

Employability Subgroup Report – Summary

The Employability subgroup discussed the wide range of stakeholders that the 'employability' theme can cover including Volunteers, employed managers of volunteers and employers who encourage their own employed staff to engage in volunteering. After over two years working together we would summarise our reflections as follows:

There is a need to be cautious in assuming that ULLL is universally required by volunteers or managers of volunteers. This educational step is not for everyone. Potential learners do not form a homogeneous group and the motivation, even around the single theme of employability, can vary substantially depending on an individual's background, age group etc.

Volunteering should not just focus on employment outcomes, nor should ULLL. In these times of economic crisis it is understandable that economic benefits of both volunteering and learning are to the forefront of thinking for those in government. Nevertheless both volunteering and ULLL offer much wider societal benefits both to those engaged in it and to their wider civic community and these should not be undervalued. The rationale for volunteers and those working in the voluntary sector to become engaged in ULLL should not just be an economic argument. The holistic argument, therefore, is much stronger: linking economic as well as social benefits within the local/regional community.

There is though a demonstrated demand for tailored ULLL provision for this sector. Even if many volunteers do not want to take the opportunity, there are others who do. However universities and voluntary organisations should not underestimate the investment of time and energy required of an individual engaging in ULLL.

Flexibility of support, content and delivery is the key to a successful ULLL offer. There are examples of good practice e.g. where this is acknowledged and accommodated by several universities in the UK and NL implementing policies of widened access and tailor-made programmes.