

Sports Club Volunteering 2018



Submitted to:
Jennie Arthur
Senior Programme Manager
Sport England

Submitted by:
David Barrett, Lee Edmondson, Robbie Millar and Ryan Storey
Sport Industry Research Centre
Sheffield Hallam University
Sheffield, S10 2BP

Tel: +44 (0)114 225 2298
Email: d.barrett@shu.ac.uk
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Executive Summary

1 Introduction

SIRC are pleased to present this report into understanding the current challenges and opportunities that clubs face in relation to sports club volunteers in England. The research was commissioned to develop new insight into sports club volunteers and the issues affecting them. Sport England's strategy "Towards an Active Nation" states that in investing in volunteering, the organisation aims to support and reward those who already underpin the provision of sport in their spare time, as well encourage new volunteers to engage.

1.1 Research Context

'Towards an Active Nation', emphasises support for the 'core market' - those who are already active. The work of volunteers is crucial to the aims and objectives of the strategy, particularly in relation to delivery of club-based sport. Sport England published its volunteering strategy at the end of 2016, announcing a significant investment over a four year period to 2021. Embedded within the strategy were commitments to invest in improving the volunteering experience, and recruit a more diverse volunteer workforce. This was matched by an undertaking to measure the benefits of volunteer engagement to volunteers and the wider community.

This report represents a logical next step in developing understanding of volunteer management, and strategic planning. The intention is to supplement the quantitative findings of Club Count and the SRA survey with a deep dive investigation into the experience of voluntary sports clubs, and to produce insight into how clubs recruit, retain, support and manage their workforce. Areas of interest include:

- The skills and experience required by clubs
- Capacity and capability gaps within the workforce
- Volunteer vacancies and turnover ('churn')
- Challenges faced by clubs in relation to volunteering and opportunities for public agencies to provide support
- How to increase the diversity of the volunteer workforce
- Plans and methods to grow the volunteer base
- The appetite for innovation, technology or new approaches

For the purposes of this analysis, a club is defined thus:

"A community sports club with a recognised governance structure (constitution, bank account, and committee) that has a membership programme in place and is affiliated to its recognised National Governing Body. Generally, the club is single sport but where it is multi-sport, the different sections of the club are affiliated to the National Governing Body".

2 Methods

The complexity of the issues at hand, and the depth of analysis required, demanded a mixed methods approach to the research. This consisted of three interlinked elements:

- A review of recent research into volunteer sports clubs, influencing the design of;

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- An online survey distributed to volunteer sports clubs across the country, enabling;
- A series of focus groups and telephone interviews with club representatives.

The initial phase of the research was to review the output from the Sport and Recreation Alliance's 2017 Survey of Sport Clubs. The biennial Sports Club Survey provides a valuable source of data on trends in sports club volunteering. In addition SIRC re-examined the results of 'Club Count', an analysis of NGB-affiliated sports clubs in England, which mapped NGB-affiliated clubs in over 80 sports. The sampling frame for both the online survey and the subsequent qualitative research were heavily influenced by the results of Club Count.

2.2 Online Survey

Analysis of the responses to the SRA survey influenced the design and development of an online survey, which was distributed initially to those clubs which had completed the SRA survey and consented to involvement in further research. Sport England extended the survey sample by distributing the link to clubs registered for updates on Club Matters.

2.3 Focus Groups

Subsequent to the collection of quantitative data through the online survey, a selection of club representatives were invited to take part in more detailed qualitative focus groups or telephone interviews (depending on availability).

Interviewees for the qualitative research phase were carefully selected to reflect the stated intention of achieving a representative sample in terms of sports and geographical coverage. As far as practically possible, the qualitative interviews also aimed to reflect the range of club sizes, locations, and levels of engagement. Transcripts of the qualitative interviews were subjected to thematic analysis, generating a significant amount of data to be cross-referenced with the survey output.

3 Results

3.1 Recent Research into Volunteer Sports Clubs

While recent research reports have found that voluntary sports clubs are in generally good health, there is clear evidence that a number of demographic groups are under-represented among volunteers.

There are fewer women, young people, black and minority ethnic groups and disabled people volunteering in sports clubs than the comparative proportion of participants, with particular shortages among committee members and in other management roles.

The most recent research indicates an increase in the number of people volunteering to support community sport, though significant barriers exist which constrain this growth; most importantly the need to balance volunteering commitments with the conflicting demands of work and home.

3.2 Online Survey Findings

The online survey generated 425 responses, of which 382 were from single sport clubs, and 43 from multi-sport clubs. Clubs were grouped in categories according to size of playing membership for further analysis. The sample size prevented meaningful analysis of results by sport.

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On average, clubs in the sample had 100 adult playing members, 77 juniors and 44 non-playing members, supported by 24 volunteers (of whom 4 were recruited in the last 12 months). This gives an average ratio of 9 members per volunteer.

Clubs that have experienced a growth in participants over the last 12 months, have also tended to increase the number of volunteers. Larger clubs are more likely to have grown their volunteer base than smaller clubs.

Clubs with greater volunteer capacity are more able to appoint individuals to roles that support the further recruitment of participants. This forms part of a virtuous circle of club growth and development.

3.3 Who Volunteers?

As many as 61% of all participants are under the age of 25, but only 13% of volunteers fall into this category. Women are more prevalent among the volunteer base than their participation profile would suggest, but disabled people, and those from black and minority ethnic groups are under-represented.

Large clubs, and those which have engaged with programmes designed to support volunteer management (e.g. Clubmark and Club Matters), appear to have had more success in recruiting young people and BAME volunteers than their smaller counterparts. Clubs in the South have a higher than average number of female and BAME volunteers. Multi-sport clubs have a higher than average proportion of disabled volunteers, often because they also offer disability sports.

Clubs are generally well aware that their workforce lacks representation from young, female, BAME and disabled volunteers. While there are signs that some clubs are attempting to address the issue, evidence of success is sporadic at best. The ability of NGBs to share knowledge could be critical in this regard.

3.4 What Roles do Volunteers Take?

There are four key roles in the operation of voluntary sports clubs: Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Coach. More than 80% of all clubs deem these roles essential to the running of their sport, and have someone in post. The role of welfare officer is seen as increasingly important.

Other participation roles, such as fixtures secretary and match official, and more general positions, such as fundraising or social secretary, were generally thought to be less essential.

Larger clubs are better able to identify individual volunteers to carry out the less essential roles, by virtue of their greater overall capacity. In smaller clubs, there is evidence to suggest that these tasks are taken on by volunteers with multiple existing roles.

The use of job-sharing to manage capacity in volunteer sports clubs tends to be limited to the less essential roles, such as refreshment helper. Core committee roles are much less likely to be shared.

Operational capacity can be placed under considerable strain when volunteers are unavailable to fulfil their role. Only a third of all clubs have a volunteer co-ordinator in place to manage such constraints however.

The majority of volunteers support the delivery of sport at the club or recreational level, though as many as 18% of clubs provide elite or international level competition.

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Many people who volunteer at club level also support their sport by volunteering on behalf of other organisations, such as NGBs or competitive leagues, which has the potential to create conflicts of interest if not handled carefully.

3.5 Volunteering Delivery – Capacity and Frequency

One in four clubs has enough volunteers to meet day-to-day operational demands, while more than two thirds say that they are running over and above capacity. This places pressure on individuals, particularly in larger clubs, where the ratio of members to volunteers is higher.

Volunteer capacity constraints restrict the ability of clubs to recruit new participants, while a quarter of clubs are unable to provide coaches as a result.

While some fluctuations are inevitable, volunteer numbers at clubs are at generally stable, with 29% reporting growth, 15% seeing a reduction and 55% reporting no change over the last 12 months.

