunteer passes that gave free entry and discounts to volunteers at participating venues, others decided against such schemes due to concerns they would be breaking employment law. Where the reward schemes existed, VIOs explained they sometimes had to reassure participating venues that this was legal. These



respondents felt the culture and heritage sector would welcome more clarity over whether such volunteer passes were legal.

*A few organisations were a little bit twitchy about it in that they were worried it could have been seen as a benefit of employment, which it clearly isn't, but as soon as it becomes, 'if you volunteer with us you are guaranteed to get participation in this scheme,' then a few medium scale organisations and some local authorities were worried that it could cause them employment law or taxation problems if it was seen as an in-work benefit. [VIO, Museums]*

- **Loss of income:** In the volunteer pass schemes as above, some museums also had to be reassured over potential loss of income through allowing free entry and discounts to volunteers. They were reassured by knowing that the scheme was open to a relatively small pool of museum volunteers, rather than volunteers in general.

*For a small museum whose numbers may be pretty low to start with, and many of our smaller ones do have relatively low footfall, then actually that concern of loss of gate income is not a trifling one. [VIO, Museums]*

- **Resource and cost of recording volunteer time:** The research also highlighted some challenges involved in terms of administrative burden and cost potentially involved in reward schemes based in time banks. For example, a respondent reported such issues in a reward card scheme attached to a time bank, where volunteering time was recorded as a basis for providing volunteer discount cards. However, the VIO found the time bank model to be very time- and resource-consuming as it was manual, as well as expensive due to the cost of the time bank platform. Due to these issues, they switched to a card that was not attached to a time bank, where volunteers received the card based on the evidence of their volunteering provided by their VIO. The VIO was still, however, interested in adding a timesheet facility for volunteers to record their volunteering and build their profile, but the respondent was concerned whether volunteers would do this manually.

*We started to create what we call time banks across the borough. [...] We had a form of time banking, but it was called rewarding volunteering. [...] It was very labour intensive and also the programme was really, really expensive. The license fee was £71,000 plus our costs, and it would have cost around £50k to run the scheme, and we didn't have that kind of money. So, the downside, we pulled the plug on that. [VIO group, cross sector]*

#### 3.2.4. General challenges

In addition, various VIOs and stakeholders also highlighted some more general challenges and concerns, relevant to different types of volunteer passports and passporting:

- **Buy-in:** Different schemes grappled with the task of convincing and gaining trust of other VIOs or relevant public institutions. For example, the respondent involved in a validation-oriented passport explained how they had to convince VIOs why validation of volunteer learning was beneficial or needed. They also had to convince the Ministry of Education of the value of the volunteer passport as evidence of non-formal learning. In another example, the respondent involved in the training-based volunteer passport in the healthcare sector discussed how they

needed to gain trust of other organisations within the sector beyond their local areas where the training and passport schemes were more well-known and accepted.

- **Lack of voluntary sector resource:** The need for adequate voluntary sector resource to support any passporting system was a running theme through interviews with VIOs and stakeholders. For example, one respondent explained their training-based volunteer passport scheme has not achieved volunteer portability due to the lack of voluntary sector resource. In their view, this would have required a much bigger resource to create the web of participating organisations and agree some basic shared standards between them. Some VIOs also felt this was a challenge in the NHSVR scheme, as they thought there was a lack of resource to manage the volume of volunteers who signed up. In similar comments, other VIO respondents from the museum or police sectors gave examples where they had a surplus of volunteers, but lacked resource to manage them. Respondents therefore stressed the need for both volunteer management resource to service any increase in volunteer recruitment as a result of new platforms, and HR resource and expertise required for the necessary work in the background on standardisation and joined-up work.

*We've not been that successful in [portability], mainly because of resourcing. It's just me, I'm a part-time worker, and I have many other parts of my job to do. [...] What we have succeeded in, is getting this grassroots and basic level of volunteering understanding out there, in terms of training, learning and understanding what volunteering is and what's expected of you as a volunteer. But that network and partnership between organisations and that passport element of it, it's like a spider's web. It's huge. [VIO, strategic infrastructure organisation]*

- **Funding:** Two issues regarding funding challenges were raised by VIO respondents. Firstly, the short-term nature of much funding for the voluntary sector meant that many volunteer passport initiatives were based on equally short-term funding. In respondents' experience, volunteer passport schemes were therefore short-lived because their funding was not sustainable. In addition, as some respondents pointed out, VIOs were reluctant to invest time, energy and money into adapting to any passporting system that they thought would be short-lived. Secondly, other VIOs raised the issue of affordability of some of the digital platforms required or accreditations involved in volunteer passports and passporting. They found this cost was not sustainable for them, so were either planning to stop using certain platforms or already stopped.

*They're holding back because they don't want to invest time and energy in learning a new [passporting] system if it's not going to continue. Probably that has been our number one challenge. [VIO, cross sector]*

- **Piloting volunteer passports:** Respondents highlighted how the temporary nature of pilots used to develop volunteer passports and passporting can sometimes cause issues too. Examples of this included: technical issues due to the training platform being developed as temporary (so not fully developed), or issues stemming from temporary funding as discussed above. In both cases, issues related to the pilot nature of these projects can have broader negative impacts on those volunteer passport initiatives if discouraging volunteers and VIOs from taking part.
- **Lack of evaluations:** This research found that individual schemes tended to have basic statistics on the uptake and usage of individual volunteer passport schemes and case studies showing the

impact of these schemes on individual participants. However, more robust process and impact evaluations were generally missing, which was a gap in understanding and being able to use past experiences to refine current volunteer passport and passporting schemes. This was echoed by some respondents who felt that learning from past experiences of volunteer passports and passporting was hampered by the lack of robust monitoring and evaluations.

### 3.3. Broader views on the demand for volunteer passports

The research with volunteers and a broader range of VIOs and stakeholders also explored the perceptions of potential demand for volunteer passports and passporting. The section below discusses this broader range of views within the voluntary sector with regards to the demand for different elements of volunteer passports and passporting. The section concludes with a discussion of some additional concerns and challenges respondents highlighted as issues that would need to be considered in volunteer passport initiatives.

#### 3.3.1. Benefits and challenges of volunteer portability

Volunteer portability overall was seen to offer some appealing benefits to volunteers and VIOs, such as making volunteering easier through reduced administrative burden, quicker onboarding process or better engagement of volunteers.

*If someone was volunteering in the fire service and said, 'I don't want to do that anymore, I want to do this,' they don't need to go through the whole process again. Surely the training must be the same. The health and safety stuff, that all must be the same. Someone only needs to be taught to lift a box once. I think across the youth sector, there are certain things, so if I'm a Scout leader and I can take them out on the hills or for a night away camping, and I've got the skills for that, I shouldn't need to do that again in policing. [VIO, Police]*

In particular, portable DBS checks were consistently highlighted as an area of demand across different sectors. Other elements of passporting linked to portability – such as having a pool of volunteers, matching of volunteers to tasks and shared standards – were also perceived to have potential benefits, but these were more fragmented as respondents linked them to particular types of volunteering or circumstances:

- **Portable DBS checks:** While not all volunteers in this sample volunteered in roles that required DBS checks, some of them did across diverse sectors including health and care, community, education, youth and sport. These respondents often experienced needing to undergo repeated and multiple DBS checks and found this to be a frustrating administrative burden and a barrier to volunteering. Volunteer respondents with this experience were, therefore, keen on this aspect of passporting and would welcome a mechanism by which they could have portable DBS checks that would reduce and avoid current duplication.

*At one stage, I said I'd volunteer at various sports clubs. I did netball, badminton, rugby, football, basketball. I also volunteered at the local hospice. At one time, I had six DBS's, for each individual organisation. It came from the same organisation, same authority. I was held up volunteering because I didn't have a DBS. I had four or five DBS's, but I didn't have their DBS. [Volunteer, sport]*

This experience and view were echoed by VIOs and stakeholders, who felt that portable DBS checks would not only save time and cost to VIOs but also make recruitment of volunteers more efficient and reduce some barriers to volunteering. Digital platform providers working on various volunteer passport initiatives were, for their part, also eager to see solutions to portability of DBS checks, as they found the lack of DBS portability to be a hurdle in their experience of volunteer passporting initiatives. Finally, portable DBS checks were described by a stakeholder as ‘low hanging fruits’ of volunteer passporting as there was a substantial demand across the voluntary sector for a solution that would help with this.

- **A pool of volunteers:** Having a pool of volunteers that could then be matched with volunteering tasks was also felt to have potential benefits, although in more specific ways rather than in general. In particular, this element of portability was relevant to volunteers and VIOs with experience of large-scale and surge volunteering, for example in the context of Covid-19 and other emergency response or major sporting and culture events.

*We have a big events team that we've had since London 2012. We started to work with events around the time of London 2012, and there was a legacy from that. We had then the Peace and Fire Games in Belfast the year after, and we had recruited for those games 3,500 volunteers and they'd all been checked. We felt it was too good an opportunity to miss, to have that resource sitting there and then just letting it go at the end of the games. So, we asked volunteers if they wanted to stay with us, and we have supported that work. Over the last 5-6 years we've worked a whole range of different events with that same pool of volunteers, which is essentially passporting, but it's us managing that in the middle. [Stakeholder, strategic infrastructure organisation]*

In such circumstances, where large numbers of volunteers needed to be mobilised and deployed, having a pool of volunteers who were already vetted and potentially profiled was seen as beneficial. Respondents hoped this would allow for large-scale mobilisation and faster volunteer onboarding and deployment, which they found often to be a bigger challenge than volunteer recruitment. For example, a VIO in the education sector wanted to see the current NHSVR scheme expand to cover Covid-19 and recovery response in education, by also directing volunteers into schools to help with a wide range of needs for support in this context.

*I'd think it's building on [NHSVR]. When this is all over, you wouldn't want to waste that, would you? I think it would be building on that kind of platform. Rather than trying to start again. That's what I would like to see. [...] If you could get something like that, that you build on for other themes, so you've got health volunteering, education volunteering, you might have international volunteering, I would think you build on something that people recognise. It's an app, so it's very efficient. That's how I'd love to see it. [VIO, Education]*

Outside of emergency or major event contexts, volunteer pools were perceived to have a potential to enable task- and place-based volunteering. For example, this may be similar to the ways in which some volunteers helped during the pandemic. As these volunteers explained, this involved tasks that required no or little training and that could be done across different organisations in a local area, for example, shopping for vulnerable people or taking medicines to someone. A respondent from a local network of VIOs also stressed volunteers may be more

likely to want to be in such a local pool that connects them to their area, rather than in a national 'army of volunteers'.

*Anybody can do it [volunteer through the GoodSAM app]. You had to apply for it first, but there were thousands of people across the country applying for it. I just thought, just do it in your local area. Because I had time on my hands. [Volunteer, health]*

- **Matching volunteers to volunteering opportunities:** There was a mixed response in terms of how important digital brokerage platforms were to volunteers and VIOs in this sample. This concerned respondents' views both on the existing volunteering portals and a digital brokerage platform as an element of a potential volunteer passporting system.

On the one hand, digital brokerage platforms were fully integrated in volunteer recruitment and management for some VIOs, for example, in health, culture or on a local and regional level. Likewise, some volunteers in the health sector used various digital platforms to be matched with volunteering tasks locally. To that extent, such platforms have become normalised within parts of the voluntary sector; therefore, this digital infrastructure and skills would be available in some instances, potentially making the integration with a volunteer passport system easier.

*I volunteered through Simply Connect. You put in all your info and it matched you to your volunteer roles. [Volunteer, health]*

In addition, some VIOs and volunteers could see the benefits of the brokerage element of a potential volunteer passporting system. As previously mentioned, volunteers who used the GoodSAM or other similar apps to be matched to volunteering tasks during the pandemic appreciated the ease of these platforms and the ways they enabled volunteering tailored to their interests and availability. The VIOs involved with this type of brokerage platforms also discussed it in terms of volunteer enablement rather than traditional volunteer management: enabling volunteers to connect with volunteering opportunities in a flexible and safe way.

