

Institution: University of Roehampton
Unit of Assessment: Panel C, UoA 19 Business and Management Studies
Title of case study: Volunteers' Work and the Voluntary Sector
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This case study details the impact of Stephen Howlett's research on the development of third sector volunteer management practices. Howlett's research investigates the sector's capacity to address the management of volunteers, especially in the context of unpaid workforce formalisation, and the means by which both organisations and volunteers gain from involvement. Through a series of operational reviews, reports, and professional thinking and action in the UK and internationally, this research has had an impact on the sector in two ways; 1) it has directly influenced policy and practice within specific organisations and 2) has impacted strategic thinking within the wider sector.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Howlett's research conducted at the University of Roehampton (Senior Lecturer, 2005 to date) into volunteer management underpins this case study. The formalisation and expansion of volunteering into a 'workplace model' (like paid work, but without the pay) poses serious challenges. Howlett's research explicates how volunteering is necessarily different: it can take place within structured and seemingly bureaucratic organisations, but can also occur in unstructured, almost un-led groups; it is not remunerated and retains something of the value of collective action. This demonstrates the need for the development of different management approaches. Hence Howlett's research explores volunteer management models that carefully balance organisational needs with recognition that managing unpaid work should not always mirror managing paid work, and that, for many, volunteering is a leisure pursuit and not a work-substitute. This transformation is complicated by factors such as the drive for 'business-efficiency' in the voluntary sector and the uses made of voluntary work by individuals for (paid) career development.</p> <p>Howlett's research and analysis of the management, organisational positioning and perceived legitimacy of volunteer workers is explicated in his co-authored book <i>Volunteering & Society in the 21st Century</i> (2010). Howlett sole-authored chapters on motivation, retention, management and international volunteer trends. The book makes a major contribution to international perspectives on voluntary action, analysing data on who volunteers are, what they want, and examining key issues for volunteer managers. Importantly, the book engages with the enduring challenges which volunteering faces concerning the imperative to change its image and adopt inclusive approaches, whilst avoiding the more fraught issues of formalisation. The book highlights the problematic institutional isomorphism which can arise when volunteering organisations delivering welfare under contract uncritically adopt the paid work model as the norm.</p> <p>Hospices and palliative care units provide vital specialised social resources that assist individuals and their families at the end of life. These are complex organisations that provide social care in quasi-medical environments. In these contexts, volunteering is an important social practice and embodies complex volunteering issues. Drawing on his body of research Howlett co-edited <i>Volunteering in Hospice & Palliative Care</i> (2009) and authored two chapters. The first of these surveyed the environment in which volunteer managers work and appropriate methods for recruiting volunteers in an increasingly competitive arena, having regard for how to adapt internal processes in the context of a changing external environment. The second assesses the impact of volunteer programmes. Overall, the book provides comprehensive and evidence-based practical knowledge on the responsibilities of those who manage volunteers in these complex environments and convincingly demonstrates that these volunteers are in fact key service delivery workers, often performing difficult and important work in a medicalised environment.</p> <p>Commissioned studies of third sector organisations, specifically in the hospice sector (Claire House Hospice and Together for Short Lives), a museum (The Horniman museum) and sector infrastructure (NCVO) constitute an on-going body of work that draws on, and feeds into, this research.</p>

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3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Authored Books:

- *Volunteering and Society in the 21st Century* (2010) Rochester, C. Ellis Paine, A. and Howlett, S. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

'This up-to-date, comprehensive, attractively and accessibly written book reviews volunteering as a global as well as a national phenomenon...The style of writing is well suited to the widest readership, from practitioners to policymakers and academics...The book is illuminated with nuggets and insights'. - *The Geographical Journal* 177 (1), p. 98.

'*Volunteering and Society in the 21st Century* provides a comprehensive and coherent overview of the multiple dimensions of volunteering'. Lester M. Salamon, Centre for Civil Society Studies, Institute for Policy Studies, The John Hopkins University, USA.

- *Facilitating volunteering as leisure: How not to take the fun out of everything* (2013) Howlett, S in *Leisure in Mind: Meanings, motives and learning*, Elkington, S. and Gammon, S. (eds) London: Routledge.

