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From one parent to another: A personal perspective of the parent champion journey

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List of abbreviations

Housing Advisory Panel (HAP)

Leeds City Council (LCC)

Family and Childcare Trust (FCT)

Department for Education (DFE)

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DSCF)

Abstract

The study examines the impact of training and volunteering for a government funded scheme designed to provide peer support between parents. It focuses on the volunteers themselves to identify career aspirations and achievements that have developed through involvement with the parent champion scheme. The research seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the personal journey of the volunteers in relation to developing their own career aspirations and the factors that have supported or prevented personal growth. It contributes to the growing knowledge about the potential benefits of volunteering and contextualise the parent champion scheme within the academic frameworks identified in literature.

Peer support doesn't just work one way. Even if you're in a mentoring role, simply talking to someone else who is struggling with the same issue can support you as well. It's not just an act of charity. In a lot of cases, the volunteer is helped as much as the patient.

Casiday (2008) pg 19

Chapter 1: Introduction

Results from the 2015-16 Cabinet Office, *Community Life Survey* showed that 41% of people participated in formal volunteering at least once in the past 12 months, and that 60% of people informally volunteered in the past 12 months which demonstrates that the role of volunteering is now widespread. This study will consider how the role of a parent champion volunteer is personally rewarding for parents who give up their own time to provide other parents in their community with information about a range of children's services. Developing a personal perspective about the factors that have supported their journey to personal development will advance the understanding of parent champion volunteers' support needs in relation to achieving personal work related goals and aspirations.

1.1 Background

40 per cent of parents found the most common source of information about childcare was through word of mouth, such as from friends or relatives.

The Department for Education 2012–13

In 2007, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (Now Department for Education) funded Daycare Trust (now Family and Childcare Trust), to manage trial Parent Champions projects in London to increase awareness of formal childcare. Funding for the project supported the launch of a national network in 2012 which now has 48 registered parent champion schemes. The national network is funded by DFE and continues to be managed by FCT. Any local authority can join the scheme once they have recruited between five to ten volunteers, each scheme is provided with the induction training and a small start-up grant of up to £1000. Scheme co-ordinators are typically from local authority services such as children's centres, Family Information Services, housing, schools and community groups who have information they want to share with parents. The scheme which is the focus for this study is co-ordinated by Leeds City Council housing department and aims to share information with residents of council properties and reduce anti-social behaviour on estates.

I have been involved in the parent champion scheme since the launch of the national network in 2012 and have supported the scheme to develop training materials and resources, delivery of induction training for volunteers and mentoring and ongoing support for schemes nationally. I am the designated consultant for the Leeds scheme and have supported its growth since it began in 2014. I have delivered induction training to every volunteer over two half day sessions and have met with them again at an update training event. My close involvement with the scheme has driven my interest in the personal progression for volunteers and a commitment to understanding how the scheme can offer benefits not of monetary value.

The Parent Champions model is based on the belief that parents trust other parents opinions about childcare and that they are best placed to reach out to those parents who do not access services. The model is particularly useful for targeting communities in which participation in children's early learning and the use of childcare is not the norm, to introduce the benefits of childcare and early learning and how it can benefit children and families. This is a role that has traditionally been funded through outreach teams within children centres but that has been reduced by local authority budget reductions. The National Audit Office reports *37% estimated real-terms reduction in government funding to local authorities 2010-11 to 2015-16, with a reduction in full-time equivalent posts in local authorities by 16.6% between 2010 and 2013.* The report warns that;

Ensuring that local authorities remain financially sustainable, in that they deliver their statutory services to a sufficient standard, is becoming more difficult.

NAO (2014) pg 5

The outreach worker's role is an important function of children's centres across the country, ensuring that the most hard to reach parents are informed about and can access children's services. The key functions of the parent champion role are similar to that of an outreach worker as defined in the DCSF policy paper; Children's Plan 2007 as:

Effective home visiting, outreach and other outreach services can make a real difference to families who cannot or choose not to access services, providing important information and access to services such as childcare and family support. We announced earlier in 2007 that we will expand outreach so that there are a minimum of two outreach workers in Sure Start Children's Centres in the most disadvantaged areas.'

Children's Plan (2007) pg 21

Despite the acknowledgement of the importance of the outreach role by policy makers, an announcement in the 2011 budget to dramatically reduce borrowing led to significantly reduced budgets for children's centres and new guidance issued in 2013 reduced statutory rights on local authorities to provide some services. Since then the continuously reducing budgets has led to many closures and loss of key staff from outreach teams. The *children's centre inspection outcomes report* evidences the decline from 2,123 open and inspected centres in December 2014 to just 196 centres open and inspected in August 2015 (OfSTED 2015).

Challenging reduced budgets necessitated more innovative and cost effective ways of delivering services which the Coalition government presented as the 'Big Society', with a particular focus on the role of volunteers in local communities:

Encourage people to take an active role in their communities: We will take a range of measures to encourage volunteering and involvement in social action, including launching a national 'Big Society Day' and making regular community involvement a key element of civil service staff appraisals.

The parent champion volunteers are supporting some of the functions of the outreach role at a fraction of the cost and have a good success rate at reaching parents identified as hard to reach or engage with services (Marsden; 2015). Through working with parent champions I recognise the transferrable skills and knowledge that they develop over time but more importantly their raised confidence levels have been particularly rewarding to observe.

1.2 Research aims and objectives

Aims of the study

This study aims to go beyond descriptive analysis of already available quantitative data (mean, median, quartiles, minimum and maximum values) gathered through evaluation questionnaires, designed to measure the parent champion journey. It uses qualitative data gathered through semi structured interviews for a richer personal perspective of the parent champion journey and a deeper understanding of the information gathered from questionnaires. Findings from the questionnaires carried out with volunteers before starting the scheme and again after six months (appendix 1) of participating on the scheme are used to create questions for semi structured interviews. This provided a more in-depth perspective of the complex reasoning to understand the 'how' and 'why' values associated with common benefits that parent champions are gaining from involvement with the scheme.

The study is also an opportunity to focus on the volunteers who commit their time to support other parents by recognising their support needs and identifying pathways for personal career progression. Collating responses to questionnaires and semi structured interviews identifies key strategies that support personal career progression. A contribution to academic research in the field of volunteering (Andreoni and Scholz 1998; Musick and Wilson, 2003; Li and Ferraro, 2005; Choi and Bohman, 2007) is provided through a unique insight into a volunteering scheme that has been adopted across England. The first large scale study of volunteering in England was commissioned in 1982 when unemployment was high and the benefits of voluntary work were linked:

“Volunteering by unemployed people has been a subject for research and discussion for at least a decade and a half, since Voluntary Work and Unemployment”

Gay and Hatch (1983) pg 29

In addition the study contributes to the ongoing evaluations for the national network of parent champion schemes and will provide clear messages from parent champions about the support needs of volunteers.

1.3 Research questions

The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

What impact does becoming a parent champion volunteer in the Leeds area have on developing personal skills of volunteers?

What impact does becoming a parent champion volunteer in the Leeds area have on motivating career aspirations of volunteers?

What value does qualitative data contribute to understanding the personal benefits of parent champion volunteers?

Findings from parent champion questionnaires carried out before starting the scheme and six months after participating in the scheme were explored further through semi-structured interviews with parent champions. The questions for the semi structured interviews were informed from the questionnaire findings to delve further into the views and opinions of parent champions. It was predicted that the mixed method approach of using data collected from the interviews would complement the questionnaires and surveys, to understand the personal journeys of parent champions and provide an insight into whether the correlations identified from the questionnaire data are recognised by the volunteers individually. The approach has been guided by the work of Edmeades et al. (2010) who began his study with focus groups and individual interviews and used the data from this part of the study to construct a survey that enabled the collection of data using not only pre-coded response categories but also a narrative approach when discussing sensitive issues. Their survey was a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions that had been formulated from the findings of qualitative research, whereas this study is a mixture of qualitative and quantitative interview questions developed from a survey.

2: Literature review

Theoretically the study has required domains of knowledge across different themes of literature to inform the background issues relating to volunteering and the design of the study addressed in the methodology later. The context of volunteering is set within history, law, policy and social enterprise and these have been reviewed to gain a deeper understanding of the issues relating to volunteering and developing work related skills. In addition to the issues relating to volunteering generally, further literature regarding marginalised groups has been reviewed to address the specific issues affecting parent champion volunteers who in Leeds are the target group for both the recruitment of volunteers and the beneficiaries of the work being carried out by volunteers. The literature review developed an understanding of the nature of volunteering and the issues surrounding marginalised groups which was productive in being able to frame the parent champion experience in wider literature and answer the research questions with greater clarity.

2.1 Historical perspective of volunteering

Historically, volunteering has been categorised as a leisure activity (Stebbins 2015) but further (Andreoni and Scholz; 1998, Samuelson; 1956, Bruno and Fiorillo 2012) studies suggested that this definition did not sufficiently provide a powerful enough argument and this led on to definitions purely aligned with public good. An early definition of a public good is suggested as activity that is non-rival and non-excludable (Samuelson 1956). Meaning that one person cannot be prevented from enjoying a public good by another person consuming it. The incentive for individuals to provide pure public goods is questioned by studies that identify benefits which are appreciated by all involved in the activity, including the volunteer themselves. The belief that volunteering can only be rewarding to the public good does not account for the benefits received by volunteers and suggests that an individual's desire to volunteer should decrease as the contributions by others increases.

Furthermore, private individual contributions would be reduced by an increase in government funded provisions for the public good (Bergstrom et al. 1986). Studies carried out by Andreoni and Scholz (1998) report that the provisions of public good seems to increase levels of volunteering in the community, rather than decrease it as does governmental provision of the same public good. In some literature (Andreoni and Scholz 1998; Francois 2005; Sugden 1984) term these additional benefits as "impure altruism", proposing that

volunteers gain from the good causes. This suggests that the act of contributing to the public good provides each individual with an additional benefit such as, social integration, employability skills or stronger mental health. The parent champion scheme in Leeds confirms the findings as its members have increased since its creation and this seems to encourage more volunteers to join the scheme, rather than reducing involvement. This study will determine what the additional benefits for parent champions are in relation to work related skills and raising aspirations.

To describe the motivations for volunteering, the literature reviewed identifies two opposing frameworks; the consumption and the investment framework model. The consumption framework (Bruno and Fiorillo 2012; Meier and Stutzer 2007), suggests that individuals contribute because it gives them an internal benefit, such as caring about the value of others, enjoying the work related to volunteering, or gratification from the act of helping others. This model also identifies other benefits such as status, respect or other non-monetary personal rewards. Neymotin (2016) notes that:

I find evidence that individual volunteering does not decrease, but rather increases when average community-levels of volunteering increase, further solidifying the view that volunteering is not a pure public good, and, at the very least, has some private elements in its motivation. Furthermore, I find clear evidence for a positive effect of social interactions in the form of the volunteering of others in creating an environment that encourages individual contributions.

Neymotin (2016) pg 151

The investment model (Hackl 2007; Menchik and Weisbrod 1987) suggests that rather than necessarily enjoying the role of volunteering, that the motivations are more associated with increasing personal economic wellbeing e.g. wage increases through newly acquired skills, or a desire to build social networks that provide future opportunities for gaining employment (Loannides and Loury 2004). If it is to be accepted that the motivations of volunteering cannot be attributed purely to the public good, retaining volunteers on parent champion schemes will depend upon understanding the private values when planning the elements of a successful scheme. This study will examine the personal motivations of volunteering and the impact on work related skills by identifying the personal motivations of parent champions. The study will determine which of the two models the parent champion scheme fits best with which will enable the scheme co-ordinators to better meet the needs of their volunteers by offering opportunities that reflect the motivations of parent champion volunteers.

2.2 Hard to reach groups

People may be marginalized by virtue of their social exclusion, disempowered as a result of a lack of resources, and/or vulnerable on account of mental health or other issues.

