



Full Time Social Action Review: Call for Evidence Submission from Depaul

October 2017

About Depaul

Depaul works in some of the UK's most disadvantaged communities, preventing homelessness and providing support to vulnerable young people. Last year we provided services including emergency accommodation, longer term housing and community outreach to over 3,000 young people.

If you have any questions on the information in this submission please contact Dan Dumoulin, Depaul's Policy and Public Affairs Manager:
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Summary of key points

- Depaul would be able to deliver more services that benefited a greater number of young people if full time social action volunteering opportunities were expanded. Young people who use our services may also be able to benefit from participating in full time volunteering programmes.
- The Government should create a distinct legal status for full time volunteers. This status should allow volunteers to earn National Insurance Credits and claim expenses in a way which will better able them to volunteer on a full time basis.
- Depaul currently benefits from the involvement of full time volunteers from the European Volunteer Service (EVS), which is part of the European Union (EU) Erasmus+ programme. Brexit makes UK organisations' continued ability to draw on EVS volunteers uncertain. Creating more full time social action volunteering opportunities could help mitigate risks around Brexit for Depaul and other organisations that involve these volunteers.

Question: What experience have you had of full time social action / volunteering, either as a young person or as a provider for young people?

Depaul currently benefits from the involvement of full time volunteers from the European Volunteering Service (EVS), which is part of the EU Erasmus+ programme. EVS volunteers from a range of EU countries spend 12 months volunteering in Depaul projects across England and make a valuable contribution to our work.

EVS volunteers are a central part of Depaul's 'Get up and Go' programme, which helps young people to access employment, engage with education, training or a work placement and go on to live an independent life away from the issues that surround

homelessness. They also assist project staff with the delivery of supported accommodation services and individually mentor young people to reach their potential.

In the last 16 years, over 150 EVS volunteers have added significant value to Depaul's work. Their position as full time volunteers allows for a unique relationship of trust and reciprocity to be established between them and the young people they support. The EVS programme is funded by the EU, without this funding the programme would not exist.

Question: Should there be an expansion of full time social action / volunteering opportunities for young people, and do you have any evidence of unmet need or demand?

- **Depaul would be able to deliver more services that benefited a greater number of young people if full time social action volunteering opportunities were expanded.**

More full time social action volunteering opportunities could enable Depaul to do more work to support young people who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness. These volunteers could help more young people with experience of homelessness to engage in their local communities and move closer towards employment, education and training through mentoring and coaching.

- **Young people who use our services may also be able to directly benefit from participating in full time volunteering programmes.**

Full time volunteering programmes could include opportunities designed for disadvantaged young people, including young people who have experienced homelessness. These opportunities could be tailored to the needs of the young people we work with, for example they could live in accommodation provided by Depaul and participate in volunteering schemes brokered by us.

Disruptive and traumatic childhood experiences have made it more difficult for many young people in our services to access education, training or employment opportunities. Participating in appropriate full time volunteering could help these young people to gain confidence, skills and experience needed to find and keep a job, or to complete education and training courses. The NHS has summarised the evidence around the health and other benefits of volunteering.¹

- **Brexit makes UK organisations' continued ability to draw on EVS volunteers uncertain. Creating more full time social action volunteering opportunities could help mitigate risks around Brexit for Depaul and other organisations that rely on these volunteers.**

As stated above, Depaul currently utilises EVS volunteers to support the delivery of vital services. Across the UK hundreds organisations benefit from the involvement of thousands

¹ <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/volunteering/Pages/Whyvolunteer.aspx>

of EVS volunteers every year. Brexit makes UK organisations' continued ability to draw on EVS volunteers uncertain.

Creating more full time social action volunteering opportunities could help mitigate risks around Brexit for these organisations. Volunteers from the UK could replace volunteers from other EU states if the UK was to leave the EVS programme.

Question: If you were to propose up to three things to enable more full time social action /volunteering, what would they be?

1) Create a distinct legal status for full time volunteers

Full time volunteering is currently not recognised within legislation. As a result people engaged in full time volunteering are classified as not in education, employment or training (NEET). This classification does not reflect the social benefit that is created by full time volunteering. The creation of a distinct legal status could help address this, and also, perhaps more importantly, solve some of the issues that currently make full time volunteering difficult - two examples are given below.

The creation of a distinct legal status should also be accompanied by the creation of more full time volunteering programmes. As stated above, these could benefit Depaul through enabling us to use more volunteers to deliver services and providing more opportunities for young people using our services to volunteer.

2) Allow volunteers to earn National Insurance Credits

Unlike people claiming unemployment benefits, people who volunteer full time do not earn National Insurance credits while doing so. The negative impact that this has on state pension and contribution based unemployment benefit eligibility is likely to put people off becoming a full time volunteer.

People participating in a full time volunteering programme should receive National Insurance credits in recognition of the contribution that they are making to society.

3) Allow volunteers to claim expenses in a way which will better able them to volunteer on a full time basis

Current legislation means that volunteers cannot claim expenses for days on which they do not volunteer, including days on which they are unable to volunteer due to circumstances outside of their control such as illness or bereavement. This leads to difficulties for full time volunteers who do not have any other income, as without expenses they may find it difficult to buy food and other essential items.