Practitioner orientated publication:

- *Volunteering in Hospice and Palliative Care: A Resource for Voluntary Service Managers* (2009) Howlett S and Scott R (eds) Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-954582-7.

Key grants:

- 2010: Evaluation of National Support Services by NCVO: A research project to assess the impact of services provided to second tier organisations by NCVO. The contract was worth £30,000.
- 2012-13: Volunteering at Claire House: A research project to assess the effectiveness of the volunteer programme at the hospice, with recommendation to develop a volunteer management strategy commensurate with the hospice strategic plan. The contract was worth £10,000.
- 2012-13: Report of a survey conducted for Together for Short Lives: A survey of children's hospices in the UK to assess the health of volunteer involvement and the construction of a benchmark 'typical' hospice – The contract was worth £5,000.

4. Details of the impact

Howlett's research has had direct and significant impact on third sector policy and practice, informing numerous NGOs' working approaches and operational understandings, funding allocations, human resources, and the development of training materials to support change. Howlett's work has provided the research, and demonstrated impacts, on which the sector in the UK and internationally has drawn for further development.

Shaping Policy and Practice in Volunteer Organisations:

In 2010 the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) commissioned Howlett to evaluate a set of time limited projects, funded by Capacity Builders, that provided information, workshops and dissemination on good practice in management capacity to second tier voluntary organisations. Data were collected on campaigning, social change, HR and employment, and leadership work streams (in which volunteering was crucial). The report highlighted for NCVO which of the partnerships that they had created to deliver work were providing what was needed to build capacity within the sector. The report noted and recommended that NCVO should more clearly target their work to smaller organisations beyond second tier organisations. These findings informed NCVO's choices on which elements of the work streams were to be integrated into the NCVO structure after the demise of Capacity Builders. Moreover, the report provided the data on

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which strategic decisions were made at NCVO. For example, encouraging them to target smaller organisations beyond the organisations that the work streams had initially focused on.

In his 2012 Claire House Hospice study, Howlett mobilised theory-based notions of volunteers as a wholly different sort of workers which generated organisational change. The volunteer programme was stultified and ineffective against the hospice's strategic plan, with an ageing volunteer profile that largely failed to reflect the diverse local community, whilst the volunteers' skills were being extensively under-utilised. Howlett's recommendations were debated and accepted by management and trustees. This research had a significant impact on the organisations, and the hospice implemented a programme of change management based on the report in order to bring in a new volunteer programme, including the key recommendation to employ an experienced strategic volunteer manager. As a result of the research, the hospice has also identified a trustee to act as a volunteer champion. The new manager is working with the chief executive to produce a three year, fully-costed plan to expand volunteering, and a change management model that ensures that volunteers and paid staff are involved in discussions as new volunteer roles are implemented incrementally, service by service.

Similarly, in 2012 Howlett was commissioned by the national children's hospice charity Together for Short Lives to investigate volunteers in hospices for children. This work builds on the Claire House study themes; despite a positive picture of over 17,000 regular volunteers in children's hospices across the UK, with volunteers donating the equivalent of £23m per annum in time, volunteers do not display sufficient diversity in terms of ethnic origins, age and gender.. Using Howlett's research insights, TFSL have profiled a notional 'typical' hospice as a benchmark for change. The recommendations, disseminated to all TFSL members, challenge them to invest in volunteer management and development.

Influencing approaches to volunteer management:

Howlett's work and experience in the area of volunteer management has been collected, and the significant practical and theoretical elements highlighted, in two books. This research is having an impact on a much broader scale, and is influencing approaches to volunteer management across a variety of organisations internationally.

The reach of Howlett's research is exemplified by *Volunteering in Hospice and Palliative Care*, which supports practitioners' work by aiding understanding of work contexts. The handbook is extensively quoted in the 2013-2016 Palliative Care Strategy for Victoria, Australia, which uses Howlett's notions of professionalisation of volunteering to argue for a review of volunteer management frameworks to ensure volunteering is well resourced, managed and supported, including strengthening volunteer manager networks (Reference 2). The book and its ideas are referenced in training material for volunteer spiritual support developed by the Quality Palliative Care in Long Term Care Alliance in Canada (Reference 3).