*It's not about volunteer management, it's about enabling people to safely volunteer in their community against need that needs to be picked up and met. I think it's about different types of volunteering, more flexible volunteering, more volunteering where you're enabling people to be empowered to do their best because you've done all the assurance framework to know there's somebody that we can let off to do their best, but with the backstop of being able to seek support and information. [VIO group, health]*

Some VIOs also found the ability to match their volunteering opportunities with volunteers' interests appealing, as they did not feel that they could do this easily through their current systems. In addition, some VIOs from the culture and heritage sector and the police felt that such platforms may help diversify their volunteers, if they opened their volunteering to a wider pool of volunteers.

*If you look at police cadets, a third of our cadets come from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. In London, 98% of cadets are from black and ethnic minority backgrounds. If you look at the volunteers in policing, they're all white and old. [...] The cadets [programme] has proved that people want to get involved with the police, but the offer isn't right. We're fishing in the wrong pond. If the passports can help do that, that would be a great thing. [VIO, Police]*

However, the extent to which online brokerage has become integral to the voluntary sector and how volunteers and VIOs find each other was also partial. Some VIOs, volunteers and stakeholders, for example, emphasised the communal and organic nature in which volunteers found their volunteering roles. These respondents explained that volunteers came to volunteering through their social connections or interests in particular activities, rather than set out to volunteer per se and then looked for opportunities. Other volunteers were put-off by the 'job-site' feel of digital brokerage platforms and the need to apply for roles; fearing that, like job sites there would be a huge volume of applications and they may not hear back from roles applied for. For these reasons, digital brokerage platforms as potential elements of volunteer passports and passporting held limited appeal for parts of the sample across different sectors, such as sport, education, and culture.

*Quite a lot of [volunteering] is organic because you have a passion for it. I've been involved in the same setup of two or three clubs, so I have a passion for it. [Volunteer, sport]*

- **Shared standards as an enabler of volunteer portability:** Shared standards as an enabler of portability were an area of considerable debate, as respondents had mixed feelings in this regard. Thinking about the benefits of shared standards in the context of portability, two particular areas of demand were highlighted: basic, entry-level volunteer training standards applied on a local level and sector-specific specialist skills standards that could be local or national.

Some VIOs, stakeholders and volunteers could see the value of developing basic, entry-level volunteer training standards at a national level. In their view, the standardisation may be possible at this level in areas such as health and safety, first aid, equality and diversity, and potentially some aspects of safeguarding. The perceived benefit of standardising entry-level training was greater consistency in volunteer skills across the voluntary sector and greater portability of volunteer skills. In this model, VIOs would then supplement the training that is specific to their sector and their work and build on these basic skills. Respondents thought this would be particularly beneficial at a local level in the context of the integration of statutory and non-statutory services in community and health volunteering.

*It would be things like safeguarding, because of who volunteers are likely to come into contact with. Things like taking health and safety seriously, equality and diversity principles. I think good standards in volunteer management should be recognised. That's not necessarily saying we write things into law, but maybe we could have a nationally recognised standard. [VIO, CVS and volunteer centre]*

Specialist skills and sector-specific training standards allowing volunteer portability were highlighted as another area of potential demand for volunteer passports and passporting. For example, some VIOs and stakeholders discussed examples where existing qualifications or specialist skills meant there would be a demand for passporting solutions. A stakeholder from a youth charity explained they developed an accreditation for a particular type of work with young people. Their volunteers with accreditations were keen to work across different schools, but experienced frustrating barriers in needing multiple DBS checks. Another stakeholder gave an example of specialist skills developed in volunteering on nature and conservation projects,

which would be portable across different conservation projects if there was a passporting system allowing easy work across different organisations and projects.

In addition, VIOs and stakeholders within particular sectors, for example health, police, youth and culture and heritage, could see the value of developing sector-specific training standards for volunteers that would drive consistency and quality in volunteer training and skills, but also enable greater volunteer portability across the sector. For example, a VIO familiar with volunteering in the police and the youth uniformed sector thought that standardisation of volunteer training and vetting across the police would be beneficial for a number of reasons. Firstly, they believed this would allow volunteers to be re-deployed to different roles where there was a need for their assistance. Secondly, by allowing volunteers to move across different roles or organisations, this would enable volunteer learning and development as they would be exposed to new tasks. Thirdly, this would help volunteers who moved to another location to build on their previous experience in volunteering, rather than having to repeat recruitment and onboarding and start all over again. The respondent thought this was particularly relevant and beneficial to young volunteers such as police cadets, who found they could not easily transfer their previous experience when they moved because of their studies or work.

Respondents weighed these potential benefits of different aspects of volunteer portability against the challenges, concerns and limitations they thought were involved in this idea:

- **Barriers to portability:** Some stressed the scope for volunteer portability depended on geography too, as volunteers may be more or less likely to want to travel and move between different organisations depending on the type of area. For example, respondents from the museum sector explained that there was often little inclination from volunteers in rural areas to travel outside of their area for volunteering. These respondents felt this would be a barrier to volunteer portability, but still hoped that a volunteer passport system could encourage greater interaction between volunteers in different areas and between rural and urban museums.

Volunteers and VIOs alike sometimes also raised other barriers to volunteer portability. Some explained that the idea of portability did not reflect how and why many volunteers entered volunteering. As previously mentioned, respondents stressed many volunteers had a personal interest or a connection to organisations they supported, rather than set out to volunteer in general and then looked for where they could help. For this reason, the concept of being in a 'pool' of (portable) volunteers also did not appeal to every volunteer. Criticisms included it feeling a little impersonal or that it implied it was for 'professional' volunteers who had a lot of time to give. Thinking about volunteers' motivations for volunteering, one VIO respondent also commented how volunteers may not want to be considered as something portable.

*Quite often people come into a heritage organisation because they have a passion for a certain artist or the steam engines. That's why they volunteer. So, the likelihood of them going, actually there's a children's centre down the road that really needs my time [is small]. Some of the volunteers are doing it, yes, they've got very much a public benefit lens on it, and there's a selfish lens because they genuinely get a lot out of engaging with the heritage. So, it might be a different drive behind the volunteering. [VIO, Museums]*

In addition, some VIOs and stakeholders also raised other concerns they thought VIOs may have over a volunteer passporting system. Respondents explained that VIOs can feel protective over their volunteers and the relationship they have with them. In this context, respondents thought that some VIOs may fear that a volunteer passport system could result in 'stealing' their volunteers. Any volunteer passporting system would need to consider these concerns and reassure VIOs over any threats to the relationship with their volunteers.

*At the same time of being able to make it easy for a volunteer to move from one organisation to another, you don't want that volunteer to feel that they don't belong to that organisation. Or, for that organisation to feel that they aren't able to take ownership of that volunteering and feel like they're able to bring them fully into the fold. They're not just visiting, they should be able to be resident here. [VIO, CVS and volunteer centre]*

- **Diversity vs. standardisation:** In thinking about shared standards as an enabler of volunteer portability, respondents stressed that volunteer vetting and training standards varied greatly across different sectors and organisations and often even within similar organisations in the same sector. The main differences were perceived to stem from differences in the levels of risk involved in particular kinds of volunteering and risk appetites of different organisations.

For example, a respondent from a VIO affiliated with the police explained how even different police forces did not trust one another enough to accept each other's volunteers without repeated vetting. At the heart of this lack of trust, respondents thought there were VIOs' fears over liability and a lack of certainty over who would be liable if there was a problem with a volunteer in a passporting system. The volunteer passporting model also raised questions over safety mechanisms for dealing with problems in such a system. Some VIOs asked what the mechanisms would be to highlight or exclude individual volunteers who were not deemed suitable for certain kinds of volunteering. In discussing this, a VIO respondent stressed this would raise questions over the rights of volunteers and VIOs in such a passporting system.

*If somebody is in a passport and they have an experience with an organisation where the organisation deems that person's behaviour to be inappropriate, what then happens to that profile? [VIO group, health]*

Some other VIOs, volunteers and stakeholders in this sample were further not convinced standardisation of volunteer training was possible across different sectors, even for basic, entry-level skills. For example, a chairman of a local grassroots football club who also volunteered as a governor in a local school stressed that safeguarding training required for volunteering in a football club and as a governor in the school was so different that they did not think there could be any shared standards nor that they would be needed.

Given the diversity of standards and VIO risk aversion, respondents felt that standardisation of volunteer training and vetting even within individual sectors would be a significant undertaking. Many still welcomed greater standardisation if it improved the quality of volunteer training and enabled volunteer portability. However, they stressed the need for an investment into the volunteer management infrastructure and human resource that would be needed to support such an endeavour.



### 3.3.2. Benefits and challenges of volunteer passports as tools for validation and rewards

Volunteers, VIOs and stakeholders also highlighted the following areas of demand and challenges involved in volunteer passport elements aimed at validation of volunteers' experience and skills or giving access to rewards and other ways to value volunteers' achievements.

- **Volunteer profile:** There was a mixed interest in this element of the volunteer passports from volunteers. Some volunteers thought that having this facility would be very helpful, as it would allow them to have all their volunteering experiences and potentially also skills stored in one place. However, others pointed out they already had other ways to achieve this, for example through their CV or LinkedIn and similar profiles. Respondents in this second group struggled to see what having a volunteer profile would add to what was already available to them.

*It can be in addition to your CV. That being said, it does feel quite similar to something that you would see on LinkedIn or other similar websites where you enter your details and skills.*

[Volunteer, cross sector]

It is worth noting though that this response was concerned only with having a volunteer profile as a record, rather than in terms of other potential benefits it could enable, such as validation, portability and potentially access to rewards. The research, therefore, may suggest that having a volunteer profile on its own adds little new for some groups of volunteers, but its potential lies in enabling these other benefits.

- **Validation:** Volunteers, VIOs and stakeholders thought that the interest in this aspect of volunteer passports would depend on volunteers' motivations for volunteering. Respondents across these different groups could see the value of validation of volunteers' experience, learning and skills for those volunteers whose motivation was to gain experience and skills that could help them find work. Some VIOs, volunteers and stakeholders stressed this could be beneficial to young people or other groups needing support to find employment. VIOs within culture and education also thought this aspect could be beneficial to volunteers within those sectors, as volunteering was for some volunteers a route to employment.

*The real one I'm interested in, is [the Passeport Bénévole model]. If we could use something like this to say to a young person at the age of 18, look, you might not be off to university, you haven't done particularly well at school, but it's not over for you. We'll give you this passport and you can use this as a validation to say I've done these things, and these are the skills I've got. That first step, if we can give more people from marginalised communities and more challenging backgrounds a second opportunity to get to this level of maturity, then I think that would be a really good thing to do. [VIO, Police]*

However, others pointed out that not all young people would be interested in this, as their motivations for volunteering were diverse and not necessarily linked to work. Thus, respondents also stressed that validation would be of lesser interest to volunteers whose motivation for volunteering was because they had particular interests or personal connection to causes and organisations they chose to support. In addition, a VIO and a stakeholder stressed the importance of ensuring any skills frameworks attached to volunteer passports and validation

were flexible enough to reflect what volunteers wanted to achieve, rather than be pre-determined.

- **Rewards:** There was also a mixed interest in this potential aspect of volunteer passports. Some volunteers and VIOs thought rewards schemes would allow VIOs to thank volunteers and make them feel appreciated. In addition, VIOs who were hoping to develop volunteer discount cards thought this could work as an incentive to volunteering.

However, other VIOs, stakeholders and volunteers stressed this was not a reason why people chose to volunteer, so any rewards needed to be handled carefully to avoid seeming too transactional. This view was reflected in the response by some volunteers in this sample who were put off by the idea of rewards, which they felt almost undermined their motivations for volunteering. Interestingly, all of the existing reward schemes discussed in this research linked rewards to some broader benefits, for example: volunteer CPD in the case of the museum volunteer pass; volunteer access to local physical activities in exchange for volunteering in sport; or supporting local businesses in the case of a local volunteer discount card.