Buck and Curran (2009) pg 2

In the UK, there have been various attempts to reduce social exclusion and the combination of interlinked problems, caused not just by poverty, but also through discrimination, chronic ill-health and geographical or cultural isolation. In 1997 The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was set up by the Cabinet Office and later moved over to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in May 2002. The SEU defined social exclusion as, “a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown” (SEU 2004). In the UK, social exclusion is a key policy, with substantial research, policies and strategies aiming to reduce the impact. There is extensive political

and academic debate as to how effective the overall social exclusion policy has been in tackling social exclusion, with a persistent economic and social divide still evident across the UK; and research evidencing that inequality is still growing in some policy areas (Pierson, 2010).

The recognition that traditional ways of accessing information and support does not work for all families has been a long term challenge for children's services and historically these families have been termed 'hard to reach'. In a service context, hard to reach often refers to the 'underserved', namely minority groups, those slipping through the net, and those choosing not to access services (Doherty, Stott, Kinder; 2004). Barriers preventing families from engaging with services include a wide range of issues that can be separated in to four key groups:

- Minority groups e.g. for reasons of disability, ethnicity
- Hidden populations e.g. homeless, families involved in criminality
- Broader segments of the population e.g. full time working parents, rural locations
- Transient families e.g. traveling families, asylum seekers

From experience of working with parent champions, the barriers and challenges that they report that are preventing hard to reach groups from engaging with services are in relation to:

- Negative prior experiences of education and helping agencies
- No prior experience of early education or knowledge of other services and agencies
- Social confidence
- Mistrust of officialdom and its advice
- Cultural differences
- Stigma of some services
- Gendered roles in family
- Lack of use of existing support services
- Perceptions that 'offer' is irrelevant
- Time poverty
- Family stress, domestic violence, depression, illness
- Language and literacy difficulties
- Mobility Isolation from mediating networks
- Rural isolation, poor transport

Many of these issues are reflected in literature, policies and strategies regarding the issues of marginalised groups. Case studies presented by Pierson (2010) about three marginalised groups identifies with the issues reported by parent champions in the list. The case study about a disadvantaged neighbourhood in the Leeds area is particularly relevant to this study and identifies with some of the social exclusion issues in relation to transport, mobility isolation, financial difficulties and family stress;

A large disadvantaged housing estate lies on the edge of Leeds with clearly demarcated geographical and transport boundaries that separate it from the city. The estate was built in the 1930's to replace extensive slums in the area. A large

part of the population of the estate live below the poverty line. Over two-thirds of the households with dependent children are headed by a single adult.

Pierson (2010) pg 6

If it is accepted that poverty is a social construction and a multi-dimensional problem then domains such as income, employment and standards of living and expectation can be measured to compare economic status. The indices of poverty created by Peter Townsend (1987) provides a structure by which broader debates that link to issues such as crime, health, social exclusion or lifestyles can be opened up. Townsend drew up a list of indicators of deprivation before selecting the 12 he deemed most reliable to indicate deprivation. Some of the indicators included; access to holidays, ability to offer food to friends, lack of parties for children, lack of fresh meat, lack of cooked breakfast. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) that is currently in place to measure deprivation by each ward nationally uses domains such as, household income, employment, health, education and training, access to services, living and housing circumstances and crime.

The parent champion scheme being researched in the Leeds area is co-ordinated by the housing department to address some of the social problems such as anti-social behaviour, domestic violence and crime, which have arisen on estates across the city as a result of the deprivation and social exclusion described in the case study. Target Group includes parents' aged 16-45 years old, young adults, teenagers, ex-offenders, parents with disabled children. The main aim is to promote healthy families and improve parenting skills. The other target groups include Schools, Children Centres, Community Groups, Vulnerable families, Youth groups and local authorities. The Leeds Parenting Champion has its own specific priorities which link with the issues identified by Townsend, Pierson and parent champions above, these include:

- Increase awareness and information to parents about the benefits of childcare, early learning activities, parental involvement, and to increase the take-up of formal childcare,
- Ensure that disadvantaged families will get support, information and access to use childcare services, often because they do not have the information required to make informed decisions for their family,
- Improve parenting skills and social inclusion between families and work towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination within the community by encouraging parents of usually excluded, isolated groups to engage in the Group;
- Promote the interests of all parents in the area, and to assist in gaining good relations between Children Centre, Family Information Service, School, GP's and other local agencies of the community;
- Promote raised awareness about benefits of two and three years old education amongst parents
- Inform parents about where to get advice and information about childcare and getting involved in their child's early learning and wider services.
- Raise cultural awareness; improve families' relationships within the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) groups and wider community.

The research carried out by Coram's (the evaluators of the programme) into the extent that these barriers have been reduced by parent champions nationally focuses on the outcomes for communities whereas this study will focus on the volunteers themselves to identify if any of the barriers to engaging with services have been reduced by their parent champion volunteering role.

2.3 The outreach model

The key objective of the parent champion model is to recruit parents who interact with these marginalized communities and can offer peer to peer support in an outreach function. The outreach model works on the premise that these families aren't hard to reach, they just need to be reached differently. Action for Children define the role of outreach as:

Making support as accessible and relevant as possible. We use existing networks to reach families, running services from convenient local venues like schools and community centres. That's how we raise awareness of the support available. Many of the most vulnerable families are also some of the hardest to reach, often not accessing services voluntarily. This can leave them unable to break out of the cycles of deprivation. Outreach is where we visit these families in their own home, bringing services to them that they would otherwise not be accessing. Successful outreach can engage these families, encouraging them to access services delivered at their local children's centre, where they can then be signposted to a broader range of services.

Action for Children (2010) pg 2

The Action for Children survey '*Supporting the UK's most vulnerable families Why children's centres are the best way to reach those who need it most*', found that before benefiting from outreach, 80 per cent of respondents who were now receiving outreach services were not previously getting support from anywhere else, and 46 per cent were not accessing services because they did not know they were there. These figures highlight the importance of outreach in engaging hard-to-reach families to signpost families into other services appropriate for their needs. This indicates outreach really does help to make sure otherwise excluded families have access to the services that are available to them.

The findings from the '*parent champion final report*' written by Coram highlights how successful the parent champion model has been in reaching out to other parents in their local communities:

Parents showed a high willingness to take action after contact with a Parent Champion:

- In 94% of cases the referral given by the Parent Champion was used by parents with 50% of referrals leading to regular use of the service or activity recommended.
- All referrals given about the 2 year offer of free childcare were used by parents.
- 57% of contacts with parents led to a general impact on the parent e.g. greater awareness of services.

Parent Champion Final Report (2014) pg 5

3: Methodology

Literature reviewed to inform the design of the study spans many different research theories and authors to develop structured and robust procedures throughout the design and the

implementation of the study. The literature review supported the design of the study and informed the tools used to gather data and to report findings that are ethical, reliable and valid. It also provided a summary of the merits and challenges of interview methods approaches to gathering information from volunteers and explored the research tools to determine the reliability and validity of the information gained. It has reinforced a simultaneous approach to data collection and analysis, developing themes, elaborating or refocusing the research questions, and identifying and dealing with issues of validity and reliability (Creswell; 1994, Teusner; 2016).

The focus for this research was to identify repetitions of factors that have stimulated or progressed career aspirations for parent champion volunteers. Guidance about identifying themes was drawn from Tyan and Bernard (2003) who suggest that, "Repetition is one of the easiest ways to identify themes", but that researchers should also look for a range of other themes including, indigenous typologies, metaphors and analogies, transitions, similarities and differences, missing data and linguistic connectors when interpreting qualitative data.

3.1 Methods

The study initially evaluates all the completed Leeds parent champion questionnaires to identify key themes related to their career aspirations. Feedback from 32 parent champion questionnaires carried out at the beginning of the journey and again after six months were analysed to determine key themes. The key findings from this analysis informed the questions for the semi structured interviews which were used with three parent champions who have been actively involved with the Leeds scheme for at least six months.

All parent champions in the Leeds scheme were invited to take part in the study and six of these were randomly selected for a 30 minute interview, although only three actually took part in the interviews due to non-arrival on the day of interviewing. The interview was scheduled to run consecutively with a 30 minute gap for scribing notes and thoughts about parent champion responses and any research insights regarding my personal approach to questioning technique. Interviews were held in a children's centre with which the parent champions were familiar with to facilitate a neutral but relaxed environment.

The study examines judgements collected from a large sample group against information obtained through semi structured interviews with a much smaller sample size. It compared the information captured and identify issues of validity and reliability associated with both.

3.2 Questionnaires

Positivist research argues that ideas must be observed or be demonstrable facts, otherwise they are nothing more than logical reasoning or priori knowledge. The questionnaire approach applied by FCT and the evaluators Coram, to measure the parent champion journey are aligned to the beliefs of the natural sciences and as such uses surveys with scales to indicate preferences. Surveys and questionnaires are commonly used research methods and are used in almost every context of daily life, from providing feedback about a service to the National Statistical data collected every 10 years. Survey research can provide a wealth of quantitative data, that if well designed is relatively easy to interpret and with the advances in technology provide vast opportunities for more complex analysis.

This type of research is regularly adopted by government agencies to demonstrate impact of funded programmes, confident that they provide speedy, reliable results that can be clearly evidenced. The parent champion scheme has been funded through Department for Education since 2009 and relies on survey data to evidence outcomes of the number of parents that parent champions have met and provided information to about children's

services.

3.3 Semi-structured interviews

Semi structured interviews have been selected to explore the lived experience as told by the individual volunteers themselves. It offers flexibility to gain new meanings about the perceived employability benefits from parent champion volunteers, whilst maintaining a focus on the variables of work related skills and experience gained. The semi-structured interviews offer a loose structure that will ensure useful and relevant data is captured. Accepting that as the researcher I am fundamentally entwined in every aspect of the process is crucial to the interview process due to the intimate nature of a one to one discussion. A review of literature (Fielding; 2003, Gubrium & Holstein; 2002, Kvale & Brinkmann; 2009) supported a planned approach to the semi-structured interviews which enhanced the likelihood of obtaining data which has credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

3.4 Emerging themes for semi-structured interviews

The structure for the interviews followed the format of the questionnaire as the aim was to develop a deeper understanding of the factors that have affected their work related skills and aspirations.

How and why did you become a parent champion?

The question were designed to discover the who, what, where and when information missing from the questionnaires but was focused on why they decided it was something that they wanted to do, as only two out of the five provided an answer for the open question on the induction questionnaire. For each reason provided they were asked to determine how much they did actually benefit from the parent champion experience using the scales from question six of the follow up questionnaire i.e. 'not at all', 'a little', 'quite a bit' or 'a lot'.

Question 1 – How were you recruited to the role of parent champion?

Question 2 – Why did you want to become a parent champion?

Answers were written down on a post it note and the participant was asked to place it on a scale of 'slightly important', 'somewhat important' and 'very important'. Each participants scale was photographed to support the write up.

The post it notes were then removed and the participant was asked to place each of the answers on a scale of 'not at all', 'a little', 'quite a bit' or 'a lot'. A photograph captured the scores for comparison against the questionnaire answers.

Question 3 – Has the experience of being a parent champion brought any benefits that you weren't expecting?

Question 4 – Has volunteering as a parent champion benefitted your personal work related skills?

Question 5 – What tasks have you done as a parent champion that you think would be useful in a job?

Question 6 – Has volunteering as a parent changed your desire to work?

Question 7 – Is there anything else that the parent champion scheme co-ordinators could do to support you to develop your work related skills?

Question 8 – How much did you gain the following benefits as a result of volunteering as a parent champion?

This is the same question six on the follow up questionnaire which was asked again to check if the same answers were provided again when face to face. Laminates with each benefit listed in the questionnaire were used by participants to score them 'not at all', 'a little', 'quite a bit' or 'a lot'. They were then asked after grading each issue for further information about the reasons for each score. The answers to the scoring were matched against the original questionnaire and where differences were highlighted further questioning was used to understand why they scored differently using the two methods of questionnaire and interview.