Volunteering and Society in the 21 Century has also sold well to universities and other training providers, and was positively endorsed by David Horton Smith and Lester Salamon, leaders in this field, and by *Volunteering Magazine*, a major practitioner publication who all provided recommendations for the cover of the book highlighting the usefulness of the material to practitioners as well as researchers of volunteering. The book is utilised in a variety of documents that inform practitioners' work. A strategy report by the Red Cross uses it to frame the challenges faced by organisations in providing quality volunteering opportunities, while the Mentro Allan Big Lottery-funded project in Wales (which encourages active lifestyles in Wales) uses definitions of volunteering and the model of volunteering as unpaid work/activism/leisure from the book to frame views of volunteers' work on the project (Reference 4).

In addition to NGOs commissioning Howlett's work, the significance of Howlett's research impact is evidenced by further engagement with practitioners. Howlett was a director of the Association of Volunteer Managers between 2007 and 2012, assisting in founding and developing the organisation and providing workshops and panel sessions at events. As a board member, Howlett was the only academic representative among practitioners and contributed by adding findings from his research and that of others to the discussions and debates. Howlett was invited to speak at the 2013 conference of the Association of Volunteer Managers. In 2011 Howlett made a presentation on volunteer mega trends to practitioners, academics and policy makers at the 21st International

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Association for Volunteer Effort world volunteer conference in 2011 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsIUQ-I tJY>). In 2012 he gave an invited presentation at a meeting of the Commission into the Future of Hospice Care on the strategic importance of volunteers. This, and other presentations on the day, provoked discussion which became a working paper to the Commission as it goes about its work of looking at how volunteering meets new challenges in hospices (reference 5).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Examples of reports Howlett has had input into or which draw on his research:

1. Shining a spotlight on children's hospice volunteers: Report of a survey conducted for Together for Short Lives (2013) Carling, R and Howlett, S. Bristol: Together for Short Lives.
2. Palliative Care Volunteering Strategy 2013-2016, Palliative Care Victoria, Australia: <http://www.pcvlibrary.asn.au/download/attachments/5865497/Victorian%20Palliative%20Care%20Volunteering%20Strategy%202013-2016.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1368677321620&api=v2>
3. Train and sustain: A model for volunteer spiritual support (2013) Quality Palliative Care in Long Term Care Alliance: http://www.palliativealliance.ca/assets/files/Alliance_Reources/Education/Spirituality_In-service_Facilitators_Guide_June_2013.pdf
4. Volunteering (2011) Mentro Allan Briefing paper: [http://www.sportwales.org.uk/media/965789/Briefing%20paper%20-%20volunteering%20\(August%202011\)%20\(EN\).pdf](http://www.sportwales.org.uk/media/965789/Briefing%20paper%20-%20volunteering%20(August%202011)%20(EN).pdf)
5. 2012 Volunteers: Vital to the future of hospice care: <http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CFIQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.helpthehospices.org.uk%2FEasysiteWeb%2Fgetresource.axd%3FAssetID%3D123571%26type%3Dfull%26servicetype%3DAttachment&ei=4xpNUuejC-Sp4ATF5YCABw&usq=AFQjCNHHZb190qr-M3DSTuDmn-yjE2PBaw&sig2=XsMD6TkC1qHS-3M1ScqXvq&bvm=bv.53537100,d.bGE>

Testimonial Evidence:

6. Director of Public Policy at NCVO.
7. Chief Executive at Claire House.
8. Director of Finance and Resources at Together for Short Lives.
9. Representative of the Association of Volunteer Managers.

Book reviews:

10. *Volunteering and Society in the 21st Century*.
 '...such is the breadth and depth of this book that it can claim to be the most comprehensive contemporary review of volunteering produced...this excellent book succeeds in its aim of appealing to academics, practitioners and policy makers alike. It is authoritative, comprehensive and thorough, exploring in a logical manner the wide range of factors which influence volunteering in the United Kingdom and beyond, and which will continue to influence it in the 21st century. It is an essential reference source for anyone studying, working in or working on issues of volunteering.' - *Voluntary Sector Review*.

11. *Volunteering in Hospice and Palliative Care*:
 'This 223-page text will prove invaluable for new voluntary service managers, and an aid to better management and performance in many established services. Definitely recommended reading.' - Centre for Palliative Care Research and Education, Australia.