The majority of clubs have plans to deal with volunteer capacity shortages

The majority of roles require volunteers to contribute time at least once a week, particularly those which support participation. Clubs report peaks in unmet demand at weekends, and on weekday evenings, reflecting the predominance of people of working age in volunteer roles.

3.6 Volunteer Development

Volunteers are most commonly recruited either as a result of their child's involvement in sport, or an approach by a member of the club's committee. Recruitment is, by necessity, a continuous process, but few clubs take a strategic approach. For this reason, recruitment of volunteers from outside of the club or sport is patchy.

Clubs are broadly supportive of the need to engage in training and development leading to accredited qualifications. This is particularly true of welfare officers, coaches and match officials, where the need for minimum standards to be maintained is recognised.

A significant number of clubs have taken advantage of at least one programme of support for volunteer management, with 38% receiving assistance from their NGB, while 34% have engaged with Clubmark, and 30% with Club Matters. Only 9% of clubs have engaged with the volunteer matching opportunities afforded by Join In. The majority of those clubs which have engaged report an improvement in their management of volunteers as a result. There is a significant potential market for Clubmark, Club Matters, Join In and NGB-specific support among clubs that have not yet engaged.

Clubs are making increasing use of technology to ease the burden on individual volunteers, though in the majority of cases, the technology concerned is used for communication. E-mail is now the default method of communication within and between clubs, on grounds of cost and haste. Only a small proportion of clubs have made use of team management apps such as Teamer or FixturesLive, but those that have note their effectiveness.

There is little evidence of any imminent decline in the number of volunteers supporting club sport, though time pressures may cause some to withdraw. Many clubs try to reward their volunteers in tangible ways, in order to encourage them to continue in their role.

3.7 Challenges and Opportunities

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The need to balance volunteering with the conflicting demands of home and work continues to be one of the biggest challenge for community sports clubs.

Clubs employ a variety of strategies to manage volunteer workloads, including: appointing volunteer co-ordinators; sharing roles among volunteers; using information technology, and; developing written role descriptions.

Technology has clear benefits in streamlining administrative processes, but this does not eliminate the issue of bureaucracy entirely. Duplication of administrative processes, including DBS checks, generates antipathy among volunteers. NGBs are perceived to be generally supportive, while clubs believe that they receive little effective support from their local authorities.

Clubs work hard to minimise the financial costs of maintaining a volunteer workforce. For asset-owning clubs, this is made possible by investing surplus bar takings, or facility fees, while other clubs use coaching income to subsidise the cost of training and development. The direct and indirect costs of NGB-led courses are a significant barrier to enrolment.

The recruitment of new volunteers tends to be a reactive response to increases in participation, with little strategic planning being the exception rather than the rule. Volunteers are most commonly recruited from among the friends and family of participants, or from among exiting playing members as they reduce their participation levels. Word of mouth continues to be the most effective method of recruitment.

Clubs recognise the need to invest in the development of their volunteers, with reasonable expectations of a more efficient and effective workforce as a result. Better qualified volunteers (particularly coaches) may expect payment for their services however. Expectations of qualified and accredited personnel working in clubs require some flexibility on the part of NGBs.

3.8 *In Summary...*

These findings outline a generally healthy outlook for voluntary sports clubs in England, with a reasonably stable workforce. A clear, positive relationship exists between participant growth and volunteer recruitment. Clubs are keen to develop new volunteers, but require the support of NGBs and other agencies to identify and remove the barriers which currently prevent people from under-represented groups from putting themselves forward.

Nevertheless, the findings underscore the constant tension in voluntary sports clubs between managing existing volunteer resources, and fulfilling ambitions for growth and development. A strategic approach to volunteer management would see clubs identify and deploy volunteers in advance of an increase in participants, driven at least in part by volunteers in outward-facing roles. In reality however, the majority of clubs operate in a more reactive way, responding to participant growth by recruiting volunteers from among new members.

The most successful clubs, in terms of volunteer management, have developed a club culture in which all members are expected to contribute their time in some way. The dilemma facing clubs is one of planning and timing. Club development is dependent on being able to deploy a volunteer workforce of sufficient capacity, but identifying and recruiting the volunteers themselves is often a consequence of participant growth.

While two thirds of clubs claim to need more volunteers, most would deploy new recruits to relieve the burden of the existing workforce, rather than increase provision. The desire,

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expressed by many of the club representatives who participated in this research, is to spread the existing workload more widely and reduce the burden on existing volunteers. Crucially, clubs seek volunteers with an underlying understanding of their sport, and an emotional connection to the club, which limits the appeal of recruiting external volunteers.

4 Conclusions

The report gives information on the state of the sports club volunteering workforce in 2018. 425 clubs took part in the survey and around 50 of these participated in a series of focus groups and telephone interviews.

With respect to what is already known about sports clubs in England, it is clear from the Active Lives and SRA Sports Club surveys that a significant amount of data exists regarding the extent and nature of the workforce. Volunteers understand the need for data to be collected to inform research, and how it can be used to improve the administration of coaching in their sport(s), but there is some evidence of survey fatigue impinging on the overall sample size.

Sport England's phased approach has compartmentalised research into the various aspects of the running of voluntary sports clubs, and enabled this report to go into greater depth on the specific workforce-related issues covered here. Nevertheless, a larger sample of clubs in the online survey would have permitted further analysis of differences between individual sports, and it is therefore important to consider how this might be achieved in future research exercises.

4.1 Club Volunteers

Based on the information reported in the survey, the typical ratio in clubs is one volunteer for every nine members, which is consistent with other published research on voluntary sports clubs, though this varies depending on the size of the playing membership. Clubs with fewer members have a higher proportion of volunteers, while larger clubs operate at a higher ratio indicating a greater degree of efficiency. On average, 18% of volunteers were recruited to their current role over the last 12 months, revealing the extent of annual 'turnover' or 'churn' among the workforce. Some caution is necessary in interpreting this figure however, since a volunteer who is new to a specific role may not be new to volunteering *per sé*.

The age profile of volunteers highlighted by the online survey is heavily skewed in favour of older volunteers. There are few, if any signs of any impending demographic cliff edge however, with clubs reporting only a small proportion of their volunteers signalling any intention to withdraw. In fact, the overall picture is one of modest growth in both participation and volunteering over the last 12 months. There is, nevertheless, evidence to suggest that young people, women, the disabled, and people from black and minority ethnic groups are consistently under-represented as volunteers in community sports clubs in England.

4.2 Recruitment

The most successful clubs, in volunteering terms, are those that have an embedded volunteering culture, which is ingrained into all members. While not officially a condition of membership, there is an acceptance that in these clubs, participants and non-playing members alike will be expected to volunteer in some way. Word of mouth is the most popular means of recruiting new volunteers, with friends and family of participants the most likely target.

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This might explain how existing levels of under-representation among target groups are perpetuated. Clubs are aware of the **need** to identify and engage with more young, female, BAME and disabled volunteers, though there is less certainty regarding **how** to achieve this. In reality, the workload pressures on clubs are such that they prioritise recruiting 'enough' volunteers over any concerns over a lack of diversity.

It is clear that volunteer recruitment tends to follow on spontaneously from increases in participation, suggesting that there is little forward planning in this regard. Where strategic workforce development does occur, it tends to be the preserve of larger clubs, who are better able to fill the outward-facing club development roles which promote further growth.

The traditional culture of sports club volunteering, with its rigid, hierarchical structure will be slow to change. Sport England, and individual NGBs have a key role to play as champions of a more diverse and flexible volunteer workforce.