The questions were designed to flow in a natural sequence of asking an open ended question and then following it up to evaluate the importance of the responses given by scaling them, using the original scales from the questionnaires to determine any differences in responses.

3.5 Reliability and validity

Literature relating to reciprocity and reflexivity is widely available (Denzin; 1989, Moustakas; 1994, Richardson; 1994, Schwandt & Halpern; 1988, Teusner; 2016) and has challenged and shaped my awareness of how I (as researcher) am integrated within each stage of the study. The qualitative paradigm is situated within the belief that reality is socially constructed and can be accessed through the participants but debates about interpreting and representing participant's realities opens up complex issues relating to reliability and validity. An awareness of the relationship between myself and the participants has previously been discussed as a sensitive issue that must be considered reflectively and reflexively and this will be addressed through a section specifically about 'researcher reflectivity and reflexivity'.

Literature by Creswell and Miller has been particularly useful in understanding different paradigm assumptions depending on the viewpoint or lens for establishing validity and has guided my choice of validity procedures from the planning stage through to the reporting. To reflect on elements of the study that have influenced my perceptions and interpretations, personal notes have captured experiences and feeling that have arisen through the research and might be relevant to the reporting. Richardson (1994) suggests a metaphor of a crystal for representing validity of reality, in that it has infinite reflections depending on the view point:

Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves..... What we see depends on our angle of repose.

Richardson (1994)

A variety of procedures, frameworks and typologies have been identified by authors such as Schwandt's four positions (1997), Maxwell's five types (1992) and Creswell and Miller's (2000) nine types of validity which incorporates the procedures that are typically used and cited in qualitative literature e.g. triangulation (Denzin; 1978), Reflexivity (Schwandt; 1997), audit trails (Lincoln and Guba; 1985). Several of the nine validity procedures presented by Creswell and Miller have been used within the study to demonstrate the credibility of the study and the report. These procedures include elements of:

- **Triangulation** draws upon previous reports about parent champions, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and literature will support the identification of similarities and common themes that evidence transferability and confirmation of findings from the study.
- **Researcher reflexivity** was a prominent procedure, entwined throughout every stage of the study with the use of a journal notes which addresses personal beliefs, values, assumptions and biases that shape the enquiry. The validity issues concerned with insider research have been carefully considered using up to date literature from Teusner (2016) who expands on the key questions identified by Rooney (2005) to guide the validity of insider research through a reflexive deconstruction of own practice. Thoughts about the study will be recorded to identify any issues linked to the seven questions posed and these questions will guide an approach that is both reflective and reflexive.
- **Member checking** will be facilitated through allowing the participants to read the final report and make comments about the assumptions made. Due to time restraints this procedure will most likely be implemented after the academic report has been submitted but will be an important aspect of personal development in understanding my own skills of interpretation.
- **The audit trail** will inevitably be implemented by the university who review the documentation within the study to measure reliability, logical inferences, category structure, methodological reasoning, credibility and validity.
- **Thick, rich description** was the focus of the write up of the semi-structured interviews where great detail will be provided to create a plausible accounts of the stories told by parent champion volunteers and that enable them to identify with the statements they made during the interviews. Geertz (1973) defines “thick description” as providing the symbolic meaning, using the example of winking, he illustrates how the gesture of winking is an accepted social gesture that from an outside perspective could be interpreted as a twitch. This outlines the importance of going beyond the observation to understand the particular social gesture and shared understanding of the “winking” as a gesture, how do we distinguish it from a twitch:

‘Thin description’ is the winking. ‘Thick’ is the meaning behind it and its symbolic import in society or between communicators.

Geertz (1973) pg 7

- **Peer debriefing** was provided throughout the study by regular review by the supervisor assigned to the study who will offer support and challenge at every stage of the study. In addition the managing organisations FCT and Leeds City Council also served as a sounding board for understanding key assumptions made and overcoming barriers to accessing information.

The research study uses mixed methods of data analysis from questionnaires presented in comparison charts and participant accounts taken from semi-structured interviews which is an approach adopted by numerous researchers (Creswell; 1994, Waysman; 1997) in their quest to paint an accurate picture of another’s reality. Mixed methods research are regularly published in journals (e.g. Field Methods, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Quality and Quantity, Evaluation, Evaluation Practice, The Qualitative Report) to answer questions that require an understanding of experiences and are difficult to answer using one paradigm. The choice to use this method was in part informed by the taught element of the doctorate and part due to the convenience of access to data and participants of a scheme that I have professional connections with as discussed in the introduction. One of the main

criticisms made by Merten (2011) in her summary of *Publishing Mixed Methods Research*, is the lack of integration between the mixed approaches, warning that;

Sometimes they include both quantitative and qualitative approaches, but there is no integration of the methods, analysis, or reporting of findings.

Merten (2011) pg 3

The initial analysis of questionnaires informed the interview structure and questions which seamlessly links the qualitative and quantitative methods together, furthermore the interviews questions contained opportunities for gathering narrative and scaled answers for analysis.

3.6 Reporting findings

The interpretation and write up of data was guided by literature relating to reflexivity which is a concern of all conscientious researchers who are committed to providing a true account of qualitative research. Andrew C Sparkes (1995) raises the issue of the author (or researchers) voice within the text of reports and debates how the reporting of research can act as persuasive stories. He suggests:

Researchers need to develop a reflexive self-awareness regarding the rhetorical and stylistic conventions of the tales they tell in order to bring the tales with the author's explicit and methodological understandings.

Sparkes (1995) pg 159

The choice of terminology is interesting as it talks about tales rather than accounts, which could be construed, as unreliable. The idea that researchers need to consider their writing skills is reinforced by Wolcott (1994) who suggests that qualitative researchers need to be storytellers who can engage the reader to want to read the story.

The *parent champion final report* written by Coram evaluation is typical of government style reports and the influence of the government department is evident throughout the report. The format of the report is consistent with the standard approach to government reports which is described by Maggie MacLure in her review of systematic review processes which are also heavily influenced by political power and endorsed by the Department for Education and Skills (now Department for Education) where she highlights that the 30 published reviews follow a similar pattern of reporting:

Writing up must follow 'the EPPI-centre report structure. This imposes a dreary pattern of identical chapter and section headings, overstuffed methods sections, and overflowing appendices detailing search strategies, coding decisions, applications of inclusion criteria, quality weightings etc.

MacLure (2004) pg 13

The narrative in the parent champion evaluation report is presented in a scientific style with positive outcomes and outputs presented in charts, a writing style that Andrew Sparke (1995) terms as 'scientific tales' and cautions readers to be aware of the false perception that graphs, charts and symbols can present, suggesting that,

This technique allows the text to give the impression that its symbols are inert, neutral representations that exist quite independently of the interests and efforts of the researcher, who is presented as a neutral and disengaged analyst. Scientific tales constitute powerful and persuasive fictions in Western culture, and their value should not be underestimated.

Sparke (1995)pg 161

The purpose of this study is to provide the parent champion volunteers with a voice that will enable them to discuss how involvement with the scheme has altered their work related skills and opportunities away and will be reported using their own words rather than charts and graphs which can be misleading. To determine if the graphs and charts are accurate accounts, the questionnaires used for the Corum evaluation will be analysed and used as the basis for semi structured interviews. To ensure that views and opinions are interpreted and reported as the participants intended a reflexive account of personal thoughts about interpretations will be included. Short story writer Raymond Carver (1989) illustrates the importance of a reflexive style to support validity and reliability of reporting:

The writer brings all of his or her powers, "intelligence and literary skill" to bear on these moments to show how "things really are and how he (or she) see those things – like no one else sees them.

Raymond Carver (1989) pg 27

A short reflective account of the nature of the relationship between the interviewee and myself is provided in the findings section of the report and provides an insight into any preconceived ideas prior to and during the data collection and interpretation phases.

4: Ethics

The responsibilities to each participant was the most significant element of an ethical approach to the study. It was recognised that participants may present vulnerabilities in relation to mental health, domestic violence and social care issues. These were carefully considered against the BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research. The following issues were identified for the study:

4.1 Voluntary informed consent

The process for selection included a study outline and was emailed to all potential participants via the co-coordinators who supervise the groups. All participants were required to sign a consent form before the interview commenced and were informed about how the information they provide would be used.

A reflexivity stance was adopted throughout the study with a focus on the dual role of teacher and researcher being central to the process. The study took into account the pre formed relationship with the volunteers through the induction training events. Both the design of questions and approach to the interviews were informed by literature relating to power relationships within research. Carspecken (1996) believes that although critical researchers may have a value commitment that does not necessarily result in biased research providing it is systematic and careful. Ann Oakley's research into the roles of women in different societies warns of a hierarchical relationship when interviewing participants and provides useful guidance regarding reflexivity in identifying how personal opinions and values can be managed to protect validity and reliability of data gathered through interviews;

The goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non- hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship.

Oakley (1982) pg 41

To avoid participant's responses from being influenced by a desire to please me as the researcher and the teacher, it was made clear at the beginning of each interview that the research is independent from FCT and LCH and the importance of having honest opinions will be discussed. To prevent volunteers feeling restricted from making criticisms they were made aware that any comments included in the final write up were to be anonymous.

The study was not sponsored financially but a consideration to the close interest of the two organisations involved was respected in relation to the access to data and participants that they provided for the study. They were provided with the aims of the study and informed that the participants may provide an account that is not complementary of their experience of the scheme but that an ethical responsibility to report the findings as they are presented by parent champions was paramount to the study. The intentions of the study were to disseminate the volunteers' views and opinions, irrespective of how the organisations working with parent champions choose to use the information. Never the less it is hoped that the findings will support parent champion schemes to consider how the scheme can provide opportunities to volunteers to enrich their personal progression.

4.2 Openness and disclosure

Participants volunteering in the role of parent champion for over 6 months in the Leeds scheme were invited to take part by Leeds City Housing. The invitation to participate in the study was provided with a clear overview of the study including details about the aims of research, their involvement in the study and timescales for completion. Volunteers who expressed an interest were contacted and further information about the project was provided.

4.3 Rights to withdraw

Participants were made aware that their involvement was on a voluntary basis and that they have a right to withdraw from the scheduled interview at any time and that they can request their contribution is removed at any point in the process including the final report stage. Each participant had to agree to take part in one half hour interview so withdrawal of one of two participants would not impact significantly on the study.

4.4 Children, vulnerable young people and vulnerable adults

It was recognised that some of the participants had vulnerabilities linked to domestic violence and social care issues which they may have raised during the interview. The questions for the semi structured interviews were carefully constructed to avoid causing any distress or discomfort and limit any intrusions into subjects they did not wish to discuss. Although none of the participants raised any issues, appropriate sources of support had been researched to signpost to if they had been raised.

4.5 Privacy

Participants will remain anonymous unless they request to be identified for Leeds City Housing or FCT promotional materials. If participants would like to be identified they will sign a waiver for whichever organisation they wish to contribute to. All information relating to participants has been kept securely on a password-protected PC and any written information were scanned and then shredded. Participants will be copied into any information that is shared.

4.6 Disclosure

The possible vulnerable nature of some of the participants could have lead to a disclosure of information about personal circumstances that may involve criminal activity or safeguarding issues. Participants were made aware that any information that is in the public interest to share with other professionals such as child protection or serious crime will override confidentiality to safeguard themselves and others. There was no issues that arose but clear information would be provided about whom I would need to share the information with and how it will support the participant to address the issues.

Guidance from supervisions was useful in evaluating ethical issues as they arose during the study, along with guidance by the BERA Good Practice on Educational Research Writing.

5 Researcher reflectivity and reflexivity

5.1 The interview environment

The interviews took place in a children's centre local to the volunteers and the room was warm and welcoming as it is used for counselling sessions. The chairs were positioned to be adjacent to each other but slightly at an angle which I decided to leave so that it wasn't too confrontational. There was space for the post it note questions and the scales on the floor between the chairs so that the participant wouldn't need to stand to do the task which would be less disruptive for them.

5.2 Interpreting the parent champion journey

To acknowledge the complexities of 'insider research' and guide the reflective and reflexive approach to the study, the key questions posed by Rooney (2005) and expanded by Teusner (2014) have been weaved into the research process.

