

In 2010 Georgina Brewis and Adam O'Boyle set out to complete research on *Students, volunteering and social action: Histories and policies* to inform current and future policy and practice.

Why was this research done?

Student volunteering in the UK has a long history, from university settlements and missions in the nineteenth century to workcamps for the unemployed in the interwar period to CND protesting and Student Community Action after the Second World War. Despite recent research and policy interest in volunteering by university students as well as in the broader topic of how higher education institutions can improve their public or community engagement, the history of the movement remains a relatively underexplored field. What research there has been has tended to focus on the university-sponsored settlements and missions, leading to neglect of other forms of social service and voluntary action developed by students. It is left to institutional histories of individual universities or colleges to record the fundraising, voluntary social service or campaigning activities of their students, although usually without placing such activities in broader historical context.

The research explores the following key questions

- Broadly, what has been the history of student volunteering (its trends, growth, transformations)?
- Why have certain student volunteering organisations survived, while others have failed or disappeared?
- Why have students volunteered in the past?
- What has been the contribution of student volunteering to social reform (either directly – eg, bringing about social change – or indirectly – eg, through its impacts on students' lives and their later contribution)
- What are the implications for contemporary policy debates that could be drawn from the history of student volunteering?

Scope

- The work looked at volunteering in all its forms, including local community and international volunteering, campaigning and fundraising.
- Research focused on Higher Education covering universities, polytechnics, teacher training and theological colleges.
- The UK is the primary point of interest, though reference to key research internationally would be important (especially in the US).

Outcomes of this research have included

- A literature review
- A working group of interested parties
- A one-day symposium
- A website that is a focal point for future contemporary and historical research into student volunteering
- Student research projects