4.3 *Experience and Retention*

The evidence of this research exercise suggests that there is unlikely to be any significant reduction in the workforce in the near future, though club representatives remain alert to the possibility. When volunteers withdraw their services, this is often the result of events beyond the clubs' control, such as illness, departure for university, a change in employment status, or starting a family. The traditional route into volunteering from participation continues to be a well-trodden path.

Technology has a significant role to play in promoting volunteer retention by streamlining workloads and reducing costs. This is particularly true of communication, with e-mail now the clear default solution. There is further market potential for technological solutions, but the reticence of some clubs to move to online systems underlines the dependence on IT literacy, which favours younger volunteers. Where technology is in use, it is regarded as effective, but concerns over data protection are significant.

Clubs have some legitimate concerns over the bureaucracy involved in volunteering, with particular antipathy towards DBS checks. For volunteering culture to change in clubs, there is a need for reciprocation on the part of the NGBs and CSPs which support them. Any action designed to reduce bureaucracy would generate significant goodwill.

4.4 *Roles*

Within the hierarchy of voluntary sports clubs, core committee and coaching roles have clear primacy in terms of volunteer recruitment and retention. Clubs report that these are the hardest positions to fill, primarily because of the level of expectation and commitment required to fulfil them. The use of job sharing has been mooted as a strategic response to capacity issues, but in practice, its application has generally been limited to less essential roles, often on a rota basis.

Volunteer roles with a strategic, long-term remit are considered desirable, rather than essential. These positions tend to be limited to larger clubs with sufficient volunteer capacity, underlining the emphasis placed on day-to-day operational priorities at smaller clubs.

4.5 *Training and Development*

Clubs accept that in maintaining a viable workforce, there is an ongoing need not only to recruit new volunteers continuously, but also to develop and improve the specific skills required to

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undertake the roles to which they commit. Despite some concerns over financial and time costs, and around some of the bureaucratic constraints, there is a general level of acceptance and understanding of the need to commit to continuous development. The clear priority for clubs, as expressed in both the survey and the qualitative interviews, is to recruit and develop more coaches to support both existing delivery, and plans for future expansion of activity.

Nevertheless, the financial costs of training and development act as a significant barrier to entry for many volunteers. The indirect costs of attending training courses - travel, accommodation, and in some cases lost income - may be as significant as the course fees themselves, if not more so. This is particularly significant in light of club's desire to recruit and deploy more volunteers. Moves by NGBs and other training providers to develop online and modular delivery models have been well received, further reinforcing the potential role of technology in supporting volunteers.

4.6 Support Programmes

Clubs which have engaged with the support programmes on offer from their NGBs and from Sport England have generally noted an improvement in their recruitment, development and management of volunteers. There is clear potential to increase the number of clubs joining the programmes however. Some (small) clubs with limited volunteer capacity, may require additional support to engage with these programmes, though this would result in stronger, more sustainable clubs across the board.

Clubs which have engaged successfully with Clubmark, Club Matters and NGB-specific support, have developed a more holistic approach to volunteer management, which appears to be supporting growth in participation and indeed in volunteering. The majority of clubs which have received support, report that their management of volunteers has improved as a result.

In general, voluntary sports clubs understand the benefits of workforce management tools such as shared workloads, support for volunteer training and development, contingency planning and written role descriptions. These schemes do not only benefit bigger, well-connected organisations, but have clear, demonstrable gains for smaller, more independent clubs.

Sports Club Volunteers 2018

1 Introduction

SIRC are pleased to present this report into understanding the current challenges and opportunities that clubs face in relation to sports club volunteers in England. The research was commissioned to develop new insight into sports club volunteers and the issues affecting them. Sport England's strategy "Towards an Active Nation" states that in investing in volunteering, the organisation aims to support and reward those who already underpin the provision of sport in their spare time, as well encourage new volunteers to engage.

1.1 Research Context

'Towards an Active Nation', places emphasises support for the 'core market' - those who are already active. The work of volunteers is crucial to the aims and objectives of the strategy, particularly in relation to delivery of club-based sport. Sport England published its volunteering strategy at the end of 2016, announcing a significant investment over a four-year period to 2021. Embedded within the strategy were commitments to invest in improving the volunteering experience, and recruit a more diverse volunteer workforce. This was matched by an undertaking to measure the benefits of volunteer engagement to volunteers and the wider community.

Sport England commissioned two significant pieces of quantitative research into voluntary sports clubs in the latter half of 2017. Club Count, conducted by the Sport Industry Research Centre, used data held by National Governing Bodies (NGBs) to map over 72,000 clubs in more than 80 sports, to give an accurate picture of the size of the club 'market'. This was followed by the sixth edition of the Sport and Recreation Alliance's biennial Sports Club Survey, which collected data relating to membership, facilities, finances and volunteering from more than 1,600 clubs.

This report represents a third, qualitative component of research into sports clubs, focused on the club leaderships' view of volunteers. Given the significance, and influence over delivery, of club leadership, this represents a logical next step in developing understanding of volunteer management, and strategic planning. The intention is to supplement the quantitative findings of Club Count and the SRA survey with a deep dive investigation into the experience of voluntary sports clubs, and to produce insight into how clubs recruit, retain, support and manage their workforce. Areas of interest include:

- The skills and experience required by clubs
- Capacity and capability gaps within the workforce
- Volunteer vacancies and turnover ('churn')
- Challenges faced by clubs in relation to volunteering and opportunities for public agencies to provide support
- How to increase the diversity of the volunteer workforce
- Plans and methods to grow the volunteer base
- The appetite for innovation, technology or new approaches

For the purposes of this analysis, a club is defined thus:

"A community sports club with a recognised governance structure (constitution, bank account, and committee) that has a membership programme in place and

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is affiliated to its recognised National Governing Body. Generally, the club is single sport but where it is multi-sport, the different sections of the club are affiliated to the National Governing Body”.

As a result of these three pieces of research, Sport England will be able to refine and improve the support offered to volunteer sports clubs, as well as develop an improved understanding of the intentions and aspirations of the existing volunteer workforce. Equally, Sport England will be able to make a convincing case in persuading National Governing Bodies, County Sports Partnerships and other stakeholders to review their own volunteer workforce policies.

2 Methods

The complexity of the issues at hand, and the depth of analysis required, demanded a mixed methods approach to the research. This consisted of three interlinked elements:

- A review of recent research into volunteer sports clubs, influencing the design of;
- An online survey distributed to volunteer sports clubs across the country, enabling;
- A series of focus groups and telephone interviews with a cross-section of club representatives.

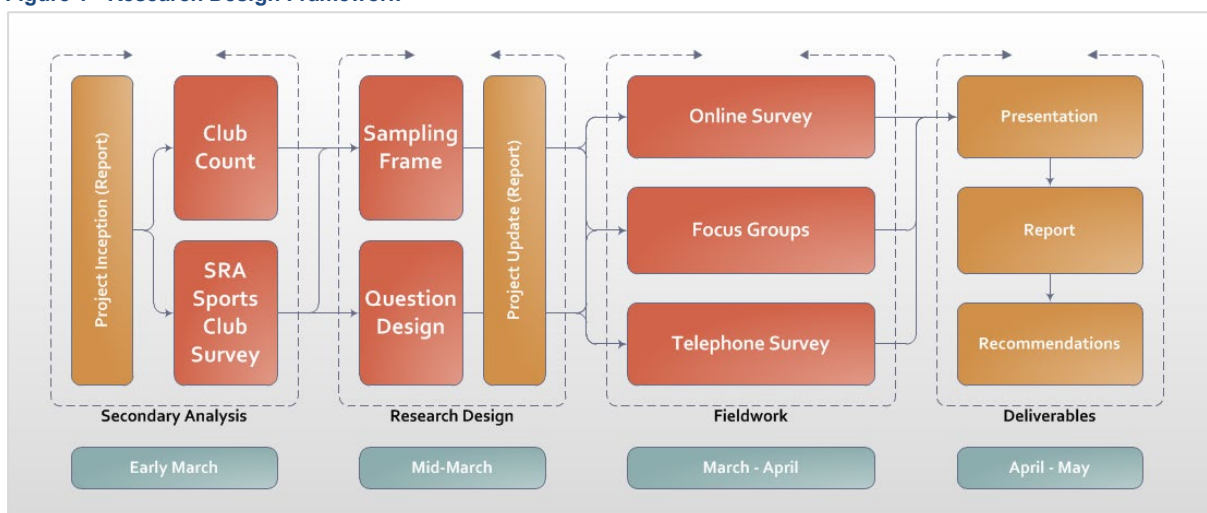
The design and development of each of these elements is now examined in turn.