Will the researcher's relationships with the subjects have a negative impact on the subject's behaviour such that they behave in a way that they would not normally?

When reflecting on the relationships that I have previously formed with the participants it was evident that they were varied in length of time we had known each other, our shared experiences and familiarity for example, I struggled to remember what one of the volunteers looked like, yet with another we had been to a number of events together and I had driven her home on a couple of occasions. Whilst I think it is fair to say that these two interviews were different in the initial few minutes of introductions, once we moved on to the questions all of the interviews ran in a very similar format, without any noticeable difference in interactions or body language.

Will the researcher's tacit knowledge lead them to misinterpret data or make false assumptions?

A good working knowledge of the scheme was a benefit to interpreting the information provided by participants as I was able to separate the impact of factors that were connected with external elements of the volunteering role that parent champions were describing. This occurred on a number of occasions when participants were talking specifically about experiences and benefits related to the housing advisory panel rather than the parent champion role.

Will the researcher's knowledge lead them to make assumptions and miss potentially important information?

On many occasions when asking the participants to use the statements from the

questionnaire and place them on the value that they associated most with for the statement the participant would just place it on the card and then refer back to a previous comments they had made. To ensure their understanding of the statement I asked them to give me a couple of examples again to make sure I understood. I was also careful when they suggested that 'I know what they mean' and asked them to tell to clarify that we had both understood correctly. Further probing at times was necessary to ensure that I didn't make assumptions about what the participant meant, for example participant 2 stated "I didn't think that I would be able to do it" which I interpreted as a confidence barrier when it was actually related to transport issues.

Will the researcher's politics, loyalties, or hidden agendas lead to misrepresentation?

As an instrument to reflect on my own beliefs about the Leeds scheme and the participants I made notes about my feelings, thoughts and opinions at the beginning of the process and again before interviewing the participants. I instinctively felt that any differences in data gained from the questionnaires and the interviews would reflect the time constraints of completing the questionnaire. I also acknowledged the differences in personal relationships formed with each of the participants and any preconceived ideas that could potentially influence the interview data. The need for participants to feel comfortable and confident was addressed through using their local children's centre and clearly explaining the purpose and structure of the interview before we started.

Will the researcher's moral/political/cultural standpoints lead them to subconsciously distort data?

Participants will have an opportunity to review the information they provided after the thesis is submitted but their answers were summarised with them throughout the interview to check understanding of information provided. The write up of participants' accounts was carefully balanced ensuring that all three participants were represented equally and with sufficient comments from each. The cultural standpoints were reviewed through relevant literature and findings from the participants have been compared to identify whether the views of parent champions are reflected in the wider context.

Will the researcher's emotional connections with the research participant(s) impact on the data collection process and interpretation of data?

In my account of the relationships with each participant I identify that I have a good rapport with two of the participants but that I have little knowledge of the third participant and the key issues that I perceive that could present in the interview and the write up of their accounts. I was particularly careful that my personal emotions were not evident in my interactions with the participants or in the reporting of their personal journey.

Has the researcher identified the extensiveness of the insider-outsider status in reference to their working relationships and research project?

This element of the project was identified in the introduction and ethics sections of this thesis as a key area for reflecting on the validity of the research and the ethical approach to working with participants where there is a power status to the role of teacher/student research.

6 Findings from study

6.1 Analysis of questionnaires

A total of 32 questionnaires carried out during the induction training were analysed. Due to low numbers of completed questionnaires for the Leeds scheme these were taken from

three schemes in different areas, including Leeds, Derby and Sheffield. The questionnaire (appendix 1) asks a variety of scaled and open response questions relating to personal experiences of the scheme and their own current mental health. This study is particularly interested in the analysis of questions 1), 2) and 3) which relate to development of skills and experience rather than mental health and well-being. The design of the questionnaires allows for experiences to be measured over a six month period by asking consistent questions and the same scales on a follow up questionnaire carried out after involvement with the scheme for six months.

A smaller sample of 17 questionnaires carried out with volunteers after participating in the scheme for six months were analysed and focused on questions 3), 4) and 5) to measure the personal experiences and development of participants. The lower number of questionnaires is due to some schemes not having six months experience and the drop out of some volunteers within the first six months. Both the induction and the follow up questionnaires were completed by all five participants of the Leeds scheme that were invited to take part in the interviews and they have been summarised separately.

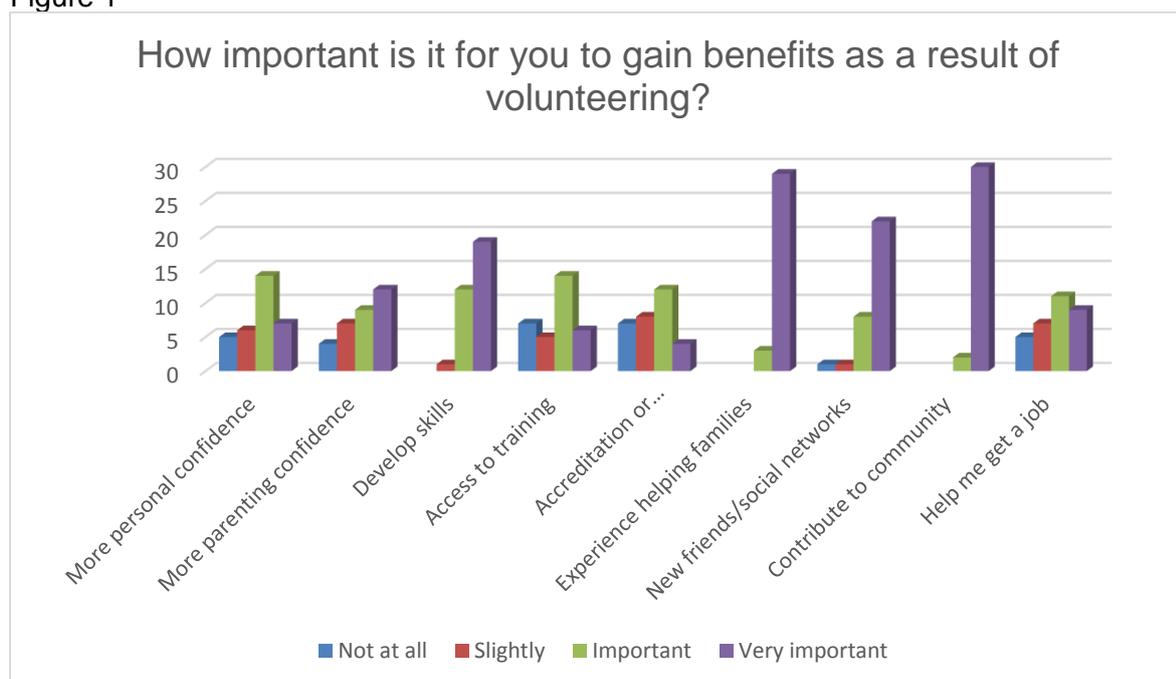
6.2 Questionnaire findings

Although very few respondents (8 out of 32) answered question one to provide an open response about what they see as the benefits of volunteering as a parent champion, the responses to the scaled question (two) provide some insight into the reasons they are choosing to volunteer. It is interesting to observe the key reasons for becoming a parent champion are more strongly linked to helping others and making new friends and less with developing personal skills for gaining employment. This finding mirrors the findings of a recent study carried out by Florence Neymotin who reports:

I find clear evidence for a positive effect of social interactions in the form of the volunteering of others in creating an environment that encourages individual contributions.

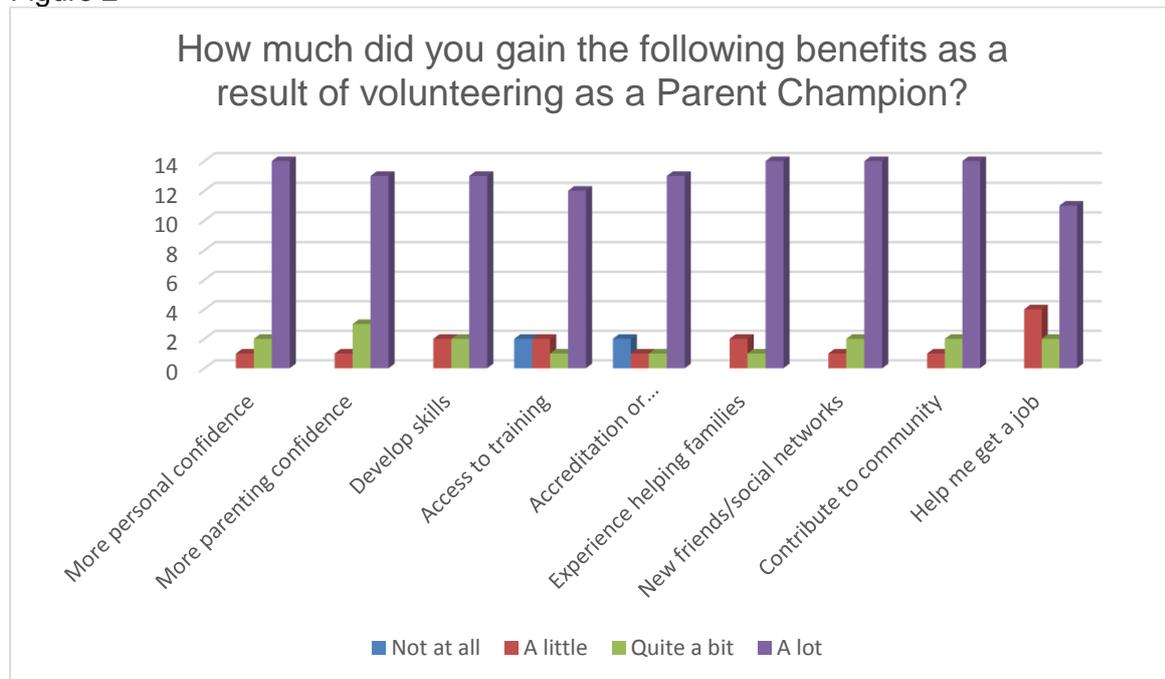
Florence Neymotin, 2016, (pg151)

Figure 1



The reliability of the answers provided at the six month follow up are questionable due to 11 of the 17 respondents all ticking the 'A lot' box for all questions, despite the fact that none of them had gained accreditation or qualifications or gained a job. This may indicate that the respondents had not fully considered the questions before answering and this issue will be followed up during the semi structured interviews as four of the five planned interview participants responded by ticking the 'A lot' box for all questions. It was of interest to discover if the same answers will be given when engaged in a face to face discussion about each potential benefit listed in the questionnaire.

Figure 2



The analysis of the skills and experience gained over a six month period indicate that parent champions are increasing skills and developing experience that enhance employment opportunities. At the induction stage the most common response (41%) to their skills and experience was graded as average (scoring five out of ten) whereas at the six month point their experience was graded the highest with 47% scoring 10 out of 10. It is important to acknowledge that there were fewer responses at the six month point compared to the induction and that this prevents accurate comparisons. The question relating to this theme is a scale from 0 – 10 with an open response only requested at the six month follow up questionnaire, this makes it difficult to ascertain the reasoning behind the increased skills. At the six month point 15 out of 17 volunteers answered yes to the question, 'do you think volunteering as a Parent Champion improved your work-related skills and experience?' but only four volunteers went on to give a further explanation in the follow up question. The answers that were given mirrored those given at the induction questionnaire and were strongly connected to communication and social skills:

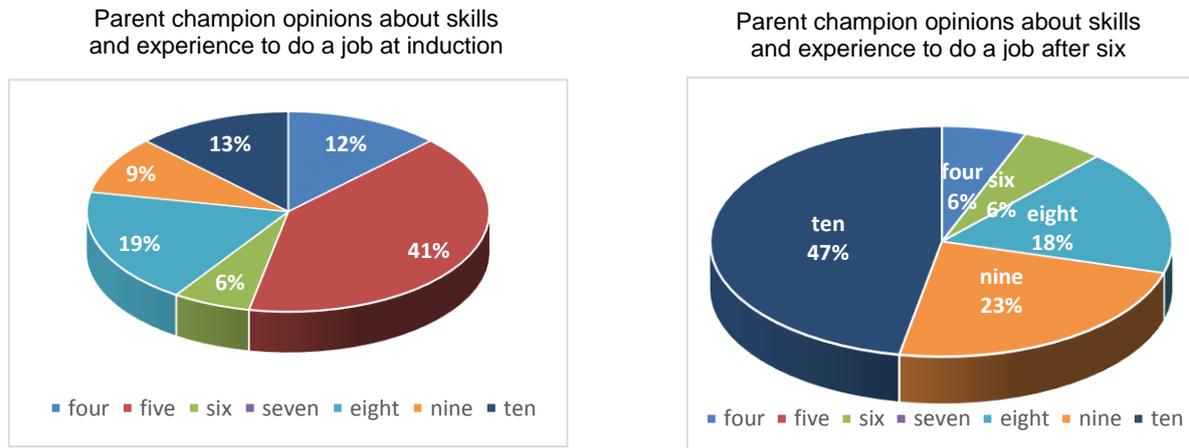
"I have started to get more involved with the community."