*I think it's a nice touch for any sort of volunteering, although I wouldn't say you'd go into volunteering hoping you would get something out of it. The reward of it is doing the job itself.*  
[Volunteer, culture]

### 3.3.3. Additional challenges and considerations

The research also captured some additional concerns and considerations volunteers, VIOs and stakeholders had with regards to volunteer passports and passporting, which were not linked to individual elements but the idea and system as a whole:

- **Potential exclusions:** Across the sample, respondents felt the passporting system could potentially create barriers for some VIOs and volunteers. Respondents stressed that smaller VIOs may lose out if an online volunteer passport system was introduced. VIO and stakeholder respondents raised examples of small, sometimes informal, VIOs in their area who they thought did extremely important work locally but would be very unlikely to sign up to any volunteer passporting platform. For example, a stakeholder talked about a local VIO which organised weekly social events for older people and helped greatly reduce isolation and loneliness. The stakeholder feared organisations such as this one may lose out in a passporting system, as they would not sign up and would become less visible to potential volunteers if the passporting platform became a norm for volunteer recruitment.

Similarly, respondents noted there would be groups of volunteers who would be unlikely to sign up for such a platform, including groups with limited digital skills and access to digital technologies and marginalised groups. Volunteers and VIOs therefore sometimes thought any digital volunteer passport system would need to have an analogue back-up. Ideas for this varied from having both paper and digital versions of a volunteer passport to ensuring there was a VIO resource to support volunteers with using the volunteer passport platform where they could not do that themselves. Respondents also stressed the need to consider and identify local VIOs, volunteer groups and populations which could be excluded by the volunteer passport system and devise strategies to overcome any barriers.

*There are certainly problems with that and if it becomes the be all and end all, you will exclude an awful lot of people that offer really valuable experiences. From some of these marginalised communities, you need the volunteers from these communities. Whatever happens with the passport, it needs to be a supplement to, not the be all and end all. [Digital platform provider]*

- **Technological challenges and considerations:** Several main challenges were highlighted with regards to the digital technology involved in volunteer passports and passporting. Firstly, some digital stakeholders stressed the complexity of integrating different elements of technology together, including the online DBS, the online DBS updates, the volunteer passport platform and the volunteer management systems of diverse VIOs.

Secondly, this first challenge was compounded by the second challenge of the variable levels of digital skills and access to digital technology across the voluntary sectors. As some respondents noted, the digital skills and technology needed for VIOs and volunteers to use any digital volunteer passport and passporting system were often not yet at a level they would need to be for such a system to work. In discussing this, respondents stressed the need for greater investment into digital skills and infrastructure in the voluntary sector.

*My current worry is that vast swathes of the sector are nowhere near even being able to do the DBS online, never mind running updates on that. Some of the big issues that we think we're going to see, is underpinning technologies will have to be in place before we even think about the passports. [Digital platform provider]*

Thirdly, various VIOs and digital providers stressed the importance of using open data standards for technologies involved in any volunteer passport platform, which would allow for data sharing and would be able to integrate with diverse existing technologies and platforms used by VIOs and volunteers.

*If there are four or five companies working in this space, are they all going to share a similar standard? There is a risk to us already that if we commit to one technology, that there's not a unified standard, and for the technology that could be problematic for our organisation straight out of the bat. [Digital platform provider]*

Fourthly, some VIOs raised the question of data protection and ownership of volunteer data in a digital volunteer passport system. As these respondents explained, for such a system to work it would have to be designed with volunteer needs in mind and give full control of the data to the volunteer. Some of these respondents were also not comfortable with the idea of digital companies holding that data, both from the perspective of volunteers but also fearing what would happen to that data if the company was liquidated.

- **National and local:** Potential tensions and integration between any national volunteer passport system and local voluntary sector infrastructure and volunteering were a recurring theme in interviews with VIOs and stakeholders. On the one hand, respondents could see the benefits of having national standards – for example, for basic volunteer training or in sector-specific ways – and having volunteer portability across the country, so volunteers would not need to start anew if they moved to another location.

On the other hand, there was a view that any national system would need to be implemented locally, particularly where strong local voluntary structure was already in place so it could deliver core aspects of volunteer management and maintain their relationship with volunteers. Another VIO stressed the importance of such local delivery of volunteer management in the emergency response contexts. VIOs also felt local organisations may need reassurance that any national system would work towards integration, rather than displacement of local organisations. Local delivery was seen as central for engaging volunteers too, by leveraging their connection with the place, local knowledge and relationships.

*I think the ultimate aim is to be enabling people to see the world as their oyster and be able to move from one location to the next and find a very similar sort of welcome in terms of volunteering, and not have to start from scratch again. [...] But I think certain organisations may be put off. Certain local organisations, if they were to be signing up to this thing, I think they would find aspects of it helpful, but maybe they could feel a little bit frightened by a national scheme, because of the scale and the scope of it. They may feel that they want to protect and own their volunteers. [VIO, CVS and volunteer centre]*

- **Volunteer passport and passporting terminology:** Finally, some VIO respondents who generally supported the goals of volunteer passports took issue with the terms ‘volunteer passports’ and ‘passporting’. A VIO respondent felt these terms could be off-putting to some volunteers, for example, that passports could be perceived as a barrier to volunteering for those without them. Also, the respondent thought the term passport could trigger negative associations, for example, it could remind people of ‘vaccine passports’ or their inability to travel during the pandemic. Another respondent felt the term ‘passport’ suggested this was a ‘thing’ or an ‘organisation’ rather than a way to empower volunteers, which they felt was misleading.

Other respondents also cited reasons why they may prefer not to use these terms. One VIO respondent explained their group of VIOs, which developed a passporting system between them, preferred to talk about a shared system for volunteer vetting and training rather than passports. Another respondent involved in a training-based volunteer passport initiative in healthcare explained they subsequently decided to remove the word ‘passport’ from the name of the training resource. The respondent explained they realised the term ‘passport’ was misleading for the resource that was essentially a volunteer training and induction resource for volunteers in healthcare.

*It was very confusing because if you go into Google and type in Volunteer Passport, you get lots of different references. For some people, it's no more than an induction programme for the person being recruited, and they've been through an induction and they call that a passport. So, I found that the term passport was really misleading. [The training standards and resource] we were discussing is [now called] just the volunteer learning, the e-learning. [VIO, Health]*

Additionally, comments from other VIOs and stakeholders revealed some further associations volunteer passports and passporting could trigger in the voluntary sector. As these respondents explained, there was a sense that ideas, models and projects around volunteer passports have been around for some time and tried in the voluntary sector, but that very few took off or had any longevity. Volunteer passports and passporting were therefore sometimes perceived as

excellent ideas in theory but extremely difficult to implement in practice. In addition to the practical complexity of such a task, these respondents stressed that such past projects did not last because they were always developed on a short-term basis and without a strategy or funding for them to lead to a more long-term infrastructure.

From a volunteer perspective the term 'volunteer passport' was assumed to either mean a record of who you were and the volunteering an individual has done (a bit like an actual passport) or in some cases volunteers assumed it was a way for volunteers to move between organisations. Volunteers saw the benefits of the term but did highlight that it felt quite 'formal' and may put off some volunteers for that reason.

#### 4. Supporting volunteering through volunteer passports

The research explored different audiences' views on what kinds of support would be required to encourage and nurture volunteering through volunteer passports and passporting. Respondents shared their views on what role they thought local and central government could have in providing this support and facilitating an effective volunteer passporting system. The section below outlines respondents' views in this respect in relation to volunteer portability and validation and valuing of volunteers, as well as more generally:

- **Supporting volunteer portability:** Given the priority attached to portable DBS checks, respondents were often keen to highlight actions and support that may make this more feasible. Firstly, this involved raising awareness and improving clarity within the sector with regards to current systems for DBS portability. As some VIOs explained, even volunteer managers were not always aware of online DBS and DBS update service for volunteers. Another VIO pointed out there was sometimes a lack of certainty on whether DBS checks were necessary for particular volunteering roles. Volunteers were also often under the impression that a new DBS check was needed with each new organisation they volunteered with, further suggesting a lack of clarity around the current possibilities for portability.

Secondly, some VIOs suggested the current DBS system needed to be improved to reduce barriers to volunteering and improve volunteer portability. As one youth sector VIO pointed out, volunteer portability may be improved if DBS updates were proactive as in the Scottish Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) system.

*DBS is very problematic. The DBS service is complicated. You have DBS itself, then you have the DBS umbrella bodies that a lot of these organisations go for their DBS through, that adds a level of its own complication. The update service is complicated too, people aren't aware of it, so they don't pay for it. The other thing as well for a volunteer, some volunteers do pay for it, others don't, so there's confusion over who should be paying for it. That element around DBS is the biggest thing that DCMS could help solve, really. That review of that work would be massively valuable. I'd tear it up and start again. [Digital platform provider]*

Another area where some VIOs and stakeholders thought the government could play part in enabling volunteer portability was through supporting the voluntary sector to develop shared standards on volunteer training. For some VIOs, this could involve supporting the development of a national standard for entry-level volunteer training and skills that could apply across

different sectors; although others did not think this was feasible due to the diversity of the sectors. For others, there may be scope to work with individual voluntary sectors to strengthen or support the development of sector-specific standards for volunteer training that may help portability within that sector. In this context, various VIOs stressed the need to invest in the volunteer management and human resource infrastructure within the voluntary sector, which was seen as essential to carry out this work of standardisation within different sectors. Given the perceived magnitude of such an endeavour, some VIO respondents also stressed the need for any policies or initiatives in this area to be realistic in terms of recognising what funding, resource and a long-term strategy this required.

*It does come down a bit to governments in some way being clear about their funding, being clear about what they want from the volunteer passport and actually setting longer term funding in place so that we can achieve change. [VIO, cross sector]*

Finally, VIOs and stakeholders highlighted some ways in which government can support volunteer portability with regards to the digital infrastructure and skills required. Respondents stressed the importance of using open data standards for technologies that could integrate with other volunteer management platforms and online DBS services in any government-backed volunteer passport or portability initiative. Another VIO also highlighted the role of government in funding the development of the technological infrastructure required for volunteer passporting. In addition, VIOs and stakeholders also thought that both local and central government can play part in supporting the voluntary sector to improve the digital infrastructure and digital skills required for VIOs to use any such system.

*I think what is important in terms of expectation of government, a need for new digital systems, new apps, new ways of working, then it's appropriate to look to government departments for funding to help support that, so the charities are not using their voluntary income for providing the infrastructure that's needed to make a system work. [VIO group, health]*

- **Supporting validation of learning through volunteering:** VIOs and stakeholders familiar with validation of non-formal learning through volunteering pointed out key ways in which this aspect of volunteer passports could be supported by government. This involved creating official routes to validate non-formal learning and accepting volunteer (skills) passports as evidence that can be put towards qualifications based on non-formal learning. Providing such routes was perceived as particularly beneficial in supporting young people, people out of work and marginalised groups in relation to employment.
- **Supporting rewards for volunteers:** As VIOs appreciated ways to thank their volunteers, some VIOs also highlighted areas where the government can provide support in this respect. For example, VIOs within the culture and heritage sector stressed it would be helpful if greater clarity was provided over whether and how volunteer passes allowing free entry and discounts to volunteers could be used to thank volunteers without breaking employment law. In addition, a VIO respondent also suggested that government and local authorities could also get involved in rewarding volunteers, for example, through giving them discounts on council tax.

*A steer about volunteering and whether or not having discounted events or things like that [could be construed as a material benefit] would be very welcome, because it's really not clear at the moment. [VIO, museum group]*

Respondents highlighted some additional success factors for volunteer passports and passporting initiative with regards to government support:

- **Branding:** Some VIOs and stakeholders discussed the branding of any government-backed volunteer passport or passporting initiative. Respondents felt that any explicit government branding may cause a push back within the voluntary sector, as it may be perceived as an imposition on the sector rather than beneficial support.
- **Endorsement:** At the same time, other VIOs pointed out instances where more indirect endorsement by government institutions can benefit volunteer passport initiatives, for example, recognising volunteer passports as evidence of non-formal learning by the relevant government institutions.
- **Strategy:** Some VIOs stressed that the success of any volunteer passport initiatives would also depend on the extent to which they were central to government strategies on volunteering or how they linked to other relevant strategies, for example, for young people.
- **Collaboration:** Respondents highlighted the importance of government working with the voluntary sector in developing any volunteer passport solutions. In particular, respondents stressed the importance of integrating any national initiatives with local voluntary sectors in ways that do not disadvantage local groups. In this context, some VIOs also highlighted the importance of endorsement by national councils for voluntary organisations for the success of initiatives such as volunteer passporting and portability.