2.1 Review of Recent Research into Volunteer Sports Clubs

The initial phase of the research was to review the output from the Sport and Recreation Alliance's 2017 Survey of Sport Clubs, made available through their partnership arrangement with Sport England. The biennial Sports Club Survey provides a valuable source of data on trends in sports club volunteering,

In addition to the SRA survey, SIRC re-examined the results of the recent 'Club Count', an analysis of the distribution of NGB-affiliated sports clubs in England, which mapped NGB-affiliated clubs in over 80 sports. The sampling frame for both the online survey and the subsequent qualitative research were heavily influenced by the results of Club Count. Output from the Active Lives Survey was also reviewed in order to position the results of the research phase in the wider context of Sport England's existing data relating to volunteering.

Figure 1 - Research Design Framework



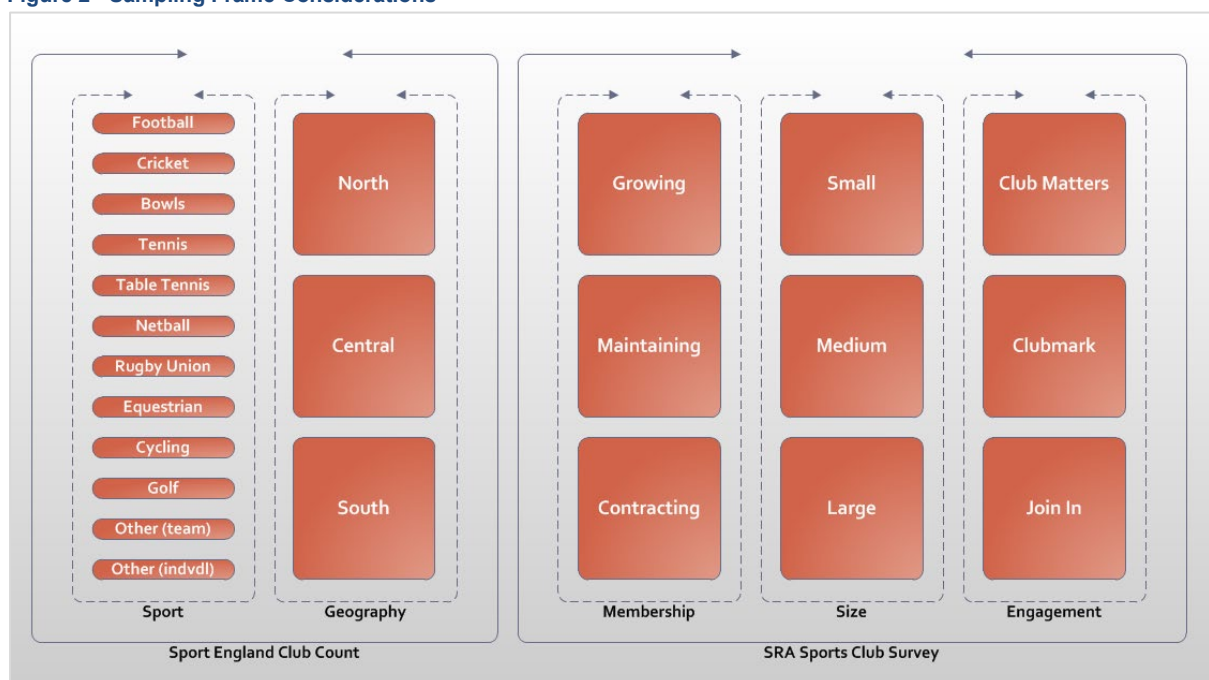
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2.2 Online Survey

Analysis of the responses to the SRA survey influenced the design and development of an online survey. This was distributed initially to those clubs which had completed the SRA survey and consented to involvement in further research. Sport England extended the survey sample by distributing the link to clubs registered for updates on Club Matters. A number of efforts were made by all interested parties via social media, more specifically the [@Sport England](#) and [@SportInResearch](#) Twitter accounts.

For reasons of confidentiality and data protection, it was not possible to link responses from the SRA survey to completions of the online questionnaire, which prevented the importation of data relating to clubs' asset-ownership. Further, the considerable length of the survey meant that questions relating to CASC or charitable status had to be excluded. There was some discussion of these issues in the qualitative phase of the research however.

Figure 2 - Sampling Frame Considerations



2.3 Focus Groups

Subsequent to the collection of quantitative data through the online survey, a selection of club representatives were invited to take part in more detailed qualitative focus groups or telephone interviews (depending on availability). The interview schedule was derived from an interim review of survey responses, which yielded a number of questions grouped into four themes: Balancing Conflicting Demands; Volunteer Representation; Support for Clubs and Volunteers; Volunteer Recruitment and Retention. A full interview schedule is attached to this report in Appendix 1.

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Figure 3 - Focus Group Venues

Location	Venue	n	Sports Represented
South Yorkshire (pilot)	Phoenix Sports Club	6	Hockey
London	Dartfordians RFC	10	Rugby Union, Cricket, Athletics, Taekwondo, Table Tennis, Bowls
Birmingham	Kings Heath Sports Club	5	Swimming, Bowls, Wheelchair Basketball
Leeds	University of Leeds	3	Sailing, Rowing, Rugby Union

Interviewees for the qualitative research phase were carefully selected to reflect the stated intention of achieving a representative sample in terms of sports and geographical coverage. The final sample included clubs from the following sports:

- Archery, Athletics, Basketball, Bowls (4), Cricket (4), Cycling, Equestrianism, Football (5), Gliding, Golf, Gymnastics, Hockey (6), Netball, Rowing, Rugby League (2), Rugby Union (4), Shooting, Squash, Triathlon, Volleyball, Weightlifting

As far as practically possible, the qualitative interviews also aimed to reflect the range of club sizes, locations, and levels of engagement. Clubs represented the following areas in the research:

- Birmingham, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Chester, Dartford, Exeter, Gloucester, Hemel Hempstead, Leicester, Medway, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, Northampton, Nottingham, Reading, Sheffield, South East London, Stockport, Sutton, Walsall, West London, Wigan, Worcester, York

Transcripts of the qualitative interviews were subjected to thematic analysis, generating a significant amount of data to be cross-referenced with the survey output.

3 Results

3.1 *Recent Research into Volunteer Sports Clubs*

Since October 2017, three linked reports have been published by a variety of agencies, which shed some light on the current conditions for volunteer sports clubs. Before examining the results of the primary research conducted in support of this investigation, it is first pertinent to discuss the findings of these reports in turn, to set the scene for the analysis which follows.