"Feel comfortable talking to others."

This was explored further in the face to face interviews to develop an understanding of which factors are directly related to the parent champion experience and any additional external

factors that have contributed. A rationale for missing question 5 of the six month questionnaire was sought to gain an understanding of how this information could be gained from more participants in future.

Figure 3



The questionnaires completed by the five participants invited to the semi structured interviews are typical of the responses given by the whole group in terms of ticking the highest score on the scaled questions and providing no further information in response to the open question. It is possible to make a direct comparison of these questionnaires but the sample size of five is too small to draw any reliable conclusions that reflect the experience for parent champions.

Figure 4

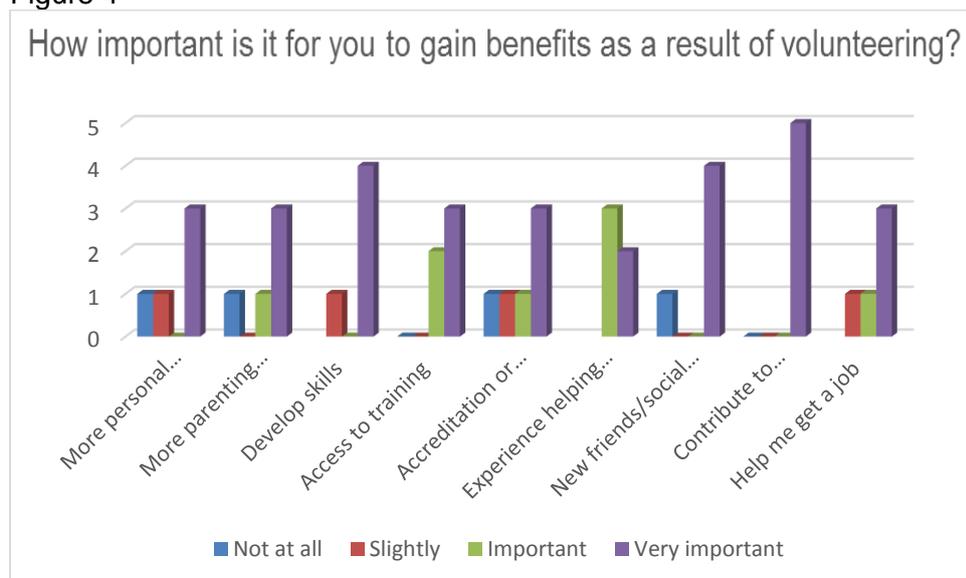
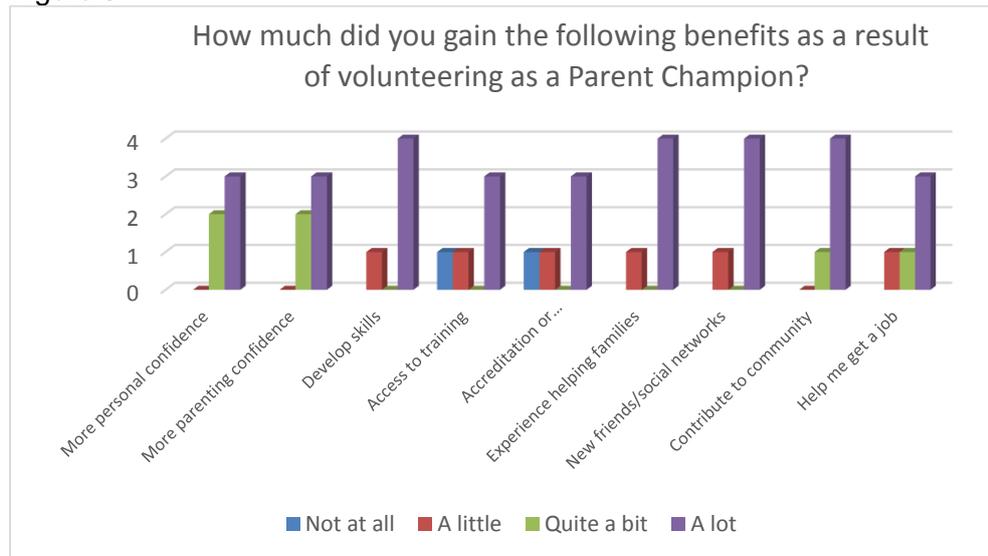


Figure 5



In response to the questions relating to increased work related skills and experience, all five participants indicated that they had improved these skills and indicated that this had risen by one or two grades. Only one written open response was provided which was in relation to communication skills:

“Feel comfortable talking to others.”

Findings from the 32 questionnaires analysed are difficult to gain any real clarity about how the parent champion volunteering role has actually improved the work related skills for individuals or the group as whole. The difficulties were partly due to the design of the initial and follow up questionnaire and partly the low sample size for the follow up questionnaire. Volunteers who are provided with a volunteer code and print it on both questionnaires can be compared over the six month period but this wasn't available for most of the 32 participants and therefore comparisons are impossible. The sample size for the follow up questionnaire is typically going to be smaller due to drop out of participants but the information from participants who drop out could be particularly useful for understanding if the experience was useful to them because they are more likely to have had a negative experience which could be addressed to maintain sustainability in the long term.

6.2 The personal perspective

Three of the five volunteers invited for an interview participated in the half hour interview. Two females and one male parent champion shared their thoughts and opinions about the scheme and their own personal development. The story told by each participant during the semi-structured interview is documented individually, with their personal comments before summarising the findings from the group as a whole. This facilitates comparisons of information obtained through the questionnaires and the interview to establish if the same answers are given using both methods and to answer the key research question for the study; *what value does qualitative data contribute to understanding the personal benefits of parent champion volunteers?*

Participant 1

This parent champion was recruited through involvement with the local children's centre and was particularly motivated by another parent champion who attended sessions to talk about

the role of a parent champion. The influence of being asked to volunteer by others is acknowledged in literature as conscious good;

People volunteer when asked to do so for charitable causes. I introduced the concept of a "conscience good" to account for the tendency of people to volunteer (or give money) when someone requests that they do so.

Although on the participant's questionnaire all of the benefits listed were ranked as 'very important', the only reason provided for wanting to become a parent champion during the interview related to helping others;

"To be honest I wanted to do stuff and wanted to help people."

This was consistent with the comments on both the induction and the follow up questionnaires where the following statements were recorded;

"I think I would benefit because I would meet lots of people and build up my confidence on talking to new people." (Induction questionnaire)

"I have started to get more involved with the community." (Follow up questionnaire)

Further probing didn't lead to any of the other reasons ranked as 'very important' on the questionnaire being identified by the participant as having any relevance.

The experience of becoming a parent champion had introduced the participant to the local Housing Advisory Panel (HAP) and this has been a positive connection for the participant who is planning to set up a community group through the creation of a committee of residents. This has benefitted personal work related skills in the sense that it has sparked an interest in politics which may be a career that will be pursued when returning to work, although this is not a current desire as the participant reported that currently they weren't thinking about returning to work. When encouraged to identify work related skills that had been developed specifically as a result of the parent champion role, they were strongly related to the comments provided on the questionnaires;

"I feel more confident than I did. I wouldn't usually just go up to someone and speak to them but now I feel ok about it."

"I actually enjoy doing this and think... well, I whinge about policies and wanted to do something about them."

The parent champion tasks that the participant had supported with included an environment friendly fun day at a local park and speaking to parents when out in the local community. The experience of supporting at the fun day was described as a difficult experience due to parents not necessarily being present with their children and parents who have English as an additional language. The language barrier was a particular issue that was discussed and the lack of support from other parent champions and supervisors had resulted in an early exit by the parent champion;

"Didn't go down too well as kids weren't with parents and I couldn't talk to the parents in another language."

The participant went on to tell me how she had helped a girl who was upset and crying because of a disagreement with her parents and that she had given practical advice that

seemed to help.

Question six provided an interesting response as the participant expressed a high level of desire to go back into work which was not as evident earlier in the interview when the issue arose during the discussion about question four. This response was a contrast to the earlier statement of not wanting to return to work;

“To be honest I wanted to work anyway but it has made me think about it more. Getting out there and doing events has made me more confident about being able to do it.”

The participant didn't feel that the scheme co-ordinators or FCT could support any further to develop work related skills and expressed a confidence that the skills had already been developed;

“Now I know what I want to do, I don't think I need support.”

Summary

This participant's motivations for becoming a volunteer were linked to community spirit and helping others but as a result of their involvement has gained confidence and social skills. The participant talked about raised career aspirations and has developed an awareness of the career path they would like to pursue, furthermore they feel that they now have sufficient skills to progress their aspirations in the future.

Participant 2

This parent champion was recruited through involvement with a children's centre group that is attended regularly. After joining the parenting course the parent champion scheme was introduced to the participant by LCC. This participant had not completed any of the open questions on either the induction or follow up questionnaire. The key reason for becoming a parent champion was due to positive experiences of previous volunteering and with a sense of feeling useful;

“I was wanting something to do instead of sitting around.”

Other volunteering roles had involved cooking which is an interest of the participant and the rewards were discussed as being able to help out others and getting involved in group work.

When discussing the benefits of being a parent champion, the participant hesitated for a while before answering and time and space was given to allow personal thoughts to be gathered. A hesitance in answering was further expressed by the answer which started with, “I'm not sure” and then moved on to;

“It's kind of a weird one because my confidence was good in the first place but I was expecting not to be able to do it.”

The answer seemed to be conflicting so further probing about what they were not expecting to be able to do, revealed a transport issue rather than the barriers being linked to confidence. The participant did not feel that the parent champion role had benefitted personal work related skills because their career interests are related to joinery and artwork. Neither did they feel that it had had any impact on their desire to work as they said they had been wanting to work since they were 16 years old and the notion that the parent champion role was, ‘better than sitting at home’ was again raised.

The participants answer to how the scheme co-coordinators could support further with developing work related skills was directed at LCC whom he suggested could provide;

“A better place to live, as living in one room and having to fit all of my stuff in doesn’t help to get me into work.”

This indicates that the parent champion scheme is strongly associated with the housing department who co-ordinate the scheme.

Summary

This participant’s motivations for becoming a volunteer are linked to a sense of usefulness and an alternative to boredom. The experience of volunteering as a parent champion had not raised career aspirations or progressed work related skills that the participant could identify with but benefits in relation to social interaction were alluded to through discussions about how the volunteering helped them to get out. This links to the theory that psychological well-being is linked to social integration

Participant 3

This participant was recruited through involvement with the housing officer at a tenants meeting. The key reasons discussed for becoming a parent champion could not have been pre-set on a questionnaire as they were very personal;

“To be honest I wanted to prove to my mum and dad that I am a good person because they had been threatening me with social care and I wanted to prove them wrong.”

“I wanted to be the best for the boys.”