Furthermore, some VIOs and stakeholders felt government could play a role in providing greater clarity on various issues posing barriers to realising different aspects of volunteer passports and passporting. One grey area where more clarity would be welcomed concerned the difference between voluntary work and volunteering which in practice was not always easy to apply and relate to specific volunteering roles and tasks.

Finally, VIOs and stakeholders stressed the importance of supporting volunteer passport initiatives through aligning their goals with wider government policies and encouraging volunteering by making it as easy as possible. Some respondents highlighted instances where such alignment was missing, as other government policies posed barriers to volunteering. Such examples included instances where VIOs felt job centres penalised job seekers who wanted to volunteer, potentially stopping them from developing skills through volunteering that could help them find employment. Another example included a distinction between voluntary work and volunteering, which excluded groups without the right to work from volunteering classed as voluntary work, where volunteering may provide routes to integration to those very groups. VIOs and stakeholders also made other suggestions for what government could do to make volunteering as easy as possible, for example, by encouraging employers to enable their staff to volunteer.

## 5. Conclusions

This final section pulls together key research findings on the existing volunteer passport and passporting landscape, the achievements and challenges involved, and areas of demand for volunteer passport and passporting. The section concludes with a discussion of success factors and design considerations identified as critical for volunteer passports and passporting to be established and benefit the voluntary sector and volunteers.

### 5.1. Volunteer passport and passporting landscape

Volunteer passport and passporting initiatives identified and explored in this research broadly shared two overarching aims: that of enabling greater **volunteer portability**, on the one hand, and providing routes for **validation and valuing** of volunteers' experience, skills and contribution, on the other hand.

Passporting initiatives striving for volunteer portability often involved networks of organisations developing a joined-up approach to volunteer recruitment, onboarding and management to enable easier volunteer movement across organisations and roles. Such arrangements have been developed locally to facilitate volunteer portability in delivering community tasks or across VIOs within a particular sector, for example, across a group of participating museums. It has also been developed nationally with the NHSVR scheme as part of the emergency response in the UK, which allowed for joined-up onboarding of NHSVR and St John Ambulance volunteers. Passporting in these examples involved systems, processes and mechanisms enabling volunteer portability, rather than volunteer passports held by volunteers.

Volunteer passports aiming at validation were typically volunteer-owned 'products' that provided a portfolio of the volunteer's experience, knowledge and skills acquired through volunteering. Such schemes also linked to wider skills frameworks and routes to validate non-formal learning through volunteering. They were developed both nationally and internationally, for example, Passeport Bénévole is integrated within the national systems for validation of non-formal learning in France, whereas Youthpass is a validation tool for young volunteers used across the EU.

The research also found volunteer passport initiatives straddling these two broad aims of portability and valuation. Typically, these initiatives were training-based and provided certificates to volunteers who completed a standardised, entry-level course for volunteers. These schemes were delivered in local areas in England to serve volunteers across different sectors, for example, in Derbyshire, East Suffolk, Slough, Bracknell Forest, Blackburn or Doncaster. They were also delivered for volunteers in specific sectors, such as the Lancashire and Pennine and HEE Volunteer Learning Passport linked to the NHS Certificate for volunteers in healthcare. The training-based volunteer passports both validated volunteer learning through certificates and aimed to encourage greater portability of volunteers through standardisation and accreditation of training.

Across these different types of volunteer passport and passporting, there was some consistency in **key elements** they involved. These included:

- 'federations of trust' as networks of organisation developing a joined-up volunteer approach;
- shared volunteer vetting and training standards and agreements and sometimes also centralised delivery of vetting and training;



- shared pool of volunteers;
- matching of volunteers with volunteering tasks across the network;
- a volunteer profile/ portfolio offering a record of their volunteering and skills;
- routes to validate volunteer learning, for example, through certificates or qualifications;
- volunteer reward schemes which were sometimes linked to volunteer profiles, so rewards could be redeemed against time spent volunteering.

While these different elements of volunteer passports and passporting consistently surfaced across the various initiatives, it is important to note that generally they were not all included in individual volunteer passport schemes. Rather, different volunteer passports and passporting projects resembled jigsaws that combined these elements in different ways. Initiatives also varied in the extent to which they realised these different elements, for example, portability was sometimes achieved partially. Furthermore, sometimes these different elements were combined as part of the same initiative, whereas at other times VIOs developed separate projects to serve these different purposes.

In addition to these building blocks of volunteer passport and passporting schemes, the research also captured views within the voluntary sector on the range of **digital infrastructure** involved. Key elements of this infrastructure included: digital identity software; online DBS service and DBS update service; volunteer passport application owned and controlled by the volunteer; integration with VIOs' volunteer management software; and potential integration with a range of other digital-based schemes, for example, youth cards.

## 5.2. Achievements and challenges of volunteer passport and passporting initiatives

Scheme uptake, longevity and sustainability, as well as positive feedback from volunteers and VIOs were cited as evidence of successful delivery of volunteer passport and passporting initiatives. This was mostly based on basic data for individual schemes, respondents' observations and case studies of positive impact, whereas more systematic evaluations were generally missing.

Some of the longest existing schemes included: the Derbyshire training-based volunteer passport that was issued to over 3000 volunteers since its creation in 2010;<sup>39</sup> the French validation-oriented *Passeport Bénévole* that was issued to 160,000 volunteers since the scheme's start in 2007;<sup>40</sup> and the Northern Museums Volunteer Pass reward type scheme which started in 2010 and currently, involves 161 participating museums representing 8000 volunteers.<sup>41</sup>

VIOs and stakeholders involved in various volunteer passport schemes cited the following positive feedback on benefits of these projects:

- **Benefits for volunteers:** Portability-oriented passporting was found to make volunteering easier for volunteers, through reducing the duplication of checks and training and platforms that match them to volunteer tasks based on their availability and preferences. Volunteer passport schemes that were training-based and aimed at validation were thought to have benefitted volunteers through: confidence-building; enabling learning and development; providing practical help with

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<sup>39</sup> Derbyshire Volunteer Passport Statistics.

<sup>40</sup> France Bénévolat, 2021b. *Le Passeport Bénévole*.

<sup>41</sup> Northern Museums Volunteer Pass Statistics.

employment, volunteering or studies; and offering public recognition so volunteers felt appreciated.

- **Benefits for VIOs:** The main benefits of different kinds of volunteer passport schemes to VIOs involved: better-skilled volunteers as a result of training-based volunteer passports and portability that allowed for exchange of skills; efficiency savings through portability-oriented passporting that reduced duplication in volunteer vetting and training; and having ways to value and thank volunteers through validation of their skills and reward schemes, which was potentially seen to improve volunteer retention.
- **Wider benefits:** This included: having a greater consistency of standards in volunteer training and skills locally or within particular sectors, due to training-based passport schemes; efficient emergency response where passporting elements enabling volunteer portability were instrumental in achieving quick and large-scale mobilisation of volunteers; and greater transparency and diversification of volunteers enabled through the usage of volunteer portals that potentially opened volunteering opportunities to a wider cross-section of population.

The research also captured VIOs' and stakeholders' experiences of **difficulties and challenges** involved in the design and the delivery of volunteer passports and passporting. For example, passporting aiming at portability often struggled with standardisation of volunteer checks and training across different organisations. The diversity within the networks of organisations and differences in risks and appetite for risk involved made it extremely challenging to align the standards. Volunteer portability in some projects was also perceived to lead to competition for volunteers. For example, some VIOs thought that volunteers were potentially driven away from local organisations into a national scheme such as NHS Volunteer Responders. In addition, geographical limitations to volunteer portability were also raised, as it was found to work better in some contexts than in others. For example, volunteer portability across the NHS or museums may be more practical in major urban areas than in rural areas.

Training-based and validation-oriented passporting projects shared some similar challenges in terms of accessibility of content and language used. In addition, volunteer passports linked to skills frameworks also raised questions over the relevance of these skills to volunteers. This highlighted a potential tension between making volunteer passports practically useful in the labour market and ensuring these were based in skills volunteers were interested in rather than pre-determined by employers or national qualification frameworks. Additionally, reward-type schemes where rewards were redeemed against time spent volunteering were felt to be difficult if the volunteer's record had to be completed manually either by VIOs or by volunteers. VIOs also highlighted some other concerns around volunteer rewards schemes, for example, a lack of clarity over which volunteer rewards were legal under the employment law.

### **5.3. Perceived demand for volunteer passports and passporting**

The research with volunteers and a broader range of VIOs and stakeholders captured their perceptions of potential demand for volunteer passports and passporting, as well as concerns and considerations involved. The research found the perceived demand varied by different elements of passporting, from those that were thought to have a more general appeal, through some that were seen as beneficial in specific ways, to others that held mixed appeal across different audiences.

**Portable DBS checks** were the one element of volunteer passports and passporting that was consistently highlighted as beneficial across volunteers, VIOs and stakeholders from different voluntary sectors. They were welcomed as a way to reduce the administrative burden on VIOs and volunteers, speed up the recruitment and onboarding, and reduce barriers to volunteering, across different sectors, including health, education, sport, youth and community volunteering. They were further described by one stakeholder as ‘low hanging fruits’ of volunteer passporting as there was a substantial demand across the voluntary sector for a solution that would help with this.

There were further some more specific areas of demand for certain elements of volunteer passports and passporting, which were perceived as beneficial either for particular types of volunteering, groups of volunteers or applications of passporting:

- **Having a ‘pool’ of volunteers:** This element of passporting was seen as very beneficial for particular types of volunteering, including: large scale, surge volunteering involved in emergency response or major sporting and cultural events; ad hoc event-based volunteering where volunteers with that experience can dip in and out of volunteering in a particular area; place-based and task-based volunteering where volunteers can do certain ‘low-skilled’ community tasks locally across different organisations, for example, shopping for vulnerable people or delivering medications.
- **Standardisation of volunteer training and skills:** Two particular areas were identified where greater standardisation of volunteer training and skills were seen as beneficial. The first centred on local volunteer portability that would be enabled by developing standards for basic, entry-level volunteer training and skills. For example, this could enable volunteers to help across different organisations in their local area. The second concerned specialist skills within individual sectors, as this could enable volunteers to do certain tasks for different organisations within the sector, either locally or more widely where appropriate. Examples for this included museum tour guide skills or specialist skills required in nature and conservation projects,
- **Validation:** There was an agreement that this aspect of volunteer passports could be very beneficial for particular groups of volunteers, especially those interested in developing skills through volunteering as a route into employment. This aspect was also thought to offer benefits in terms of supporting social integration and wellbeing of different marginalised groups.

Other elements of volunteer passports and passporting held mixed appeal among volunteers and VIOs. For example, matching of volunteers with volunteering opportunities integral to some passporting initiatives was found useful by those already using similar digital brokerage platforms. However, other VIOs and volunteers stressed the organic nature of volunteering and finding voluntary roles and felt digital routes were of less interest. Similarly, some volunteers liked the idea of having a volunteer profile that was a record of their volunteering and skills, whereas others could not see how this differed from what they could already do through a CV or LinkedIn and similar platforms. Finally, reward schemes also raised mixed response – while some VIOs liked they enabled them to thank volunteers, other VIOs and some volunteers stressed this was not the reason why people volunteered. In their view, reward schemes could potentially be off putting if they made volunteering seem transactional rather than philanthropic.

#### 5.4. Sector-specific experiences and perspectives

The research uncovered some sector-specific experiences of, and views on the demand for, volunteer passports and passporting, as well as some similarities across different sectors. The research found that there was a particular demand for volunteer passporting in the health, community and social services sectors, although certain elements of volunteer passports were attractive to other sectors explored in this research too. As outlined below, the demand amongst the health sector was underpinned by the Covid-19 pandemic and Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs). There was less demand amongst volunteer groups who came to volunteering through their social networks, children or personal interests, as their attachment to particular organisations was stronger and interest in portability limited. This was the case for some volunteers in culture, sport and education.