3.1.1 **Active Lives, 2017**

Sport England published the findings of its Active Lives survey in October 2017, based on an extensive online research exercise (n = 214,284) conducted between May 2016 and May 2017. According to Active Lives, some 15% of adults in England (6.7m) volunteered at least twice in the last year in support of sport and physical activity. Further, a 2016 study of Formal Sport Volunteering in England, by Sport England and Portas, found that 75% of sports volunteering takes place in clubs. The remainder consists of activities such as parkrun and other mass participation events, which are included in the list of eligible activities.

The Active Lives report included some important analysis of the demographic characteristics of different types of volunteers. Overall, the report found that 40% of volunteers were female, though this varied considerably according to the type of role undertaken. For example, referees, umpires and officials were much less likely to be women (24%), whereas volunteers providing refreshments or supplying kit and equipment were more likely to be female than overall (46%).

Similarly, there were notable variations between age groups in terms of the roles carried out by volunteers. For example, 36% of coaches and 35% of match officials were aged 16 to 24 according to the survey. In contrast, 35% of volunteers serving as committee members or in admin roles were aged between 45 and 64, while some 25% of these volunteers were of retirement age.

3.1.2 **Club Count, 2017**

Club Count, a research exercise commissioned by Sport England to map the distribution of voluntary sports clubs affiliated to over 90 National Governing Bodies (NGBs), concluded that there were at least 72,000 operational clubs in 80 sports, as of October 2017. One of the key findings of the report was that the ten most popular sports (in terms of the number of affiliated clubs) accounted for 67% of all clubs. This was a persuasive argument in favour of focussing attention on these sports, though in practice the invitation to take part in both the survey and the qualitative research was taken up by clubs from a much broader range of sports.

The report also made clear that there was a higher concentration of clubs in large metropolitan urban areas, and towards the south of the country. While the responses to the online survey could not (by definition) be controlled for location, the selection of clubs for participation in the focus groups and telephone interviews was designed to reflect the geographical distribution of clubs. As such, proximity to a focus group venue encouraged invitations to one of the four focus groups, while representatives of clubs in more remote locations were interviewed by telephone.

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3.1.3 SRA Sports Club Survey, 2017

The most recent edition of the SRA's Survey of Sports Clubs was completed in January 2018, with 1,611 clubs responding to the online questionnaire. Clubs were asked a range of questions relating to membership, facilities, finance and volunteering. The key finding from a workforce perspective was an increase in the average number of volunteers at each club from 24 in 2013 to 37 in 2017. Ordinarily, this would suggest that there was a notable post-Olympic upsurge in interest in volunteering, but the report's authors are cautious about implying any significance to this outcome.

Interestingly, the report mirrors Active Lives in identifying a 60:40 split between male and female club volunteers, while acknowledging that there is considerable potential to further diversify the workforce.

The most significant barriers to volunteering identified by the report are all related to conflicts of time and interests. Nearly three quarters of clubs (72%) said that volunteering was limited by a lack of time, while work commitments (59%) and family commitments (43%) were further barriers. Nearly one in five clubs (18%) felt that some of their members saw volunteering as someone else's responsibility, while 15% were not interested. Notably, in terms of this research, almost 40% of clubs indicated that they were in need of more specialist coaching knowledge relating to their specific sport, which result mirrors the outcome of the SRA Sports Club Survey, in which 39% of clubs stated that they would benefit from more specialist sports coaching knowledge.

Key Points

- While recent research reports have found that voluntary sports clubs are in generally good health, there is clear evidence that a number of demographic groups are under-represented among volunteers.
- There are fewer women, young people, black and minority ethnic groups and disabled people volunteering in sports clubs than the comparative proportion of participants, with particular shortages among committee members and in other management roles.
- The most recent research indicates an increase in the number of people volunteering to support community sport, though significant barriers exist which constrain this growth, most importantly the need to balance volunteering commitments with the conflicting demands of work and home.

3.2 Online Survey Findings

3.2.1 The Survey Sample

The survey link went live on the 16th of April 2018, and closed on the 20th of May. A total of 428 respondents completed the survey, which was reduced to 425 after de-duplication. Of these, 43 (10%) were from multi-sport clubs, i.e. constituted clubs providing more than one sport. The remaining 379 clubs were focussed on a single sport with the breakdown between sports illustrated in Figure 4.

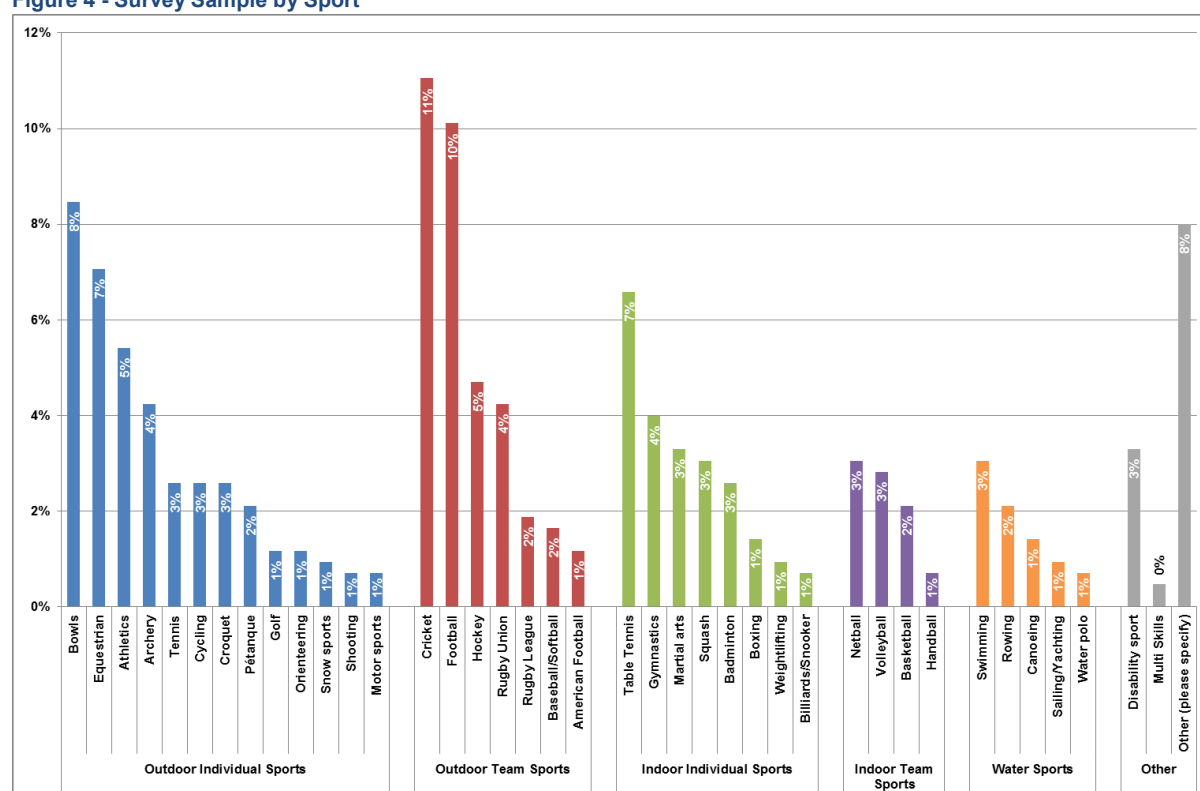
Cricket (47), Football (43) and Bowls (36) generated the most responses followed by Table Tennis, Equestrianism, Athletics, Archery, Hockey, Rugby Union and Gymnastics. A number of sports identifying as 'Other' were recoded, mainly to Athletics (Running) and Martial Arts (e.g. 'Tang Soo Do', 'Karate', 'T'ai Chi'). Croquet and Pétanque also featured strongly, as a

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result of promotional efforts on the part of their NGBs. With sample sizes lower than 50 for individual sports, the analysis of responses to the survey by sport was felt to be impractical, and interpretation was limited to differentiating between single and multi-sport clubs.