These answers were very different to the reason given on the induction questionnaire which were more centred on helping others, commenting that the biggest benefit would be,

“Helping others and seeing them benefit from my help.”

The participant expressed many benefits of being a parent champion and was vibrant when describing the benefits in terms of increased confidence, new friends, contacts and useful networks. The volunteering role has evolved from parent champion to other areas of volunteering including Housing Advisory Panel, attendance at tenant cluster meetings, secretary for tenant residents association and helping in the local children’s centre. The value of these experiences was clearly demonstrated by the enthusiasm of accounts given and inspirational language expressed:

“It has broadened my horizons. I want to be a tenant involvement officer after seeing the work that they do. I can see how it is a job that lets lovely people help anyone in the community but they’re getting paid for it. Working closely with housing has provided an insight into the functions of the role”

Benefits that the participant suggested had an impact on work related skills were largely in relation to confidence and communication skills;

“I have grown in confidence because before I would have been too shy to talk but I felt confident in my parent champion t shirt. It took a bit more time to be able to talk to people when I wasn’t wearing the t shirt.”

A further discussion highlighted benefits were also related to personal realisations of own values and attributes such as, '*being a people person, approachable, friendly and caring with a desire to help others*'.

It was felt that the training for the role is sufficient but a suggestion that more local information for parent champions is still needed to disseminate to other parents. The participant explained that having local information about fun activities facilitates striking up a conversation with a new parent and this can then lead on to more in-depth conversations about wider children's services. This was a positive indicator that the participant was reflecting on the volunteering experiences and is able to identify good strategies to meet the objectives of the role.

The participant then went on to talk about an incident that had happened recently with a parent that she was supporting with information and signposting who subsequently had her children removed from her and called the participant for support. The participant felt out of depth to support the parent and suggested that more training in dealing with different types of difficult situations could be useful. She said that this is the 'biggest issue' for parent champions and suggested training in counselling skills, anger management and restorative practice could be beneficial in dealing with delicate issues.

Summary

This parent champion had been motivated to volunteer for very personal reasons related to family, personal respect and status which they had been able to fulfil through their volunteering role. This benefit of volunteering is identified in literature by Benabou and Tirole:

To gain a sufficient amount of prestige from volunteering, it must be highly valued in the community. In a more general sense, the legal and social sanctions set up in a given society affect the physical and emotional wellbeing of individuals and their resulting private values. This can either occur in a negative fashion through punishments, such as stigma, or through positive incentives and rewards, including prestige

Benabou and Tirole (2006)

In addition to raised sense of worth the participant had benefited from improved communication and social skills. The scheme co-ordinators had inspired the volunteer to raise career aspirations and useful networks gained through involvement with the scheme were identified as a future strategy to gaining employment in their chosen career.

6.3 Comparison of data collected through different methods

The answers to question eight (*How much did you gain the following benefits as a result of volunteering as a parent champion?*) Were directly compared to the answers provided to the same question (six) on the follow up questionnaire (to identify if any difference was expressed during the face to face interview. The limitations of reporting research of both qualitative and quantitative methods are both equally problematic in avoiding partisanship. The issues of fairness and accuracy of interpreting and representing both qualitative and quantitative data is highlighted by Tooley and Darby in their review of a sub-sample of 41 articles they raise concerns that:

There was partisanship in the conduct of research (eg in interpreting data to support the class-bound nature of choice in education, when the data would seem to

undermine that claim): the presentation of research (eg by putting research findings into the context of contentious and unsupported remarks about political reform).

Tooley and Darby (1990) pg 12

The comments illustrate that the answers given on the questionnaire were very different to the answers given in the interview and further clarity was sought about the scale ranking during the interview. The changes to original answers provided on the questionnaire and the answers provided in the interview are illustrated in the table below with reasons given by each participant during the interview to expand on the rationale for the ranking of each issue.

Benefit	Questionnaire	Interview	Comments
Experience of helping families	A lot	Quite a bit	Experience had been gained through going to groups and being able to pass information on and the participant talked about these experiences with passion and pride.
	A lot	A little	They didn't feel that they had helped that many.
	A lot	A lot	Many examples of situations that they had been able to support with were shared. The experience of helping families was clearly something that the participant was proud and fulfilled with.
Developing skills	A lot	A lot	Initiated a conversation about increased communication skills which referred back to the previous discussion about increased confidence when speaking to people.
	A lot	A little	<i>"I already had a lot of skills but it has shown me some different things, like how to do events and that."</i>
	A lot	A lot	Many examples of situations that they had been able to support with were shared. The experience of helping families was clearly something that the participant was proud and fulfilled with.
More confidence as a parent	A lot	Quite a bit	The conversation about the ranking was a little conflicting as the participant said, <i>"I was confident in the first place but have some different ways of doing stuff."</i>
	A lot	A little	The participant felt that they had always been a good parent and knew what to do with their daughter.
	A lot	A lot	Many examples of situations that they had been able to support with were shared. The

			experience of helping families was clearly something that the participant was proud and fulfilled with.
Meeting new friends/contacts/social networks	A lot	A lot	Spoke warmly about a close group who supported each other.
	A lot	A little	Discussion about team spirit with the other parent champion expressed of the importance of this benefit. <i>"It's good when we all get together to go to an event or to just meet up and get out."</i>
	A lot	A lot	Talked about other volunteers and professionals that had been met. The comments about other volunteers seemed to suggest that a supportive role is the nature of their friendship and a loyalty to each other had been formed. Whereas the relationship with professional contacts is more of a useful and connection that supports with the functions and progression of the volunteering role.
Accreditation and qualifications	A lot	A little	The word accreditation was explained as the participant wasn't sure about the meaning of it. Once it was explained, the participant suggested that; <i>'The scheme has taught a lot about how to go about getting into qualifications'</i> .
	A lot	A little	
	A lot	Quite a bit	it was suggested that they was thinking more about maybe doing something like an apprenticeship or going back to college. due to a lack of interest in returning to gain formal qualifications due to a negative experience on a health and social care course that had previously been started. She went on to say that she felt better informed and was confident she could do one if she wanted to.
Help me to get a job or go back to work	A lot	Not at all	Still in the same position but further discussion resulted in another change to 'A little' when they identified that it had supported them to raise their career aspirations and know what they wanted to do.
	Quite a bit	Quite a bit	Discussion about how the voluntary work had being an outlet and that it had been, <i>'good to be doing something useful'</i> .
	A lot	A lot	<i>"Haven't actually gone back to work but I'm confident that when the boys start school I can get the job I want. I know I'm a good person and I who what I want to do and know the right people to help me."</i>

Access to training	A lot	Not at all	The training provided was a result of engaging with the children's centre rather than the parent champion scheme.
	A lot	Quite a bit	Needed clarification about what type of training was meant because the question wasn't clear. We had discussion about the parenting training and the parent champion induction training which the candidate felt had been quite useful.
	A lot	A lot	Training available through the LCC which the housing team has negotiated for them to be able to attend was discussed. The training available at the local children's centre where the participant also volunteers was discussed.
Making a contribution to the community	A lot	A lot	Examples provided earlier in the interview were reiterated as examples.
	A lot	A little	Suggested that they had not helped many people but that they wanted to do more.
	A lot	A lot	Referring back to the discussion about helping families and stating, " <i>it's the same reasons.</i> "
More confidence as a person	A lot	A lot	Again examples from earlier conversations were given as explanations of the grades.
	A lot	Not at all	Felt that they were confident already before joining the scheme.
	A lot	A lot	Rich examples that had been provided earlier in the conversation were referred back to but with a further declaration that; " <i>I can't tell you how great it has been for my confidence but I know I wouldn't be where I am now without it.</i> "

6.4 Summary of findings

Participant 1

The participant changed their ranking during the interview five times compared to the responses on the questionnaire. The reason provided for this was not understanding some of the terms and rushing to complete it at the end of the session. The additional information provided about the ranking reflected the motivations for becoming a volunteer and the benefits identified in relation to work related skills.

Participant 2

During the interview the participant changed the ranking of eight of their responses given on the questionnaire and the reason provided for this was not having enough time to complete the questionnaire. The only response that remained the same and the highest ranking was 'helping to get a job or go to back to work'. The additional explanations given for reducing the ranking of the other eight benefits suggested that they felt that they could be doing more in their role as parent champion.

Participant 3

This participant only made one change to the answers provided on the questionnaire and this was in relation to accreditation and qualifications due to its irrelevance to their circumstances. The explanation that followed the ranking of each benefit revealed that the participant had raised their career aspirations and was more confident that they had the skills to pursue employability in their chosen field.

6.5 Evaluation of methods and future recommendations

Although the sample size for the semi structured interviews was reduced from the initial plan the data from the parent champions that participated was rich in terms of the descriptions and accounts that they provided. Enough information was obtained to make some useful conclusions about the mechanisms for collecting information from volunteers and the benefits that they perceive their involvement with the scheme has provided them with.

The research highlighted the limitations of gathering information purely from questionnaires and identifies how qualitative methods can give meaning to the experiences of parent champions. The questionnaires were useful in identifying themes for the interviews and were a convenient guide to structuring the interviews in a format that the participants were familiar with. The wording in the scales was identified by parent champions as difficult to differentiate in a meaningful way and this was evident when they were placing the questions in the category they associated most with, for example the participants struggled to see the difference between 'A little' and 'Quite a lot'. Two of the three participants interviewed commented on the wording of 'Somewhat important' as they didn't understand the value of the statement and suggested that symbols might be better to help them to differentiate between meanings.

Recommendations: Review the wording to each question and the headings for the scaled questions to ensure more clarity for volunteers.

The interviews revealed that the associated benefits and reasons for joining the scheme were very different to the pre-set suggestions on the induction questionnaire and that they were ticked simply because they were there. In terms of the differences to ranking from the questionnaire and the interview, participants were clear that they did not have enough time to read the questions or really think about the answers which had resulted in misleading information being obtained from the questionnaire.

Recommendations: To gain more accurate and useful information from parent champions in future it would be better to complete the relevant section of the questionnaire during the training session as this is explored through the icebreaker exercise and would prevent misinterpretations about motivations for joining the scheme.

The questionnaires identified that the key benefits that volunteer parent champions had experienced were in relation to improved communication skills, social skills and sense of satisfaction from helping others. These benefits were also identified during the interviews but when unpicking the benefits further through discussion, it was evident that some of these benefits had arisen in relation to other volunteering roles that were undertaken alongside the parent champion role. In particular the impact of being involved with the housing advisory panel was cited as an important element of the process for improving communication skills and whilst it was the parent champion volunteering that led on to involvement with the advisory panel these external factors are not measured or accounted for in the volunteer follow up questionnaire.

Recommendations: A question could be included on the questionnaires to gather this important information in future to understand how volunteers benefit from other opportunities that are external to the parent champion scheme.

The opportunities for helping others was a strong motivator for the volunteers to continue in the role of parent champion and in particular experiences of supporting parents who are in distress was expressed by two of the participants interviewed. They spoke about these experiences with compassion and highlighted how this had been a positive experience to be able to offer help in difficult circumstances. This was the only area of their volunteering that was identified as requiring further training which again emphasises the value of this element of the volunteering role.

Recommendation: Training for dealing with difficult situations with members of the public would benefit the parent champion volunteers and increase their confidence of dealing with difficulties that parents in their local communities present.

6.6 Key findings

A burgeoning literature on the relationship between social integration and physical and mental health suggests very strongly that volunteering might well have beneficial effects for the volunteers as well as the people they are trying to help.

Musick and Wilson (2003) pg 259

The findings from both the questionnaire and the interviews suggest that the greatest impact of becoming a parent champion volunteer in the Leeds area has on developing personal skills of volunteers is in relation to increased confidence and social skills. This was evident from the questionnaires and two of the three participants discussed this in detail during the interviews. The participant that didn't highlight this as a benefit suggested that this was due to high levels of confidence and social skills before becoming a parent champion volunteer. The main motivations for becoming a volunteer were discussed in relation to helping others and enjoying the role of volunteering which best fit within the consumption framework (Bruno and Fiorillo 2012; Meier and Stutzer 2007), discussed in the literature review and are well evidenced reasons for volunteering.