The findings below are a snapshot of key issues and perspectives that surfaced in different sectors, suggesting which elements of volunteer passports and passporting would be of interest to different sectors. However, further research would be needed with a wider group of stakeholders in individual sectors to provide a more in-depth understanding of their needs.

- **Health:** The sector has seen a rise in volunteer passport and passporting initiatives, spurred by the Covid-19 pandemic and Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs). The research suggests this demand is only likely to grow, with the need to ensure agile and efficient emergency response and integration of statutory and non-statutory services in ICPs, both made easier through passporting and volunteer portability. Not surprisingly, the research identified at least two initiatives within this sector seeking to further develop digital volunteer passports, including within Lancashire and Pennine ICP and by St John Ambulance, the British Red Cross and the Royal Voluntary Service.

Experiences of passporting within the sector suggest that key challenges involve creating the federations of trust and agreeing common standards, due to the differences in volunteer training and vetting standards and information governance. This was particularly the problem between the NHS and other organisations, although not exclusively.

- **Community action and social services:** The research highlighted the demand for volunteer passporting in enabling volunteer portability in delivering community tasks at a local level, for example, through task- and place-based volunteering enabled by brokerage apps. The research also found examples of standardisation of volunteer training and skills through local, training-based volunteer passports. There may therefore be potential to build on existing place-based initiatives to deliver more comprehensive volunteer passporting in local areas, which would combine basic volunteer training standards, portable DBS and ID checks, with place-based matching through apps or volunteer centres that would enable local volunteer portability across organisations and sectors.
- **Youth:** Particular areas of demand were highlighted both in terms of youth work and with regards to young people and volunteering. Portable DBS checks were felt to be the most beneficial aspect of volunteer passporting, as VIOs with volunteers working across schools and organisations found repeated DBS checks to be a barrier. Validation of volunteers' learning and skills was also thought to be of particular interest to young people, in supporting their entry into employment. Although, it was also emphasised that many young people volunteered for other

reasons, so validation should not be seen as universally relevant to this cohort. In addition, opportunities to integrate volunteer passports with youth cards that were highlighted. This integration could help connect young people with volunteering opportunities and allow access to rewards for young volunteers through the youth card.

- **Police:** There was an interest in this sector in achieving greater volunteer portability across different volunteering roles in the police and across different police forces. Potential benefits of volunteer portability within the police sector involved learning and development as volunteers would be exposed to a greater variety of tasks and re-deployment of volunteers who were not engaged into roles where volunteers were needed. A VIO within this sector thought this could be achieved through standardisation of VIO vetting and training across the police forces, but underlined the scale of this task and the volunteer management resource it would require. In addition, validation of volunteer learning and skills was of interest in this sector, as it offered a potential way to support groups with barriers to employment and social integration, for example, young offenders or other marginalised groups.
- **Culture:** Certain aspects of volunteer passports and passporting were perceived as beneficial to the museum and heritage VIOs and volunteers involved in this research. Volunteer portability across different venues was seen as helpful, as it allowed for volunteer learning and exchange of skills. It was also thought to reduce administrative burden, where portability was enabled through centralised volunteer vetting and training across a group of museums. Therefore, there was some interest in developing shared volunteer training standards within the sector that would encourage such portability.

In addition, volunteering in museums was described as oversubscribed in some areas, as it was used as a route to employment in the sector. Digital brokerage platforms, therefore, held appeal as offering a more transparent volunteer recruitment, with the potential to increase diversity of volunteers and better match opportunities to volunteer interests. Lastly, reward schemes such as volunteer passes were of interest and used within this sector, but VIOs struggled with the lack of clarity over their legality.

- **Sport:** The research suggests this sector may have lower demand for volunteer passporting solutions, except for portable DBS checks which in common with other sectors would be welcomed. The low demand for other aspects of volunteer passports stemmed from several reasons. Volunteer recruitment within the sector was reported to be rather organic, as volunteers came to volunteering through their interests or personal connections, most often through their children. Volunteers and VIOs within this sector, therefore, had little interest in digital brokerage aspects of passporting and validation that would lead to employment.

In addition, the sector already had some level of standardisation that allowed for portability of volunteer training and skills through coaching qualifications recognised within individual sports. This may mean that the need for portability is already met to some extent through existing standards, but also that this would make passporting easier to deliver within individual sports, provided portable DBS checks were accessible.

- **Education:** The research highlighted two cohorts of volunteers in this sector, with different levels of interest in volunteer portability. As in sport, some volunteers came to help at local schools

through their children. Given the organic nature of routes to volunteering and the personal connection, these volunteers felt little need for portability or other aspects of passporting such as validation. At the same time, a VIO in this sector pointed out their volunteers worked across schools, so portability was very much essential for their work. Volunteering was also seen as a potential route into teaching for some in the latter cohort of volunteers. There was a further interest from one education VIO in developing the NHSVR to also push volunteers on a large scale into schools, as part of the Covid-19 response and post-Covid19 recovery in education. Therefore, volunteer passporting held appeal in this sector in terms of different elements of portability and validation.

There was, however, little interest in cross-sector standardisation, as education was felt to require specific volunteer training. Also, like sport, the sector seemed to already have some standardised volunteer training infrastructure that was recognised across schools, so had less need for passporting to support such development.

## 5.5. Success factors and design considerations

The research identified success factors and design considerations perceived to be critical for volunteer passports and passporting to be adopted and benefit the voluntary sector.

- **Commonality:** The data indicate that volunteer portability and passporting are more likely to work where there is some commonality between VIOs, whether through collaborating in the same local area or within the same sector or both. This commonality may be essential for being able to develop ‘federations of trust’ and align volunteer standards and processes. In addition, volunteer portability also worked well where there was a commonality between different tasks for volunteers too. For example, volunteers helping across different organisations still had a connection and something unifying their volunteering, in the absence of the relationship with a particular organisation. They may have had a connection to the type of volunteering, a particular sector, their local area, emergency response or a mixture of these.
- **Flexibility:** The research underscored the diversity within the voluntary sector and different groups of volunteers, which has important implications for volunteer passports and passporting. There was little commonality in terms of the demand, with portable ID and DBS checks being the only need that cut across various voluntary sectors. Nevertheless, there were other more specific areas of demand, as previously discussed. To manage this diversity of needs and demand, any volunteer passport or passporting solution would need to allow for flexibility in how it is used. The research suggests that a volunteer-owned profile that holds their ID and DBS check may be the core element that could work across sectors, which could then be built on by adding other features as ‘bolt-ons’ where relevant. In this scenario, volunteers could add their training, certificates, interests, availability and notifications of volunteering opportunities, if interested. VIOs could also choose to build on this system in smaller or larger federations of trusts, through developing and using standards for volunteer training and vetting.
- **Sustainability:** VIOs and stakeholders were concerned that volunteer passport and passporting initiatives may not be sustainable due to the temporary nature of funding and lack of voluntary sector resource needed to achieve standardisation and collaboration required for volunteer portability. To overcome these issues, VIOs stressed the need for any passporting solutions to be

developed in realistic ways, allowing for the funding and resource such projects would need and building this into a more long-term strategy for volunteering.

- **Credibility:** Credibility of volunteer passport schemes was another aspect important for volunteer engagement and VIOs. Some examples of what helped individual volunteer passport schemes achieve credibility included: endorsement from national councils of voluntary organisations, local authorities and government institutions; and accreditations and certificates awarded to volunteers to validate their learning.
- **Open data standards:** This was a strong requirement from digital platform providers and VIOs who explained that any volunteer passport system would work only if it was developed with open data standards. This would allow for data sharing and for the system to integrate with multiple, existing volunteer management platforms, as well as other relevant online services, such as online DBS and DBS update service.
- **Integration:** The research also uncovered other related and alternative practices, some of which were meeting the same needs as intended by volunteer passports and passporting. In addition to the need for technological integration discussed above, integration with existing infrastructure, standards and tools was seen as critical for volunteer passport systems to help the voluntary sector. This is particularly important in ensuring that any national passporting solutions integrate with, and support, the local VIOs and voluntary sector infrastructure, rather than sideline local VIOs. It is also helpful to recognise that building blocks required for volunteer passporting may already be present in individual sectors, for example, through training standards, qualifications and certificates that already allow for some level of volunteer portability. Identifying existing structures that can be integrated with volunteer passports is likely to make it easier to adopt such solutions in certain sectors.
- **Volunteer-controlled:** Various VIOs and stakeholders emphasised the importance of ensuring volunteers controlled their data, profile and matching with volunteer opportunities of interest. For example, one volunteer passport scheme had an option for volunteers to pause notifications at times when they were busy or wanted to stop volunteering. Another volunteer passport scheme in development was designed so that only the volunteer would hold their personal data and profile, which they could then decide to share with VIOs of interest. Some other VIOs were also not comfortable with set-ups where volunteer data would be owned by technological companies, asking how this data could be used or what would happen to it if the company ceased to exist.
- **Accessibility:** The research also highlighted exclusions and barriers as potential, negative outcomes of a volunteer passporting system. VIOs and stakeholders stressed that some smaller and more informal VIOs would be unlikely to engage with such a system, so may lose out in the process. Other VIOs and volunteers may want to engage but could have barriers, largely due to the lack of digital infrastructure and digital skills. Respondents stressed the importance of supporting VIOs and volunteers to build their digital infrastructure and skills, or provide alternative ways for those interested in passporting but unlikely to engage with digital platforms. Similarly, making any volunteer passport platforms as easy as possible to use for volunteers was seen as a major pre-condition for their success.

- **Managing risk:** Various VIOs and stakeholders also pointed out that volunteer passports will require clarity over liability in situations where there was a problem with a volunteer. In addition, some VIOs stressed the need for mechanisms and processes to deal with such situations within the passporting platform. For example, this may involve having clarity over the rights of individual volunteers and VIOs and whether and how volunteer profiles could be removed or flagged if there was a problem with a particular volunteer.

The research found some further considerations with regards to volunteer passports. There were mixed feelings with regards to using the term ‘volunteer passport’ to refer to the mechanisms enabling volunteer portability and validation. While for some VIOs and stakeholders this term was unproblematic and helpful, others supported the overall goals of volunteer passports but preferred to talk about empowering volunteers and developing joined-up approaches to volunteer recruitment and management.

To some extent, this was a question of preferences for the vocabulary used to describe these initiatives. But this could also reveal a wider point that the term volunteer passport may be obscuring: that of multiple elements and processes rather than a single thing or a product, passporting rather than passports. Thinking about this multiplicity of processes and mechanisms, it is worth considering that any future volunteer passport and passporting systems may aim to combine all these different elements in one platform or choose to meet these different needs through different schemes. In addition, a volunteer passport as a product could also be seen as a tip of the iceberg, sitting at the back of the voluntary sector infrastructure and resources needed for aligning standards and centralised verifying of volunteers’ checks and training.

## **5.6. Expectations of government support in the context of volunteer passports**

Finally, the research also captured views within the voluntary sector on the areas where central and local government could support volunteering in the context of volunteer passports and passporting. The areas where such support would be helpful included: raising awareness of current possibilities to make DBS checks portable and improving their portability; providing legal clarity over certain issues curtailing volunteer portability or other elements of passporting; working with the voluntary sector to support greater standardisation where appropriate through funding for resource and infrastructure required; supporting VIOs in terms of the digital infrastructure and digital skills needed to use and integrate with volunteer passport platforms; offering routes for validation of non-formal learning acquired through volunteering; and encouraging volunteering by making sure other government policies did not pose barriers to volunteering. Additionally, if any volunteer passporting mechanisms were developed on a national level, there was a strong demand for the government to ensure that these are designed to support and integrate with the local VIOs and voluntary sectors rather than compete with them.

\* \* \*

## **Appendix 1: Research methodology**



## 1a. Literature review

The literature review was required to map out existing volunteer passport initiatives and synthesise existing evidence and information with regards to the following questions:

- **What progress has been made to date in developing volunteer passporting initiatives:**
  - What is the range of initiatives in terms of: drivers for their development, their aims and beneficiaries, sectors they are designed to support, approaches and experiences to date?
  - What are common challenges in designing and implementing passporting solutions, as well as key lessons learned from existing systems and schemes?
  - What types of passport schemes or passporting solutions have been effective and why?
  - How do passporting experiences vary by different volunteering sectors and different groups of volunteers?

