

VALUE Network – Employability Sub-group

Workshop at UaLL Annual Conference, Oxford, UK, 15 March 2010

Presenters: Alison Hughes (University Liverpool, UK), Nick Ockenden (IVR, UK)

Attendance list (15): Universities included Nottingham, Glamorgan, Gloucestershire, Middlesex, Swansea, Queens Belfast, Kent, Goldsmiths London, Leicester, Northumbria , Bangor, York, Aim Higher East Midlands and JISC techDis

Presentation attached.

Discussion re presentations

Small group discussion, following the presentations included the following points:

- the factors that motivate adult learners to volunteer. Swansea University encourages adult learners to volunteer to enrich their learning experience in addition to developing employment related skills. However feedback suggests that most learners focus on the latter more instrumental motivation. Are the two motivations compatible?
- lack of time was considered a barrier to participation in both ULLL and volunteering despite the learning benefits that it brings. Many adult learners/volunteers are already juggling conflicting demands.
- whether a 'volunteer' always recognizes that they are in fact volunteering – do they just see it as a continuum of life experience, especially when they are not 'formally' volunteering i.e. not doing it within an organisational context. In those very informal volunteering cases (eg helping in the neighbourhood) it is likely that those undertaking the voluntary role do not reflect at all on their personal learning. How can ULLL help them to do this?
- Some universities have student volunteering awards – how far can these be used as a model for ULLL programmes/courses for adult volunteers?
- How can ULLL help volunteers to recognize the benefits of volunteering, not just the life-benefits but the transferable skills/competences/ actual learning undertaken?
- In UK HE the issue of financial resources drives the ULLL agenda. One way to secure HE funding of ULLL for the voluntary sector may be to stress to UK authorities the economic impact of volunteers (ie their considerable unpaid contribution to civil society and the employability benefits of volunteering through developing skills for/in employment). But is this a dangerous instrumental approach, that fails to recognize the life-benefits of volunteering that cannot and should not be measured in terms of economic impact?