Measuring the impact of becoming a parent champion volunteer on motivating career aspirations of volunteers was a much more difficult issue to unpick. This was a key research question situated in literature relating economics, labour forces (Smith; 2010) and policy (Zimmeck, 2010).

High levels of unemployment in the UK (and elsewhere) have contributed to an on-going interest in volunteering as a route to employment. Volunteering is seen to offer participants the chance to develop new skills, extend networks, build CVs, try new vocations and gain experience.

Paine, McKay and Moro (2013) pg 4

Initially from reviewing the questionnaires it appeared that the data might be unreliable due to a high ranking but little progression into employment. The comments from participants identified that although they hadn't actually moved into employment they did feel better prepared to gain employment in their chosen field. The comments captured illustrate that parent champions have evaluated their career options as a result of the volunteering role and that they had been inspired by elements of the work. The comments about increased networks and contacts that would be useful to gaining employment in their chosen field are reflected in the investment model literature. It is clear from the discussions that this was not the reason for becoming a volunteer but that it was a motivator that is important to maintaining commitment from volunteers.

The value of the qualitative data in understanding the parent champion journey was the enlightenment of the reasons why parent champions benefit from the volunteering role. Whilst it confirms that the questionnaire findings can be misleading because of time constraints of completing it and misunderstandings about the wording of the questions, the key findings were not dissimilar when identifying the benefits that parent champions discussed during the interviews.

Conclusion

This study aimed to understand how volunteering for the parent champion scheme has supported the career aspirations of parent champions who volunteer in the Leeds scheme. It identifies the personal motivations of becoming a volunteer and provides useful strategies for engaging future parent champions and supporting them to achieve their personal goals. It also identifies issues relating to the current processes for collecting data from volunteers about the parent champion experience.

In summary, the findings from the parent champion study support the literature in concluding that the formation of volunteering has moved away from a purely public good status and that evidence identifies that there are considerable individual private values involved in the motivations to volunteer. The transactions that are deposited for parent champion volunteers are recognisable benefits that individual parent champions can describe. They are evident in relation to both personal and work related skills and are viewed by the volunteers as transferrable skills that can be applied to other aspect of their lives.

The personal motivations that have been discussed in detail by parent champions and their comments that have been reported within this thesis should be carefully considered by scheme co-ordinators. The future of all parent champion schemes across the UK relies on the goodwill of their volunteers for sustainability and this may be dependent on the mechanisms in place to promote personal and work related benefits.

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Appendix 1 - Questionnaires

Participant 1





Parent Champions: Volunteer survey
(V1: Before volunteering)

Please help us monitor the impact of working as a Parent Champion on volunteers by completing the form below.

No personal details are requested and all personal information will be kept confidential. Data will only be reported in aggregate form.

Your Volunteer Code no.: ~~XXXX~~ (Please use volunteer code number provided by scheme coordinator)

Today's date: 05/01/16

1) How do you think you might most benefit from volunteering as a Parent Champion?
 I think I would benefit because I would meet lots of people and build up my confidence on talking to new people.

2) How important is it for you to gain the following possible benefits as a result of volunteering as a Parent Champion?

	Not important at all	Only slightly important	Somewhat important	Very important
More confidence as a person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
More confidence as a parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Developing skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Access to training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Accreditation or qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Experience in helping families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
New friends/contacts/social networks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Making a contribution to my community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1

V1 Parent Champions: Volunteer Outcomes Survey (continued)

Help me to get a job or go back to work

Other - please specify: _____

3) On a scale of 0-10, how much do you think you have suitable skills and experience to do a job? (N.B even if you are not currently looking for work)

(Please circle one number only)

Not at all 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very much

4) All things considered, on a scale of 0-10, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays?

(Please circle one number only)

Not at all satisfied 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Completely Satisfied

5) Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please circle the number that best describes your experience of each over the past two weeks.

(Please circle one number for each statement)

	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5

(Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) © NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2006, all rights reserved.)

Parent Champions: Volunteer survey

(V1: Before volunteering)

Please help us monitor the impact of working as a Parent Champion on volunteers by completing the form below.

No personal details are requested and all personal information will be kept confidential. Data will only be reported in aggregate form.

Your Volunteer Code no.: ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ (Please use volunteer code number provided by scheme coordinator)

Today's date: 18/09/15

1) How do you think you might most benefit from volunteering as a Parent Champion?

2) How important is it for you to gain the following possible benefits as a result of volunteering as a Parent Champion?

	Not important at all	Only slightly important	Somewhat important	Very important
More confidence as a person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More confidence as a parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access to training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accreditation or qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Experience in helping families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
New friends/contacts/social networks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making a contribution to my community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

V1 Parent Champions: Volunteer Outcomes Survey (continued)

Help me to get a job or go back to work

Other - please specify: _____

3) On a scale of 0-10, how much do you think you have suitable skills and experience to do a job? (N.B even if you are not currently looking for work)

(Please circle one number only)

Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Very much
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	-----------

4) All things considered, on a scale of 0-10, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays?

(Please circle one number only)

Not at all satisfied	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Completely Satisfied
----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----------------------

5) Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please circle the number that best describes your experience of each over the past two weeks.

(Please circle one number for each statement)

	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5

(Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) © NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2006, all rights reserved.)

Parent Champions: Volunteer survey
(V2: End of volunteering/6 months review)

Please help us monitor the impact of working as a Parent Champion on volunteers by completing the form below.

No personal details are requested and all personal information will be kept confidential. Data will only be reported in aggregate form.

Your Volunteer Code no.: _____ (Please use volunteer code number provided by scheme coordinator)

Today's date: / /

1) Did you benefit from volunteering as a Parent Champion? Yes
No

2) If Yes, please describe how you benefitted from being a Parent Champion.

3) On a scale of 0-10, how much do you think you have suitable skills and experience to do a job? (N.B even if you are not currently looking for work)

(Please circle one number only)

Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Very much
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	-----------

4) Do you think volunteering as a Parent Champion improved your work-related skills and experience?

Yes
No

5) If Yes, please describe how.

6) How much did you gain the following benefits as a result of volunteering as a Parent Champion?

	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>A little</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>A lot</i>
More confidence as a person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
More confidence as a parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Developing skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Access to training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Accreditation or qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Experience in helping families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
New friends/contacts/social networks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Making a contributing to my community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Help me to get a job or go back to work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other - please specify: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Participant 3



Parent Champions: Volunteer survey

(V1: Before volunteering)

Please help us monitor the impact of working as a Parent Champion on volunteers by completing the form below.

No personal details are requested and all personal information will be kept confidential. Data will only be reported in aggregate form.

Your Volunteer Code no.: JT (Please use volunteer code number provided by scheme coordinator)

Today's date: / /

1) How do you think you might most benefit from volunteering as a Parent Champion?

Helping others and seeing them benefit from my help.

2) How important is it for you to gain the following possible benefits as a result of volunteering as a Parent Champion?

	Not important at all	Only slightly important	Somewhat important	Very important
More confidence as a person	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More confidence as a parent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Access to training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accreditation or qualifications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Experience in helping families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
New friends/contacts/social networks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

V1 Parent Champions: Volunteer Outcomes Survey (continued)

Help me to get a job or go back to work

Other - please specify: _____

3) On a scale of 0-10, how much do you think you have suitable skills and experience to do a job? (N.B even if you are not currently looking for work)

(Please circle **one** number only)

Not at all	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Very much
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	-----------

4) All things considered, on a scale of 0-10, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays?

(Please circle **one** number only)

Not at all satisfied	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Completely Satisfied
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5) Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please circle the number that best describes your experience of each over the past two weeks.

(Please circle **one** number for each statement)

	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5

(Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) © NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2006, all rights reserved.)

4) Do you think volunteering as a Parent Champion improved your work-related skills and experience?

Yes
No

5) If Yes, please describe how.

feel comfortable
talking to others

6) How much did you gain the following benefits as a result of volunteering as a Parent Champion?

	Not at all	A little	Quite a bit	A lot
More confidence as a person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
More confidence as a parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Developing skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Access to training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Accreditation or qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Experience in helping families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
New friends/contacts/social networks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Making a contributing to my community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Help me to get a job or go back to work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other - please specify: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 3

Interview notes

~~Ham~~ Ham 23.9.16.

This is not a parent champion that I can remember so won't recognise her until I see her. She is one of the newest P.C's so has little experience of the scheme and I am not sure how active she has been in her volunteering role.

Will she have enough experience to provide useful information?

How will my interaction be changed by having had the least contact or conversation previously?

Participant 1

Not at all

Access to training.

A little

Accreditation or qualifications.

Helped me to get a job or go back to work.

A lot

More confidence as a person.

Developing skills.

New friends/contacts/social networks.

Making a contribution to my community.

Quite a bit

Experience in helping families.

More confidence as a parent.

Slightly important

Somewhat important

Very important

Wanted to help other people.

helped a girl who was crying. Gave some practical advice. - TRAINING NEEDED.

6) To be honest wanted to work anyway but it has made me think about it more.

Getting out there and doing events has made me ^{more} confident about being able to do it motivated more.

- The scaled question would have worked well here.

7) No - now I know what I want to do I don't think I need support.

Ex families - go to groups so can pass on info + parents didn't know that.

took a pause to think about answers.

New skills Communication - Confidence wouldn't have spoke before.

Conf as parent - was confident in first place but given some different way to go about stuff.

Accreditation - Taught alot about how to go about.

New friends - Close group.

~~Now~~ 2pm 23.9.16.

This P.C only attended the 2nd session of the induction training but I instantly liked his character. His larger than life persona suggests a confident and outgoing personality but in one to one discussions he is much more reserved. He has attended events for P.Cs but I am not sure how much involvement he has had with volunteering to talk to parents.

Will he share information openly in the one to one situation?

Will my approach be affected by the nurturing urge I have towards him?

Will his experiences be different because he is ~~the~~ a male in an otherwise female scheme?

7) Need a place better to live - LCC. Just
in one room to fit all my stuff in.
Doesn't know who contact.

friends - a little

Community - a little - like to do more.

Skills - a little - already has a lot skills but
Shawn cliff

Confidence - Already had a lot of confidence

Acc + qual - A little bit.

Parent - A little bit

families - Still a little bit - not helped many yet

training - In what way? was asked as he didn't understand the question
Quite helpful

Job - Yeah because I'm out + doing something

- I didn't have much time to do the
questionnaire so just ticked anything.

~~23.9.16~~ 1pm 23.9.16.

Think about close relationship - been to London Conf together to celebrate success. known her the longest and dropped her at home after induction. Have kept in touch through meetings + given toys of my sons to her for her younger sons

- How does this affect what he tells me? How I interact her with her?

He also has a long history with the scheme and has been very active as a parent champion. He was nominated for a personal achievement award at the conference and has vowed to win it this year?

- How will this affect what he tells me about the scheme?

- Will he feel able to share any negative thoughts about the scheme?

Biggest issue - Someone from some estate contacted her about time. Helped her with lots of info but then discovered she had lost her twins

- restorative practice
- Anger management.

- how to deal with different types of situations... counselling skills.

training -

Acc + qual - don't really want to go back to college or anything but I'd know how to!

Community Same as family answer - seemed to be LOSING INTEREST.

Conf person same and said as I said before

" para. All the info she gives out has helped her + the cause.

friends - Support each other and prof. are useful - LOUANNY.