To meet the research objectives, the review used the following inclusion and exclusion criteria for identifying and selecting relevant sources:

- **Subject matter relevant to the project:** Studies and grey literature focusing on the following key topics were included:
  - Volunteer passport schemes;
  - Volunteer passporting systems, solutions and infrastructure;
  - Volunteer portability – benefits, challenges, and experiences of VIOs and volunteers in joined-up approaches to volunteer recruitment that allow for portability.
- **Date of research:** Only studies published after 2000 were included.
- **Language of publication:** Mainly literature in English was included, but sources in French were consulted too in relation to Passeport Bénévole.
- **Research methods:** All studies identified as relevant involved primary research. In addition, both qualitative and quantitative research was included. The sources included a mix of academic research and grey literature.
- **Geographic origin of publication:** Academic studies identified as relevant focused on volunteer passport schemes developed within the European Union (EU), whereas grey literature gathered on topics of interest was from the UK.

A mix of purposively selected sources covering literature from relevant organisations and sources identified through database searches was used:

- Examples of **relevant organisations** whose websites were searched for potentially relevant publications included: The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), the Charity Commission, the Institute for Voluntary Action Research, the Institute for Volunteering Research, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), Volunteer Now, The Third Sector Research Centre, gov.uk and websites of organisations involved in volunteer passport or passporting projects.
- In terms of **online and database searches**, searches were conducted using Ebsco and Google Scholar.
- In addition, organisations involved in volunteer passport schemes were asked to share any internal data or reports providing evidence regarding those passporting schemes and solutions.

For the online and database searches, the following **search terms** were used:

- Volunteer / volunteering / voluntary / civil society AND
  - Passport / passporting / learning passport / pass / youth pass / record / portfolio / competence passport
  - Portability / portable / CRB portable / transfer
  - Validation skills
  - Management / transition
  - Reducing barriers.

The search process proceeded in two stages:

- For all sources identified through the initial search, researchers reviewed their full titles and abstracts in order to screen out irrelevant sources and narrow down the pool of potentially relevant sources.
- As a second step, researchers reviewed full texts of potentially relevant sources to decide whether they met inclusion criteria.

Once the final list of sources to be included in the study was agreed, researchers captured the following information about each source:

- Full reference for the source;
- Research objectives, sample and method;
- Findings (as relevant for the questions covered by this research review);
- Methodological soundness.

Then, researchers carried out in-depth analysis of the selected studies and grey literature, proceeding as follows:

- Key findings were summarised for each source as relevant to the review based on full texts;
- Evidence gathered from all included sources was synthesized according to key themes
- Gaps in knowledge and recommendations for future primary research were identified.

The final stage involved writing-up the literature review report based on the in-depth analysis of selected sources.

Literature review searches revealed a very limited amount of prior research on volunteer passports and passporting and the related issue of volunteer portability. Where research-based reports were identified, they mainly considered some other aspects of volunteer passports, namely validation of non-formal learning acquired through volunteering. At the same time, the research identified an array of grey literature describing individual volunteer passport initiatives, which sometimes also provided some basic statistics on those initiatives. Due to the recent interest in this topic, the research also found interesting discussions of issues related to volunteer passports and passporting online, through a range of formats including blogs, presentations and webinars. The table below shows the types and number of relevant sources identified in different categories:

Type of source <sup>42</sup>	No of sources
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<sup>42</sup> All sources are listed in Appendix 3: References.

Academic research on volunteer passport schemes <sup>43</sup>	1
Applied research on volunteer passport schemes <sup>44</sup>	3
Applied research on joined-up approaches to volunteer recruitment	2
PowerPoint presentations on volunteer passport schemes	6
Webinars, articles and blogs on aspects of volunteer passporting and portability	6
Internally held, unpublished data on volunteer passport schemes	4
Policy documents	3
Website pages for individual volunteer passport schemes and related initiatives	16
Newspaper articles	1

Given the scarcity of existing evidence, the research used the small number of studies and wider grey literature as a starting point to map out the volunteer passport and passporting landscape and inform the qualitative research. This was complemented with qualitative interviews with 7 VIOs, 3 digital platform providers and 2 sector stakeholders involved in passporting initiatives, who were interviewed as part of the broader qualitative research. The sample and method used for these supplementary interviews are discussed as part of the qualitative method section below.

### 1b. Qualitative research

In summary, qualitative research involved a mix of mini-group discussions with volunteers and individual or paired depth interviews with VIOs, digital platform providers and sector stakeholders as follows:

- 8 mini-group discussions with volunteers (90 minutes long; 3 respondents per group; 24 respondents in total)
- 18 individual or paired depth interviews with VIOs (1 or 2 respondents, 45 minutes long; 26 respondents in total);
- 3 individual depth interviews with digital platform providers (1 respondent, 45 minutes long);
- 5 individual depth interviews with sector stakeholders (1 respondent, 45 minutes long).

Volunteers were asked to complete a brief **pre-task** ahead of the interviews, which involved noting down where they volunteered in the past and at present and what checks and training they had to complete before they could volunteer in those roles. This helped use the interview time more

<sup>43</sup> This paper was a study of Youthpass: Norquist, Lars and Leffler, Eva, 2017. "Learning in non-formal education: Is it "youthful" for youth in action?" *International Review of Education*, Vol. 63, no 2, p. 235-256. The study involved qualitative research with learners who were volunteers of the European Voluntary Service.

<sup>44</sup> These three research reports included: 1) an evaluation of the impact of Youthpass (Taru, Marti and Kloosterman, Paul, 2013. *Youthpass Impact Study: Young people's personal development and employability and the recognition of youth work*), which involved a mix of qualitative and quantitative research; 2) a compendium of available validation tools for non-formal learning, some of which involved volunteer passports (Joklová, Mária . 2019. *Validation tools for volunteers: Compendium* presented statistical analysis of data on EU validation schemes); and 3) a report on three particular tools for validating volunteers' experience and skills, some of which involved volunteer passports (2019b. *Upgrading validation: Assistance For Introducing / Strengthening Validation In The Voluntary Sector* was based on qualitative interviews with organisations behind the three validation schemes in focus).

productively, as volunteers were ready to discuss their experiences of the recruitment and onboarding process.

The **discussion approach** in interviews and group discussions was broadly as follows, although this was adapted to different audiences in the sample:

- Volunteering context (for example, where respondents volunteered before);
- Awareness and understanding of volunteer passports and passporting;
- Experiences of volunteer passports and passporting:
  - For those involved in particular schemes, experiences of: how they work; their achievements, benefits and challenges; drivers behind their development; and key learnings;
  - For those with no experience of volunteer passport schemes, experiences with regards to issues relevant to volunteer passports and passporting, most notably, volunteer portability and validation and valuing of volunteers' experiences, skills and contribution.
- Broader views on the demand for volunteer passports and passporting, as well as perceived benefits and challenges involved;
- Expectations in terms of how government could support volunteering through volunteer passports and passporting.

The **sample structure** for different audience groups is shown below, as well as additional sample criteria used.

a) Volunteer sample

No of respondents = 24

<b>Volunteer sample (mini-group discussions, 3 respondents, 90 minutes)</b>			
<b>Group No</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Volunteer sector</b>
Group 1	South West	18-24	Culture and Sport
Group 2	West Midlands	18-24	Mix of sectors
Group 3	South East	Mixed age 25+	Health
Group 4	North West	Mixed age 25+	Health
Group 5	East Midlands	Mixed age 25+	Social services
Group 6	North East	Mixed age 25+	Social services
Group 7	North West	Mixed age 25+	Culture and Sport
Group 8	South East	Mixed age 25+	Mix of sectors

Additional sample criteria for volunteers:

- All respondents were formally volunteering (e.g. with a charity or a club rather than helping neighbours or friends informally);
- There was a mix in terms of the frequency of volunteering and the sample included those who volunteered regularly (at least once a month) and occasionally (at least once a year).
- There was a mix in terms of volunteering activities and the sample included those who volunteered in: event organising, administration, fundraising, supporting others.
- A mix in terms of demographics was achieved in terms of age, gender, socio-economic group and ethnicity:
  - 2 triads with 18-24 years old young people were conducted separately to understand any specific experiences of these age groups with regards to passporting initiatives focusing on young people.

- Other age groups were not interviewed separately, but there was a good mix of ages across the sample, ranging from respondents in their late twenties to those in their sixties.
- A spread in terms of area type, including rural, urban and suburban areas was achieved.
- The sample also included a mix in terms of those volunteering for one and more than one organisation.

b) VIOs sample

No of respondents = 18

<b>VIO sample</b>	
<b>Sector</b>	<b>Number of depth interviews</b>
Health	2
Community and social services	4
Culture	3
Sport	1
Education	1
Youth	2
Police	1
Cross-sector	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>

*Additional sample criteria for VIOs:*

- All VIO respondents in roles with significant responsibility for volunteers, e.g. responsible for volunteer strategy, engagement, training, management, etc.
  - All have worked in that role for a minimum of 1 year
- A mix of VIOs with and without experience of volunteer passport schemes or other similar initiatives aiming to ease volunteer portability or allow for validation and valuing of volunteers' experience, knowledge and skills. There were:
  - 7 VIOs which have developed volunteer passports or passporting initiatives that were explicitly named and described in this way. Of these 7, 4 schemes were training-based, one was validation-oriented, and two focused on volunteer portability;
  - 4 VIOs which developed volunteer passporting systems and processes that allowed for volunteer portability, but without explicitly referring to them in this way;
  - 7 VIOs with little or no direct experience of volunteer passports and passporting.
- There was a mix in terms of type of VIOs and the sample included: charities, voluntary sector infrastructure organisations, and public sector organisations such as local authorities, the NHS and the police.
- There was a mix in terms of size of VIOs too, ranging from large national charities to local, grassroots VIOs.

c) Digital platform providers and stakeholders

No of respondents = 8

<b>Quota</b>	<b>Depth interviews (45mins)</b>
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Digital providers	3
Stakeholders	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>

Potential respondents for this sample group:

- Digital platform providers included companies involved in projects with elements of volunteer passports and passporting.
- Sector stakeholders included a mix in terms of sectors: one from the health sector, three from strategic, voluntary sector organisations supporting VIOs, and one organisation working in the field of validation of volunteers’ skills, knowledge and experience

Respondents were recruited using a mix of methods:

- Volunteers were recruited using a network of independent Market Research Society (MRS) trained recruiters. Recruiters were provided with a questionnaire which captured all sample criteria, which they used to screen potential respondents and ensure they met the sample specification. Recruitment was managed by Jill Barnett, the in-house field manager in Research Works Limited, who monitored that sample quotas were achieved.
- VIOs, digital platform providers and sector stakeholders were identified and agreed with DCMS. They were contacted by DCMS in the first instance to introduce the research and then followed up by Research Works Limited to arrange the interview.

Qualitative data was analysed using thematic content analysis as follows:

- All audios of group discussions and interviews were transcribed;
- Data from the transcripts was summarised and entered into an Excel grid and grouped by key themes, questions and sample groups;
- The thematic grid was used to compare respondents’ reported experiences and views across different sample groups and individual data units (group discussions and interviews) to identify patterns, similarities and differences, and synthesize findings across the sample.
- Two researchers analysed this data independently and made notes on emerging findings. The researchers then worked together to discuss and compare each other’s interpretation of data and further develop and refine the research findings.

### **1c. Study limitations and future areas of research**

Qualitative samples are purposive and quota-driven in nature; they are designed to achieve specific outcomes. Consequently, they have no quantitative accuracy in terms of identifying proportions of populations holding stated views. For these methodological reasons, it is not appropriate to present qualitative findings in terms of the numbers of respondents expressing certain views. The findings in this report are therefore described in qualitative terms to capture the range of reported experiences and views rather than the proportions to which they were represented.