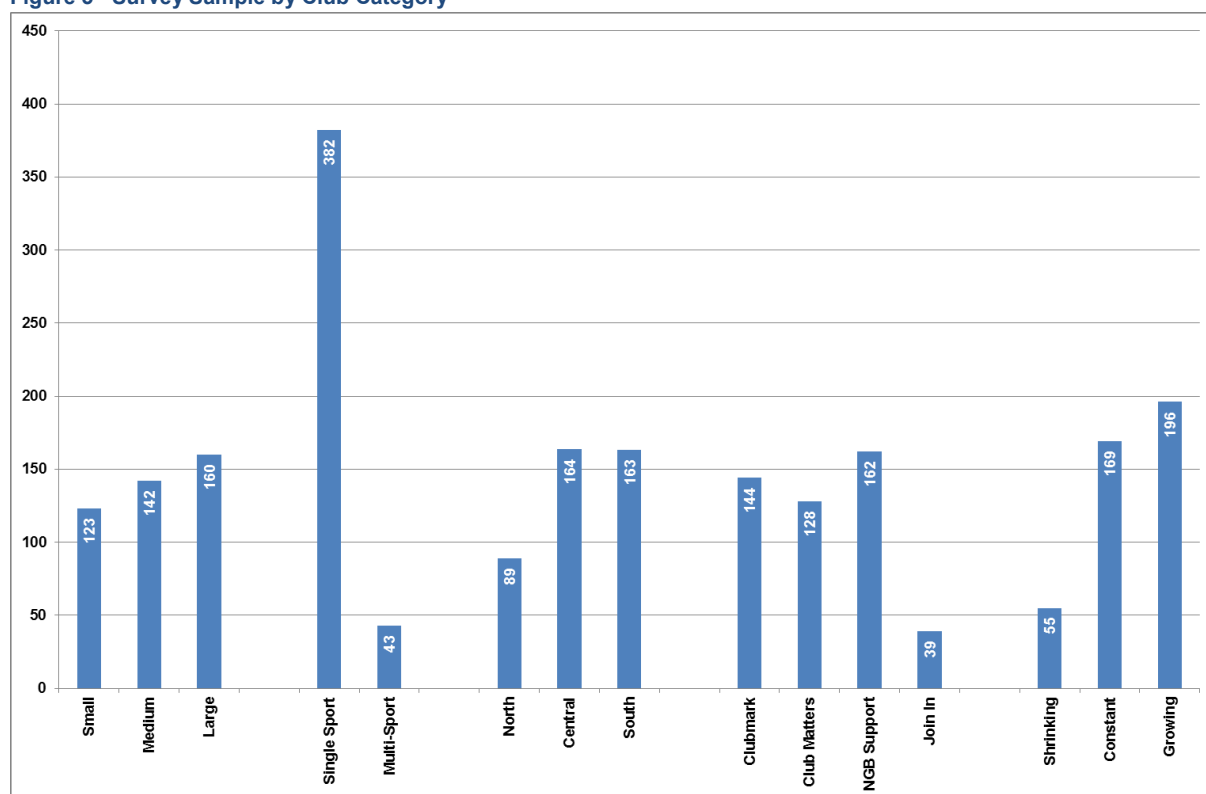
Clubs were classified according to their size, as defined by the number of participant members (Junior and Adult combined), into one of three categories: 'Small' (fewer than 50 participant members), 'Medium' (50 to 125 participants) or 'Large' (more than 125). It was additionally, the club's 'home' (according to the location submitted by the respondent) was used to derive the host local authority area, and by implication the County Sports Partnership. In this way, clubs were coded to one of the three Sport England hub areas (North, Central and South). Clubs were also categorised according to their engagement with a range of volunteer support programmes: Clubmark, Club Matters, NGB-specific support and Join In. Finally, clubs were grouped by the change in playing membership over the past year ('Shrinking', 'Constant' or 'Growing'). Each of these categorisations was used in the subsequent analysis of the survey results, with the breakdown of the sample shown in Figure 5.

Figure 4 - Survey Sample by Sport



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Figure 5 - Survey Sample by Club Category



As a starting point for the analysis, the first consideration is the number volunteers helping to support sports clubs, in relation to overall club membership. Figure 6 outlines the general situation in the survey, with the average club comprised of 100 adult participants, 77 juniors, and 44 non-playing members. While these figures seem high in comparison with the club size categories, they compare favourably with data from the SRA Survey of Sports Clubs, in which the average club had 120 participating adults, 95 juniors and 42 non-playing members. In practice, the figures are skewed somewhat by the larger clubs, where the number of members is significantly higher than the average.

Each club is supported by an average of 24 volunteers, a figure that is comparable with the SRA's 2013 survey, but much lower than the 2017 edition. There is notable variation from club to club. When grouped by the number of volunteers, 30% of clubs are supported by fewer than 10, while 39% have between 10 and 25 helping to deliver activity, and 31% with over 25 volunteers. Overall, the ratio of members to volunteers is around 9 to 1, though for larger clubs, the ratio is higher at 12 to 1, while in smaller and medium-sized clubs the proportion of members who are volunteers is much lower. At first glance therefore, the pressure on volunteers appears to be much higher at larger clubs, though as the analysis that follows reveals, the numbers conceal a more complex and nuanced picture.

Figure 6 - Initial Findings

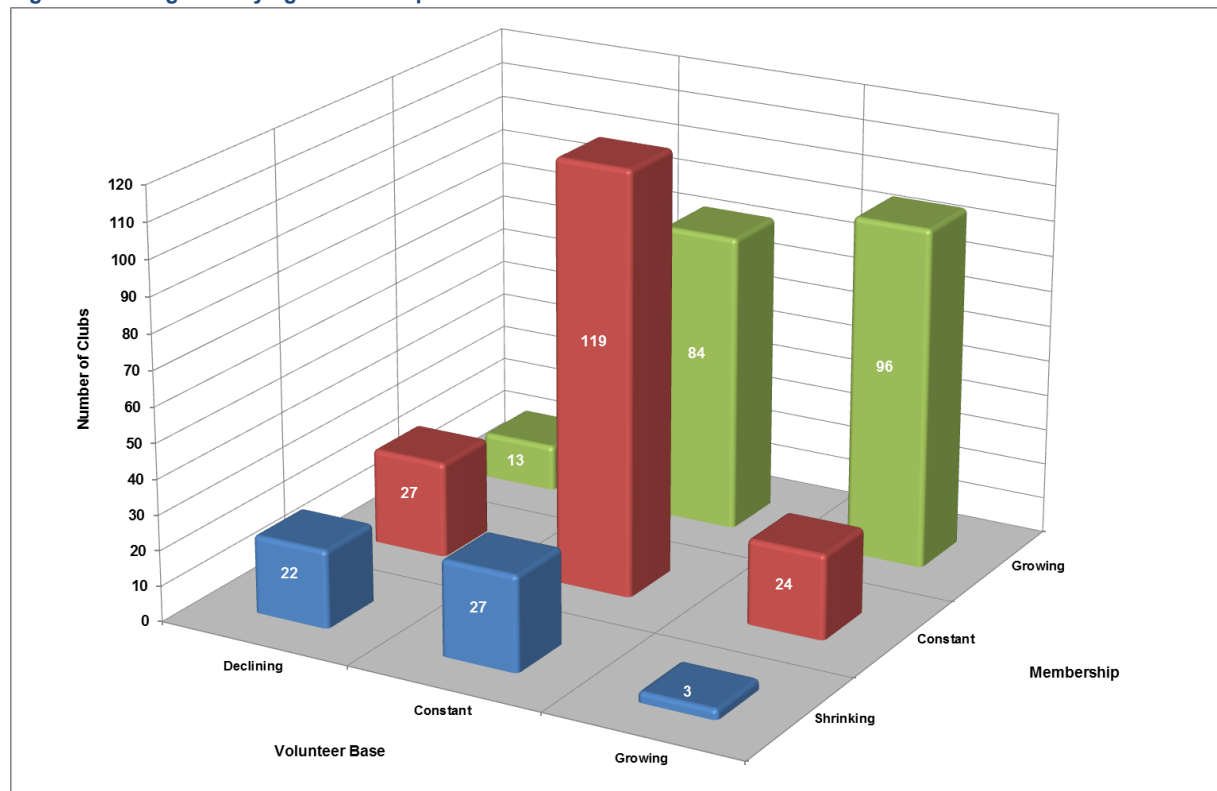
	Overall		Small (123)		Medium (142)		Large (160)	
Membership	Ave.	Ratio	Ave.	Ratio	Ave.	Ratio	Ave.	Ratio
Adult Participants	100		23		52		203	
Junior Participants	77		8		29		171	
Non-Playing Members	44		5		12		103	
Total Membership	211	9:1	36	4:1	93	5:1	477	12:1
Volunteers	24		10		18		41	
Recruited recently	4	18%	2	19%	4	20%	7	17%