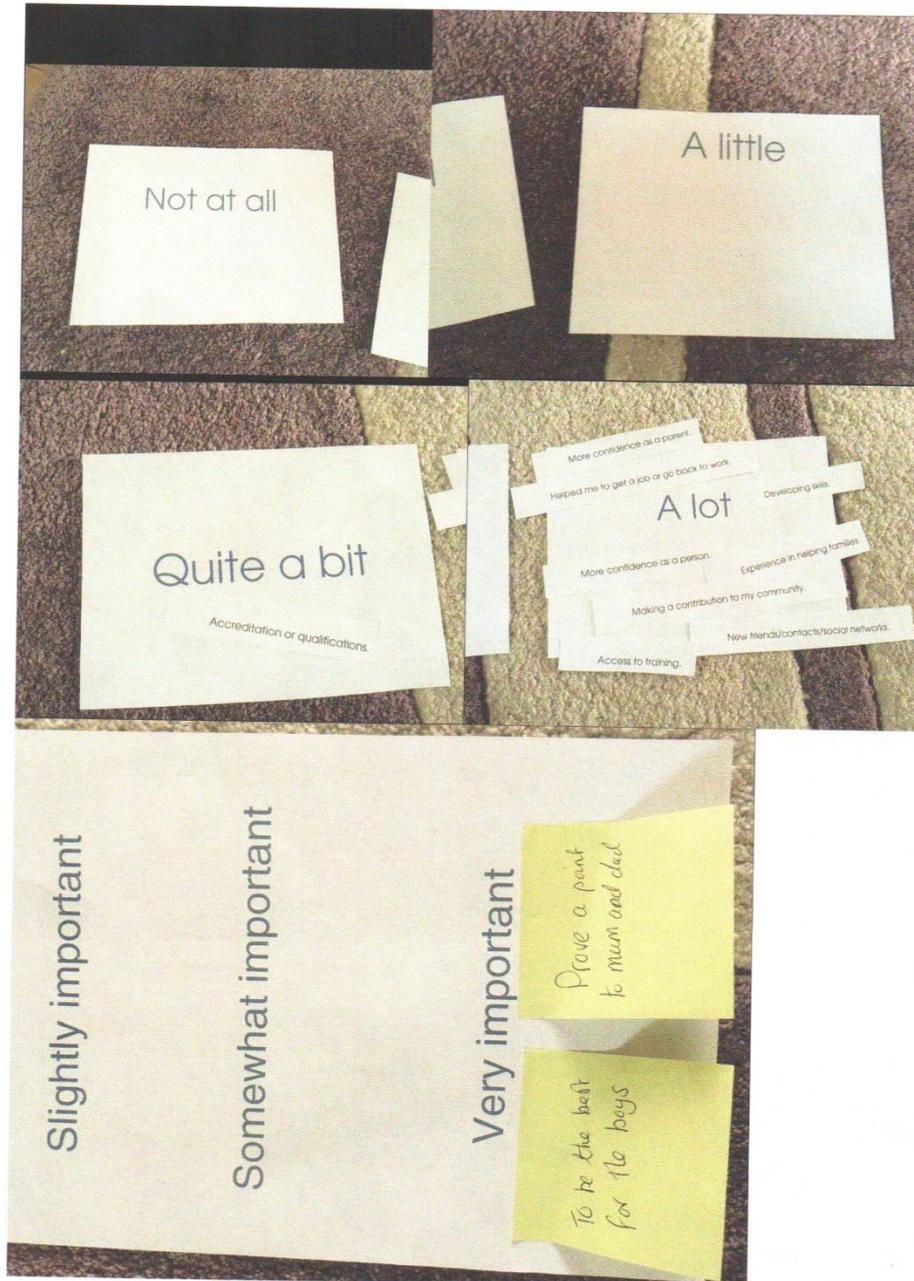
Jobless - Haven't actually gone back to work but is confident that when boys start sch she can get the job she wants.

know I'm good person

I know what I want to do and know the right people.

Conf - Can't tell you how great it's been for my conf but know I wouldn't be here now.
training It has made me - Health + social care.
Went to go back to work - did it before didn't stick at it

Participant 2



Appendix 3

Comparison of data collected through different methods

The answers to question eight (*How much did you gain the following benefits as a result of volunteering as a parent champion?*) were directly compared to the answers provided to the same question (six) on the follow up questionnaire (to identify if any difference was expressed during the face to face interview. The comments illustrate that the answers given on the questionnaire were very different to the answers given in the interview and further clarity was sought about the scale ranking during the interview. The following reasons were given by each participant during the interview to expand on the ranking of each issue.

Participant 1

The participant changed their ranking during the interview five times compared to the responses on the questionnaire. The reason provided for this was not understanding some of the terms and rushing to complete it at the end of the session. The additional information provided about the ranking reflected the motivations for becoming a volunteer and the benefits identified in relation to work related skills.

Experience of helping families changed from 'A lot' to 'Quite a bit'. Experience had been gained through going to groups and being able to pass information on and the participant talked about these experiences with passion and pride.

Developing skills remained as 'A lot' and initiated a conversation about increased communication skills which referred back to the previous discussion about increased confidence when speaking to people.

More confidence as a parent changed from 'A lot' to 'Quite a bit' but the conversation about the ranking was a little conflicting as the participant said,

"I was confident in the first place but have some different ways of doing stuff."

Meeting new friends/contacts/social networks remained 'A lot' and the participant spoke warmly about a close group who supported each other.

Accreditation and qualifications was regraded from 'A lot' to 'A little' although the word **accreditation was explained as the participant wasn't sure about the meaning of it.** Once it was explained, the participant suggested that;

'The scheme has taught a lot about how to go about getting into qualifications'.

Help me to get a job or go back to work was initially regraded from 'A lot' to 'Not at all' because they were still in the same position but further discussion resulted in another change to 'A little' when they identified that it had supported them to raise their career aspirations and know what they wanted to do.

Access to training was the greatest change in ranking moving from 'A lot' to 'Not at all' because the training provided was a result of engaging with the children's centre rather than the parent champion scheme.

Making a contribution to the community remained as 'A lot' and examples provided earlier in the interview were reiterated as examples.

More confidence as a person remained as 'A lot' and again examples from earlier

conversations were given as explanations of the grades.

Participant 2

During the interview the participant changed the ranking of eight of their responses given on the questionnaire and the reason provided for this was not having enough time to complete the questionnaire. The only response that remained the same and the highest ranking was 'helping to get a job or go to back to work'. The additional explanations given for reducing the ranking of the other eight benefits suggested that they felt that they could be doing more in their role as parent champion.

Experience of helping families changed from 'A lot' to 'A little' as they didn't feel that they had helped that many.

Developing skills changed from 'A lot' to 'A little' stating that;

"I already had a lot of skills but it has shown me some different things, like how to do events and that."

More confidence as a parent changed from 'A lot' to 'A little' because the participant felt that they had always been a good parent and knew what to do with their daughter.

Meeting new friends/contacts/social networks changed from 'A lot' to 'A little' a discussion about team spirit with the other parent champion expressed of the importance of this benefit.

"It's good when we all get together to go to an event or to just meet up and get out."

Accreditation and qualifications was regraded from 'A lot' to 'A little' and it was suggested that they was thinking more about maybe doing something like an apprenticeship or going back to college.

Help me to get a job or go back to work remained as 'Quite a bit' and led to a

Access to training was regraded from 'A lot' to 'Quite a bit' although the participant needed clarification about what type of training was meant because the question wasn't clear. We had discussion about the parenting training and the parent champion induction training which the candidate felt had been quite useful.

Making a contribution to the community was regraded from 'A lot' to 'A little' and the candidate suggested that they had not helped many people but that they wanted to do more.

More confidence as a person changed from 'A lot' to 'Not at all' because the participant felt that they were confident already before joining the scheme.

Participant 3

This participant only made one change to the answers provided on the questionnaire and this was in relation to accreditation and qualifications due to its irrelevance to their circumstances. The explanation that followed the ranking of each benefit revealed that the participant had raised their career aspirations and was more confident that they had the skills to pursue employability in their chosen field.

Experience of helping families – remained 'A lot' and many examples of situations that they had been able to support with were shared. The experience of helping families was clearly something that the participant was proud and fulfilled with.

Developing skills remained 'A lot' and the participant again discussed the confidence that she had gained with pride and enthusiasm.

More confidence as a parent remained 'A lot' and talked about the parenting course and all of the information that she had gained about different services and that she was passing on to other parents had been beneficial.

Meeting new friends/contacts/social networks remained 'A lot' and the participant talked about other volunteers and professionals that had been met. The comments about other volunteers seemed to suggest that a supportive role is the nature of their friendship and a loyalty to each other had been formed. Whereas the relationship with professional contacts is more of a useful and connection that supports with the functions and progression of the volunteering role.

Accreditation and qualifications changed from 'A lot' to 'Quite a bit' due to a lack of interest in returning to gain formal qualifications due to a negative experience on a health and social care course that had previously been started. She went on to say that she felt better informed and was confident she could do one if she wanted to.

Access to training remained 'A lot' and training available through the LCC which the housing team has negotiated for them to be able to attend was discussed. The training available at the local children's centre where the participant also volunteers was discussed.

Making a contribution to the community remained 'A lot' with the participant simply referring back to the discussion about helping families and stating, "*it's the same reasons.*"

More confidence as a person remained as 'A lot' and rich examples that had been provided earlier in the conversation were referred back to but with a further declaration that;

"I can't tell you how great it has been for my confidence but I know I wouldn't be where I am now without it."

Help me to get a job or go back to work was remained 'A lot' and went on to explain;

"Haven't actually gone back to work but I'm confident that when the boys start school I can get the job I want. I know I'm a good person and I know what I want to do and know the right people to help me."

University of Huddersfield
School of Education and Professional Development

Participant Consent Form

**From one parent to another: A personal perspective of the parent
champion journey**

Name of Researcher: Donna Sheldon

Participant Identifier Number: 1

- I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information leaflet related to this research and have had the opportunity to ask any questions.
- I agree that the interviews can be recorded and kept for transcribing purposes. I understand that only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- I understand that all my responses will be anonymized.
- I give permission for members of the supervision team to have access to my anonymized responses.
- I understand that extracts from my interview may be used by the researcher in her thesis.
- The findings from the research will be presented to Leeds City Council and Family and Childcare Trust who may wish to publish your views but this will require your permission as any comments made by you will be anonymous in the thesis.

Name of Participant:.....

Signature of Participant:

Date:

Name of Researcher

Signature of Researcher:

Date:.....

Appendix 5

Participant information leaflet



Research study information leaflet

From one parent to another: A personal perspective of the parent champion journey

Dear Jade

Thank you for expressing an interest in the research study, you have been invited to take part in the project. To help you to understand the purpose of the study and your contribution to it I have provided some information below about common questions and would like you to read it and let me know if you have any other questions or want any more information.

Purpose of the project?

This research will examine the impact of training and volunteering for parent champions in the Leeds scheme. It will focus on the experiences of your volunteering role to find out if career aspirations and achievements have developed through involvement with the scheme. It is hoped that it will give a deeper understanding of the personal journey of the volunteers in relation to developing their career aspirations and the factors that have supported or prevented your personal growth.

Why have I been chosen?

I wanted to interview some active parent champion volunteers who have 6 months experience of being part of the Leeds scheme.

Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part in the study if you do not wish to and can opt out at any time during the study or the interview. Please let me know if you don't feel comfortable about being involved in part of the study and we can talk about it more.

What do I have to do?

You need to give me half an hour of your time to talk about your parent champion experience. I have arranged a room in the local children's centre for us to meet and was hoping that you could meet me there on Friday 23rd September 2016 at 9am. When I have finished the report I will send you a copy of the findings for you to review and let me know if there is anything that you would like me to change.

Are there any disadvantage to taking part?

It will take up half an hour of your time but other than that there is no perceived disadvantage to being involved.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will be submitted as part of my final dissertation for a Masters in Research which will be used to access funding for future research as a PHD student. The findings from the research will be presented to Leeds City Council and Family and Childcare Trust who may wish to publish your views but this will require your permission any comments made by you will be anonymous.

Who has reviewed and approved the study, and who can be contacted for further information?

The study proposal has been reviewed and approved by Professor Kevin Orr and Professor Robin Simmons at the University of Huddersfield, School of Education and Professional Development. Please contact Carolyn Newton, Research and Marketing Administrator for further information on 01484 478109 or email her at c.a.newton@hud.ac.uk.

Name and contact details of the researcher

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