Two other issues need to be considered in terms of the limitations of this study. Firstly, the lack of evaluations of existing and past volunteer passport initiatives posed limitations for assessing their impact on volunteers or VIOs. The findings on the impact and achievements of individual initiatives in this report were, therefore, based on respondents’ reported experiences, perceptions and views

complemented with some basic statistics regarding the uptake and longevity of these initiatives. Secondly, in presenting the current landscape of volunteer passport initiatives, the report offered a detailed snapshot of different types of volunteer passport initiatives and key issues and perspectives across different voluntary sectors. However, it did not provide an all-exhaustive account of past and present initiatives in this space or an in-depth analysis of experiences and needs within individual sectors.

In terms of future research in this area, this study highlighted the need for evaluations of existing and future volunteer passport initiatives and more in-depth analysis of the demand for such solutions within individual voluntary sectors, as this was likely to vary.

## **Appendix 2: Research materials**

### **2a. Discussion guide – volunteers**

90 minutes long mini-group discussions; three respondents per group

#### 1. Introduction (5mins)

- *Introduce RWL and the project – explain RWL is an independent agency commissioned to carry out this research on behalf of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The research aims to explore volunteers’ experiences, and views on, volunteer recruitment and training.*
- *Explain about the research process:*
  - *Explain that participation in research is voluntary – they can skip questions if they would prefer not to answer or withdraw from the research. Participants will not be negatively impacted in any way if they choose to do so and decide not to participate.*
  - *There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers as we are just interested in their views and experiences;*
  - *We record interviews but this is only used for our analysis and no other reason;*
  - *Everything they say will be confidential and the findings will be reported in an anonymised form.*
- Respondent introduction: Age, what they do, who they live with, hobbies and interests.

#### 2. Volunteering context (5mins)

*This section aims to provide a brief context on their present and past volunteering activities, as well as their experiences of the recruitment and onboarding experiences.*

*Moderator to explain we would like to start with a very brief overview of their volunteering activities.*

- **Where do you volunteer now? Probe:**
  - Can you provide a very brief overview of what you do?
  - How long have you been doing that?
  - How often do you volunteer?
  - How and why did you start to volunteer there?
- **Have you done any other volunteering in the past?**
  - If yes, can you provide a very brief overview of your past volunteering? *Probe: where did they volunteer, what did they do, for how long?*

### 3. Understanding of volunteer passports and passporting (5-10mins)<sup>45</sup>

*This section aims to establish what respondents know about volunteer passports, if anything, and what experience they have had with volunteer passports.*

- Have you come across a term 'volunteer passport'? Moderator to explain other terms used for volunteer passports include: *volunteer pass, wallet, card, portfolio.*
- Note: *We are just checking for their understanding of the term and basic awareness at this point. If they ask for more explanation on what VPs are, explain this will be provided shortly.*
  - If not, what do you think volunteer passports are?
  - If yes, what are volunteer passports, from what you know?

*Moderator to explain we will now show them some more information about what volunteer passports are. Moderator to show **Stimulus 1 – Volunteer passports and passporting definition** and explore:*

- What does this make you think? Why?
- Is anything unclear in this description? What?
- How helpful would something like this be? Why yes / not?
- If the organisation(s) you volunteer for had such a scheme, how interested would you be to get a volunteer passport? Why yes/not?
- Do you know any examples of volunteer passports? If so, which ones?
- Have you personally had any experience of volunteer passports or passporting initiatives [as described here]?
- For each example mentioned above probe very briefly:
  - What does that volunteer passport initiative involve? *Probe: record of training, experience and skills, DBS checks, opportunities to volunteer with different organisations, other?*
- Based on that experience, which of these different types would you have seen as volunteer passports and passporting?

*Moderator to explain this is just so we can get a basic sense of what experience of volunteer passports or passporting they have had and then we will discuss this in more detail.*

### 4. Matching supply and demand (15mins)

*This section will explore volunteer experiences of, and views on, digital platforms (and potentially other systems) that help match volunteer supply and demand.*

*Moderator to explain that we will start by exploring what experience, if any, they have had with the first element of volunteer passporting – initiatives (digital or otherwise) that try to match volunteers with volunteering roles and manage the volunteer supply and demand in this way.*

- Thinking about your current volunteering, where did you **find out** about it?
  - If online, which websites have they used where they could find volunteer roles in different organisations, if any? *Probe:*
    - What was the name of the website?

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<sup>45</sup> This section will take 5-10 minutes if respondents haven't had any experience of volunteer passports but may last longer if respondents have had some experience of such schemes.



- What worked well / less well about those websites?
- Was there anything you would improve about those websites – what and why?

*Moderator to explain that they would now like to show them some examples of websites that help match volunteers and organisations. Moderator to show **Stimulus 2a: Matching supply and demand**. Explain you could use the website to: make your volunteering profile; be matched with roles based on your profile; and filter volunteering opportunities based on your criteria. Then explore:*

- What did they think about different **website features**? *Probe:*
  - Being able to create your volunteer profile?
  - Being able to be matched with suitable volunteering opportunities?
  - Being able to filter roles? *Probe: how would you want to filter roles – e.g. based on area, time you have, interests, other?*
  - Is there anything else you would like to be able to do? What and why?
- What difference would using these websites make to their experience of: searching for roles? Why?
- **How interested** would you be to register on a website like this? Why yes/not?
  - If this sort of matching was done through a volunteer **database** rather than a website, how interested would you be to register on the database? Why yes/not?
  - Do you have a preference for matching volunteers with opportunities through a website or a database? Why?
- [If not covered already] What do they see as **benefits** of having such websites?
- Do they envisage any **challenges** in using such a website as a volunteer? What and why?
  - How could those challenges be overcome?
- Who do you think can **help support** the development of such volunteer supply and demand initiatives?
  - What role can the government play in supporting such solutions? *Probe: for example:*
    - In terms of supporting the development of technological solutions for matching volunteer supply and demand?

## 5. Improving recruitment and onboarding (20mins)

*This section aims to understand experiences of, and views on, volunteer passports and passporting solutions that aim to improve volunteer recruitment and onboarding, both for volunteer involving organisations and volunteers.*

*Moderator to explain we would now like to discuss recruitment and onboarding of volunteers and how volunteer passports and passporting can help with this.*

- Thinking about your volunteering experiences, what was your experience of recruitment and the process you needed to go through before you could take up your role?
- *Moderator note: At a suitable point, explain that this process volunteers have to go through before volunteering is sometimes called onboarding.*
  - Did you have to pass any **checks** so you can start volunteering in your current role?
    - if so, what checks?
  - Did you have to take any **training** to start volunteering in your current role?
    - If so, what training?

- How **easy or difficult** was it to go through this process before you could start volunteering?
- Is there anything you would want to **improve** about the recruitment or onboarding process? What and why?

*Moderator to explain we will now give them some more information about that second element of volunteer passports and passporting and show **Stimulus 2b: Improving recruitment and onboarding of volunteers**. Moderator to show and talk through the Derbyshire example – explain you would get a passport after completing some basic training for volunteers and the passport would make it easier to volunteer for different organisations locally. Then probe:*

- Has anyone had any **experience of volunteer passports** and passporting in this sense?

*For those with no experience of such initiatives:*

- **What do you think** about these initiatives? Why?
  - **How interested** would you be in taking part if their county/area or organisations in the sector they were interested in had such an initiative?
  - Why would you be interested / not interested in taking part?
  - What do you see as potential **benefits** of such initiatives? *Probe:*
    - For volunteers? *Probe: saving time, anything else?*
    - For VIOs? *Probe: not duplicating training, cost-saving, anything else?*
    - For service users? *Probe: ensuring minimum training standards for volunteers, anything else?*
  - What do you see as **downsides or challenges** involved in such initiatives, if any? Why? *Probe: having to update training periodically; difficulties in agreeing the same level of checks and training for different organisations/roles; anything else?*
  - How could these challenges be overcome?

*For those with experience of such initiatives:*

- What did your volunteer passport initiative involve?
  - What did you need to do to get your volunteer passport? *Probe: take training, create a record of your skills and knowledge you acquired through volunteering, something else?*
  - Who issued your volunteer passport?
  - What **format** was your volunteer passport in? *Probe: digital profile, paper booklet, something else?*
  - Have you **used** your volunteer passport in any way? Why yes/not?
    - [If they used the passport] How did you use it?
    - What helpful was that? What makes you say that?
    - Is there anything that could be improved about the passport? *Probe: about the process of getting the passport, about the passport itself, about how it can be used?*

*For all:*

- **How should volunteer passports work** to ensure good recruitment and onboarding experience of volunteers?
  - What difference would that make to volunteers?

- Would you prefer a **locally-based** volunteer passport or a **national** one? Why?
- Would having a volunteer passport (as described in those examples) have any **impact** on:
  - How much you volunteered? Why?
  - Whether you volunteered for more than one organisation? Why?
  - How could volunteer passports encourage more volunteering in your view?
- Who do you think can **help support the development** of such volunteer passport initiatives?
  - What role can the government play in supporting such solutions? Probe: for example in terms of:
    - Supporting organisations to agree shared standards for checks and training?
    - Supporting collaboration between organisations involving volunteers?

6. Validating volunteer experience, rewards and incentives (20mins)

*This section aims to explore volunteer passport initiatives that seek to validate and value experience, skills and knowledge acquired through volunteering, as well as reward and incentivise volunteering.*

*Moderator to explain the purpose of this section as per above.*

- Do you have any (formal) **record of your volunteering experience**?
  - What form is that in? *Probe: references, digital profile, volunteer passport?*
  - Have you used that so far? If yes, how? How helpful was that?
  - Is there anything you would improve about how you can prove and show experience, skills and knowledge you got through volunteering? What difference would that make?
- Do organisations you volunteer for have any **'reward' system for volunteers**?
  - What form is that in? *Probe: access to discounts, free entry to venues and events, learning opportunities, anything else?*
  - Have you used any of these 'rewards'? If yes, how helpful was that?
  - Is there anything you would improve about rewards for volunteers? What difference would that make?

*Moderator to explain we will now like to show them some examples of volunteer passporting that include recognise skills and knowledge gained through volunteering. Moderator to show **Stimulus 2c – Validating and valuing volunteers' skills and knowledge**. Show the French Passeport Benevole and explain this would list all your volunteering roles and also skills and knowledge you gained through volunteering, which would be certified by the organisations you volunteered for so you could use it for jobs or other volunteering. Then explore:*

- What do you **think** about this / these initiative(s)?
- What do you see as **benefits** of this / these initiative(s) for volunteers?
- How should such initiatives work so they are beneficial to volunteers?
- At **what level** should this ideally be offered?
  - Probe: nationally, locally, by organisations working in a particular sector?
- How would you **use** such a volunteer passport?
- What **impact** would offering this have on encouraging volunteering, in their view? Why?
- Do you think there might be any **challenges** in running this kind of volunteer passport?
  - What and why? How could those challenges be overcome?
- Who do you think can **help support the development** of such volunteer passport initiatives?

- What role can the government play in supporting such solutions? Probe: for example:
  - In terms of recognising volunteer experience and skills? *Probe: allow for passport to be used as evidence of skills that can go towards certain national qualifications?*
  - In terms of rewards for volunteers?

Moderator to then show **Stimulus 2d: Rewards for volunteers** and explain what rewards each of the two schemes give to volunteers. Then explore using the questions above.

7. Final views on volunteer passports and passporting (15mins)
- If your organisation offered this type of volunteer passport, **how likely would you be to have one?** Why yes / not?
  - Which of these different things volunteer passports can do would be **most appealing** to you? *If helpful, go back to the definition page so they can see the different elements/types of volunteer passports to help prioritise them.*
    - Helping match volunteers with volunteering opportunities?
    - Listing your checks and training so you can volunteer across different organisations that have shared standards?
    - Listing your experience, skills and knowledge so you can use it for jobs or volunteering?
    - Giving you access to rewards?
  - What would you hope to **gain** from having a volunteer passport?
  - What **type of volunteers** would volunteer passports be useful for, if any? *Listen to spontaneous responses and then probe:*
    - Young people? Those with very limited amount of time (who do 'micro-volunteering')? Other groups?
  - Again, if you were offered a volunteer passport, **are there things that could stop you from signing up for one?** How could that be overcome?
  - Are there other things you think might **stop particular groups of volunteers** from having volunteer passports? What are they? *Listen to spontaneous responses and then probe if they think any of the following can act as a barrier:*
    - How easy or difficult a registration process is?
    - Concerns over privacy and volunteers' personal data?
    - Limited digital skills or access to digital technology?
    - Concerns about losing a more personal connection with individual organisations (e.g. through managing recruitment through a website / passporting system)?
    - Language barriers?
    - Accessibility issues, for example for visually impaired volunteers?
    - Anything else?
    - For each of the above respondents agree could be barriers, probe:
      - What would be important to ensure to overcome that barrier?
  - Having seen different examples of passporting, how would you explain to someone what volunteer passports and passporting is? *Moderator to listen and then show the definition again:*
  - With this in mind, how clear do you think this definition is?
    - Is anything important missing?
    - Is there anything they would improve in this definition?

