

CAMPAIGNING FOR CARE in social services—

TRADE UNION MONITORING OF PRIVATISATION VOLUNTEERS

The purpose of this monitoring sheet is to find out the scale and effects of formal schemes using volunteers in social services. This excludes the use of volunteers informally in helping neighbours. However local authorities and District Health Authorities are increasingly using volunteers through arrangements with Councils of Voluntary Service and other agencies. Many of the schemes take over duties and responsibilities of local authority and NHS workers. YTS and other Manpower Services schemes are also being used in a similar way.

The Government is encouraging the increased use of volunteers as an integral part of its cuts and privatisation strategy. The increased use of certain volunteering schemes must be seen in the same light as hiving off work to private contractors. The increased use of these volunteers could mean:

- ★ **disruption to the service**
- ★ **less reliable service for users.**
- ★ **loss of jobs**
- ★ **bigger cuts in council budgets**
- ★ **conflicts over duties and responsibilities between paid and unpaid staff**
- ★ **pressure on council workers for cuts in wages and working conditions**

USING THE INFORMATION

Even if you are happy about the current situation with volunteers in your service, use this sheet. Gathering information on the current or planned use of volunteers will help you to:

- a) **be better prepared for negotiations with your employer and voluntary agencies over the use of volunteers**
- b) **make clear distinctions between formal volunteer schemes which complement your work and the service you provide and those which are a threat to jobs and the quality of service**
- c) **monitor whether there are any problems with volunteer schemes which have a bearing on your own work.**

Before you start

1. Check if there is a local agreement between trade unions and management or with voluntary agencies on the use of volunteer schemes. Is it being breached?
2. Arrange for a group of shop stewards and workers to monitor the use of volunteers in one specific week. Make sure you cover all the different sections or types of workplace because there are widely differing uses of volunteers. Have a brief meeting before you start to make sure that everyone understands the purpose of the survey and the information needed.
3. Once you have collected all the monitoring sheets arrange for one or two people to analyse the results and report back to the branch of JSSC.
4. Decide which, if any of the schemes require further action and negotiation to curtail, amend or expand them.
5. Work out the estimated cost of these volunteer schemes — include the cost of organised volunteers, supervision, training, expenses, the cost of having to cover, and make good unsatisfactory work.
6. Compile evidence into a brief report for discussion at union branches, joint shop stewards committees and section meetings. Draw up recommendations for action to be submitted to the JCC for negotiation.
7. Appoint a shop steward or worker to be responsible for a watching brief on the use of volunteer schemes and to whom others can contact if they have evidence of any increased use of volunteers.

Date of survey (week/month)

Name of section/department

Name of person completing survey (phone number)

1. What responsibilities and duties do volunteers have?
2. Do these responsibilities complement or overlap with your own or other council workers' duties (give details)?
3. Give details of any recent changes in the duties of volunteers (for example increased workload, new tasks etc.)
4. Are there ways in which volunteers could be used to do specific additional work without this threatening your job or the overall standard of service?
5. How many volunteers are used in your section or department?
6. How many hours per day or per week do they work (if this varies, please give details)?
7. Do volunteers receive any training?
8. Do the same volunteers come each day/week or do different people turn up at different times?
9. What happens to the work if volunteers don't turn up?
10. Does the use of volunteers lead to disruption in the running of the service and/or to council workers having to make good or finish work started by volunteers (give example)?
11. From which organisation(s) do volunteers come from?
12. Are volunteers paid? Where does the money come from?
13. Were there any discussions with trade unions before volunteers started?
14. Has the council appointed a volunteer organiser?
Has she/he approached you about possible new areas of work for volunteers?
15. How do you think trade union attitudes on the use of volunteers can be developed?
16. Do you have any other comments about the use of volunteers?

Use additional sheets of paper where necessary.