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3.2.2 Changes in Club and Workforce Size

Respondents were asked to indicate the direction of travel of their club in terms of the overall playing membership, and the number of volunteers supporting those participants. As figure 7 makes clear, there is a clear relationship between growth in playing membership and growth in clubs' volunteer workforce. The majority of clubs that experienced an increase in the number of participants over the last 12 months, have also seen a concurrent increase in the number of volunteers. Similarly, most clubs which remained unchanged in terms of playing membership saw no change in the size of their volunteer workforce. Among the relatively small number of clubs that saw a decline in playing membership compared with last year, workforce size was either constant or declining.

Figure 7 - Change in Playing Membership and Volunteer Workforce Size



Volunteer growth is by no means restricted to clubs with growing player bases, but there does appear to be a virtuous circle at play. Larger clubs, with more volunteers, have better capacity to develop long-term strategic development plans. They are also better able to recruit individuals to undertake the outward-facing roles that support them such as marketing, schools liaison and website maintenance (this point is examined in more detail in section 3.4.1). The cycle is reversed as club membership declines, with attention becoming focussed on the core roles required to secure the club's continued existence.

Further analysis reveals a distinction in terms of growth between clubs of different sizes, when measured by playing membership and volunteer workforce. Figure 8 shows that clubs with larger memberships (125 or more) are more likely (34%) to have grown their volunteer workforce over the last year than those with fewer than 50 participants (28%). Equally, a third of clubs with a larger volunteer workforce (25 or more) had more volunteers than last year, compared with just under a quarter of clubs with fewer than 10 volunteers. In simple terms,

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there is evidence to suggest that larger clubs, with more volunteers, are more likely to have increased the size of their volunteer base in the last 12 months.

Figure 8 - Volunteer Workforce Change, by Club Membership Size

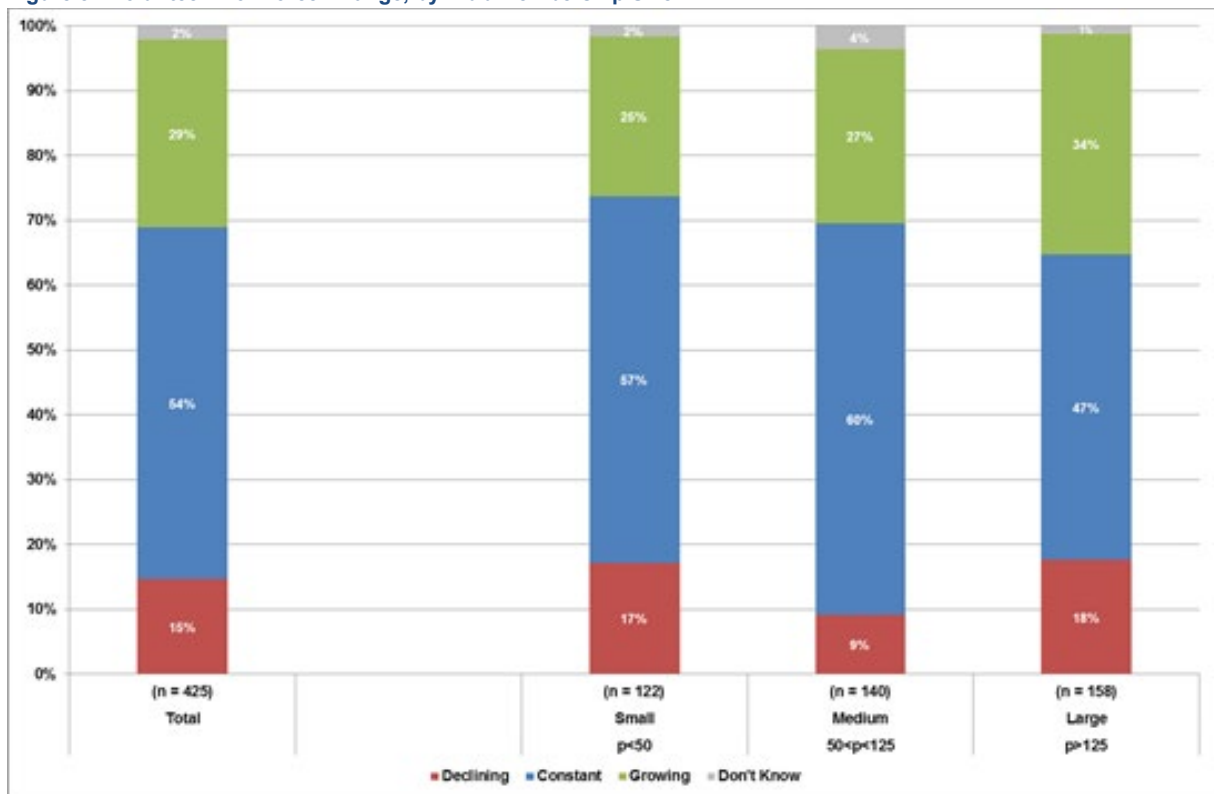
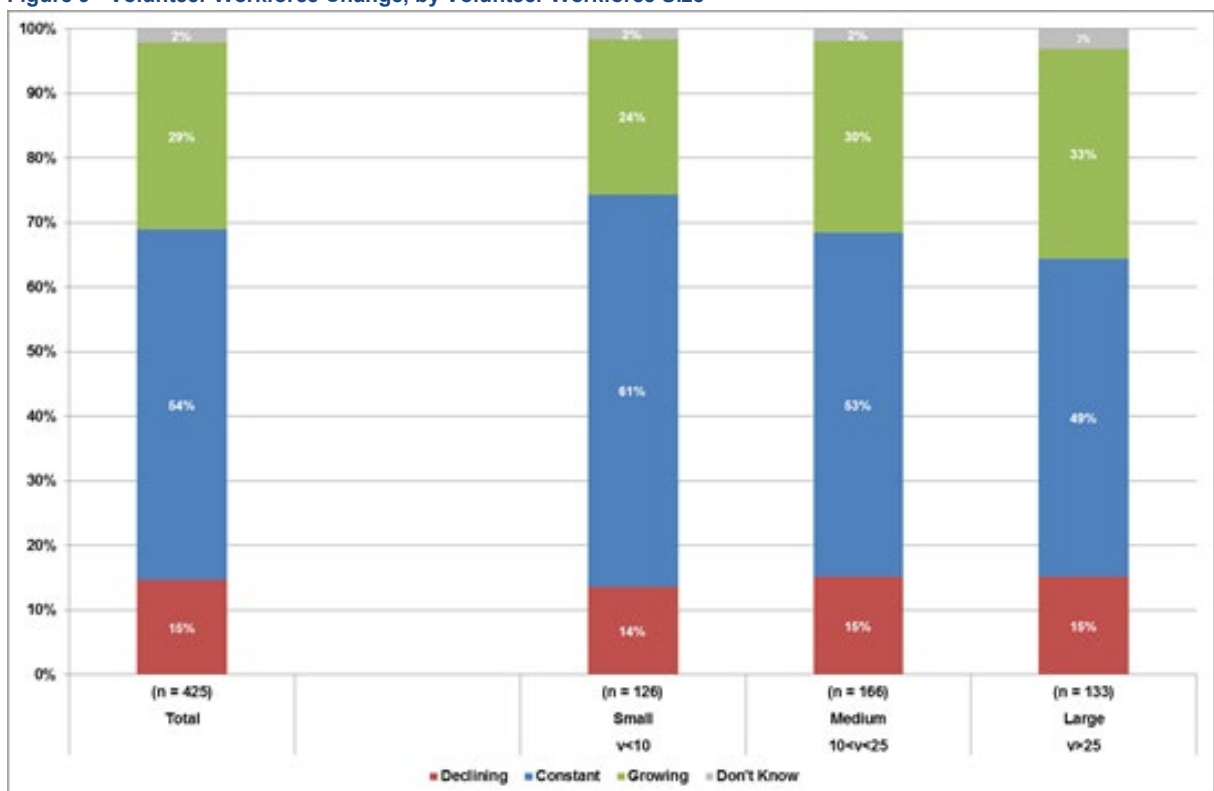