- [If there is time left] Do you have any final comments on volunteer passports that you would like to share with us?

*Moderator to check if the respondent would be happy for us to contact them again by email if we need to clarify something they said.*

*Thank the respondent and close*

## **2b. Discussion guide – VIOs<sup>46</sup>**

45 minutes long depth interviews; one or two respondents

### 1. Introduction (5mins)

- *Introduce RWL and the project – explain RWL is an independent agency commissioned to carry out this research on behalf of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The research aims to understand experiences of, and the demand for, the volunteer passports and passporting solutions. We share some information about different examples of volunteer passports and passporting shortly to see if you have similar experiences and what you think about these initiatives. The research is interested in how passports have worked for different organisations and stakeholders and in experiences from different passporting schemes, rather than in any one particular form of volunteer passports.*
- *Explain about the research process:*
  - *Explain that participation in research is voluntary – they can skip questions if they would prefer not to answer or withdraw from the research. Participants will not be negatively impacted in any way if they choose to do so and decide not to participate.*
  - *There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers as we are just interested in their views and experiences;*
  - *We record interviews but this is only used for our analysis and no other reason;*
  - *Everything they say will be confidential;*
  - *Explain that findings from case studies will be anonymised as much as possible, but that someone familiar with their scheme/project could still recognise and identify their scheme from the report.*

**Moderator note:** *Please familiarise yourself with the organisation in question before the interview and adjust the questions in parts to fit with individual organisations or passporting schemes.*

- Respondent introduction:
    - A brief overview of their organisation, their role and remit, how long they worked in that role, and where relevant, their involvement with volunteer passports or passporting.
- ### 2. Volunteer passports and passporting: awareness, understanding, usage (5-10mins)
- This section aims to establish respondents’ awareness and understanding of volunteer passports and passporting, as well as what experience they have had, if any, with such schemes and solutions.*

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<sup>46</sup> Discussion guides for sector stakeholders and digital platform providers covered the same thematic areas as the VIO discussion guide, but were adapted in terms of language and also specific probes, for example, as relevant to digital technology.

*Moderator to explain that we'd like to start by exploring what volunteer passports and passporting are and whether they have had experience of similar initiatives, systems and processes in their volunteer recruitment and management.*

- When we said we were researching 'volunteer passport and passporting', what did that make you think?
  - What sort of initiatives did you think of, if any?
- [As appropriate] What volunteer passport or passporting initiatives have you come across, if any? *Probe to understand level of exposure and experience.*
- From what you have seen about such initiatives, what would you say volunteer passports are? What would you understand by volunteer passporting?

*Moderator to explain we will now share with them a very basic, working definition of volunteer passports and passporting. Moderator to show **Stimulus 1 – Volunteer passports and passporting definition** and explore:*

- What does this make you think? Why?
- Is anything unclear in this definition? What?
- [If not covered already] Very briefly, which of these types of volunteer passports or passporting have you come across, if any?
- Do you have any other comments on this definition at this stage? *Moderator to explain we'll come back to this definition at the very end of our discussion.*

### 3. Volunteer passport and passporting: experiences and views (25mins)

*This section aims to understand in more detail VIOs' experiences of volunteer passports and different elements of volunteer passporting.*

*Moderator to explain we will now discuss in more detail their experiences regarding these different elements of volunteer passports and passporting. We will now show them some examples of these different types of volunteer passports and passporting to help with our discussion. Moderator to **show Stimulus 2: Examples of volunteer passports/passporting**, then probe:*

- What did you think of these examples?
- Were any more / less relevant to your organisation? Why?
- Having seen the working definition and examples, does your organisation have experience with any of these different kinds of volunteer passports and volunteer passporting? *Explain this can include initiatives that involve elements of passporting, even if they don't use that term. Probe for each different kind:*
  - Briefly, what experience do you have, if any, of volunteer passports or passporting in terms of:
    - Matching volunteer supply with your demand for volunteers?
    - Improving volunteer portability across different roles and organisations to enable efficient recruitment and onboarding?
    - Validating and valuing volunteers' experience, skills and contribution?
  - *For each of the above, probe as appropriate:* To what extent would you see that as a volunteer passport or passporting? Why yes/not?

For VIOs who reported they had volunteer passports or elements of passporting

Moderator to use and adapt the questions below to understand their experience of the different elements of volunteer passports or passporting.

- What is the **history** of your volunteer passport / passporting initiative(s)? *Moderator note: If the respondent is aware of more than one initiative, ask if they can summarise across similar initiatives in their answers.*
- What were the **key drivers** behind creating this initiative?
  - Did it develop organically or was it initiated by particular parties?
- Who was involved in the set up and running of the scheme? *Moderator to probe for different types of actors, locally and nationally?*
  - What involvement have local or central government had in implementing / delivering this scheme, if any?
    - If so, how?
    - If not, would you have welcomed their support? What kind of support? What difference would that make?
- What were its **aims and intended benefits**? *Probe [as appropriate] in terms of:*
  - Managing volunteer supply and demand?
  - Ensuring volunteer portability and improved recruitment and onboarding experience?
  - Validating and valuing volunteer experiences, skills and contribution?
- Can you describe **how your volunteer passport / passporting works**?
- What were the volunteering sectors where this scheme was used? Why those?
  - [If relevant] How many organisations have used the scheme?
  - How many volunteers have used the scheme? *Probe: have some groups of volunteers used it more / less, which ones and why?*
- **What has worked well / less well about the scheme**? *Probe to understand what worked well / less well about:*
  - Design of the passport or passporting initiative?
  - Delivery and implementation of the passport or passporting initiative?
  - [If relevant] Digital platforms / solutions underpinning your initiative?
  - [if relevant] Collaboration with other organisations, e.g. to agree common standards and share volunteers?
- What helped the scheme work well in those respects? Why?
  - To what extent have the following factors helped the scheme work well? *Use probes relevant to the scheme):*
    - Voluntary sectors buy-in?
    - Agreement on common standards and data sharing?
    - External funding/support?
    - Volunteer interest?
- What feedback have you had from volunteers? From volunteer involving organisations?
- What do you see as its **key achievements** of this initiative so far? *Probe [as appropriate] in terms of:*
  - Managing volunteer supply and demand?

- Ensuring volunteer portability and improved recruitment and onboarding experience?
- Validating and valuing volunteer experiences, skills and contribution?
- Do you have any **monitoring or evaluating** activity for the scheme?
  - Do they have any data or internal reports they can share with us?
- Is there anything you would **improve** about the passport / passporting initiative?
  - What further action is needed, if any?
- What do you see as **key learnings** from your experience with volunteer passports / passporting so far?
  - Are there any plans to further develop or scale up the scheme?
- [If relevant] Have they considered using other kinds of volunteer passporting (i.e. where only one category used so far)? Would they consider this? Why yes/not?
  - What kind of additional passporting would you consider and why?
  - What would you hope to achieve through that?

For VIOs who haven't used volunteer passports / passporting

- **Have you ever considered** setting up a volunteer passport / passporting initiative?
  - [If yes] What was driving this / what were you hoping to achieve?
  - What kind of passporting was considered? *Probe: did it aim to help with:*
    - Managing volunteer supply and demand?
    - Ensuring volunteer portability and improved recruitment and onboarding experience?
    - Validating and valuing volunteers' experience, skills and contribution?
  - What were the reasons not to pursue this further at the time? *Probe: limited resources, digital infrastructure issues; lack of sector buy-in; lack of volunteer interest?*
- **Does your organisation have other ways to:**
  - Match volunteer **supply with your demand** for volunteers? *Probe:*
    - What systems or processes do you have to help with this, if any?
    - What works well / less well about this?
    - What could be improved?
    - To what extent could volunteer passports or passporting help manage volunteer supply and demand better? Why yes/not? *Moderator can refer back to examples of volunteer passporting that help with matching volunteer supply and demand.*
    - How would passports and passporting need to work to help with this?
  - Enable **volunteer portability and make recruitment and onboarding efficient** for you and for volunteers? *Probe:*
    - What systems or processes do you have to help with this, if any?
    - What works well / less well about this?
    - What could be improved?
    - To what extent could volunteer passports or passporting enable volunteer portability? Why yes/not?
    - To what extent could volunteer passports and passporting make volunteer recruitment and onboarding more efficient? Why yes/not? *Moderator to remind*



*respondents of definition of passporting if necessary and can refer back to examples of volunteer passporting that help with volunteer portability and efficient recruitment and onboarding.*

- How would passports and passporting need to work to help with this?
- **Validate and value** volunteer experience, skills and contribution?
  - What systems or processes do you have to help with this, if any?
  - What works well / less well about this?
  - What could be improved?
  - To what extent could volunteer passports or passporting help validate and value volunteers' knowledge and skills? Why yes/not? *Moderator can refer back to examples of volunteer passporting that help validating and valuing volunteer experience and skills.*
  - How would passports and passporting need to work to help with this?
- Having discussed all this, how likely would you be to consider adopting volunteer passporting solutions? Why yes/not?
  - Which elements of passporting would be particularly appealing? Why?
  - Which, if any, are less appealing to you? Why?

#### For all

*Moderator to ensure there is sufficient time for the questions below:*

- What do you see as the **main benefits** of volunteer passports and passporting? Probe:
  - How do benefits vary between three different types of passporting? *Probe any differences for different types*
  - What are the benefits for:
    - Volunteer involving organisations? *Probe: any variations by VIO / voluntary sector?*
    - Volunteers? *Probe: any particular groups of volunteers it's particularly useful for? E.g. young people, people who do micro-volunteering, any other?*
    - Service users?
    - Any other stakeholders? *Probe: local and central government?*
- What do you see as the **main challenges** in:
  - Designing volunteer passports and passporting solutions?
  - Implementing and delivering volunteer passports and passporting solutions?
  - How do challenges vary by different types of passporting?
  - How could these challenges be overcome?
  - Who could support you in that?
- **What barriers can stop volunteers from signing up for a passport?** *Listen to spontaneous responses and then probe:*
  - What a registration process is like?
  - Concerns over privacy and volunteers' personal data?
  - Limited digital skills or access to digital technology?
  - Concerns about losing a more personal connection with individual organisations (e.g. through managing recruitment through a website / passporting system)?
  - Language barriers?

- Accessibility issues, for example for visually impaired volunteers?
- Anything else?
- For each of the above respondents agree could be barriers, probe:
  - What would be important to ensure to overcome that barrier?
- **Where is the biggest demand** for these types of volunteer passporting solutions? *Probe: which sectors*
  - How can they be scaled up to benefit other volunteering sectors?
- **What role can the government play** in supporting volunteer passport schemes and/or passporting solutions? *Probe: what role could the government play in terms of supporting:*
  - Technological solutions underpinning passporting schemes?
  - Collaboration between volunteer involving organisations?
  - Agreeing core standards for volunteer training?
  - Anything else?
  - Where passporting schemes are local (e.g. county-based), is there any support that can be provided nationally? What would that be?

#### 4. Summing up (5mins)

- Moderator to explain we'd like to finish by taking another look at how to define volunteer passports and passporting. *Moderator to share the definition and then explore:*
  - What do they think about this as a definition now?
  - Is anything unclear? Missing?
  - To what extent do you agree / disagree with this definition? Would your definition be different? How?
  - How could this definition be improved?
- To conclude, what do you see as most important to help ensure their current / future passporting solution(s) is/are work well? Why do you say that?

*Moderator to check if the respondent would be happy for us to contact them again by email if we need to clarify something they said.*

*Thank the respondent and close*

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