Figure 9 - Volunteer Workforce Change, by Volunteer Workforce Size



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Key Points

- The online survey generated 425 responses, of which 382 were from single sport clubs, and 43 from multi-sport clubs. Clubs were grouped in categories according to size of playing membership for further analysis. The sample size prevented meaningful analysis of results by sport.
- On average, clubs in the sample had 100 adult playing members, 77 juniors and 44 non-playing members, supported by 24 volunteers (of whom four were recruited in the last 12 months. This gives an average ratio of nine members per volunteer.
- Clubs that have experienced a growth in participants over the last 12 months, have also tended to increase the number of volunteers. Larger clubs are more likely to have grown their volunteer base than smaller clubs.
- Clubs with greater volunteer capacity are more able to appoint individuals to roles that support the further recruitment of participants. This forms part of a virtuous circle of club growth and development.

3.3 Who Volunteers?

3.3.1 The Current Position

Our analysis of the volunteer workforce begins with an examination of the demographic characteristics revealed by the clubs completing the online survey. Figure 7 reveals the breakdown between age, gender, ethnicity and disability categories for participants and volunteers across the 425 respondent clubs. This is important because the results of the Active Lives and SRA Sport Club surveys revealed that women, young people, people from minority ethnic groups, and the disabled were generally under-represented among the volunteer workforce.

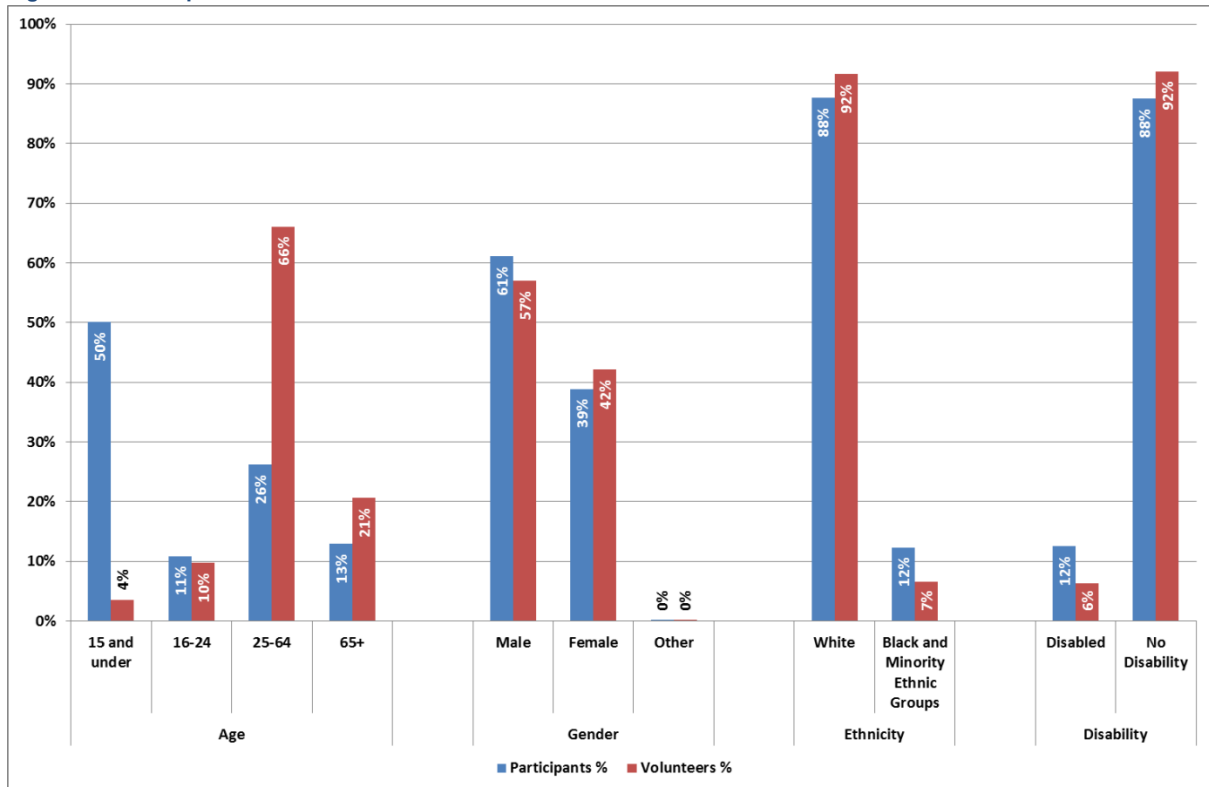
First, there is a clear divide between the age groups, with half of all participants of school age, and a further 10% aged 16 to 24. In contrast, two thirds of volunteers are of working age, with a further 20% in retirement.

In participation terms, men clearly outnumber women in the sample, but the gap is smaller among volunteers. Just under 40% of participants are female, but the equivalent figure for volunteers is 42%. While not a significant difference, this does suggest that women are more prevalent among the volunteer workforce than their participation profile might otherwise suggest, although women are still under-represented to some extent in both respects.

The picture is reversed for black and minority ethnic (BAME) volunteers and disabled volunteers. In both cases, the proportion of volunteers is lower than that of participants, with 7% of volunteers coming from BAME groups and 6% being disabled. These figures are also lower than the estimates produced by the Active Lives survey (14% and 11% respectively), highlighting the extent of under-representation amongst those in clubs. It is important to bear in mind however, that these data are based on estimates provided by one survey respondent acting on behalf of each club, and may therefore be liable to under-estimation.

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Figure 10 - Participants and Volunteers

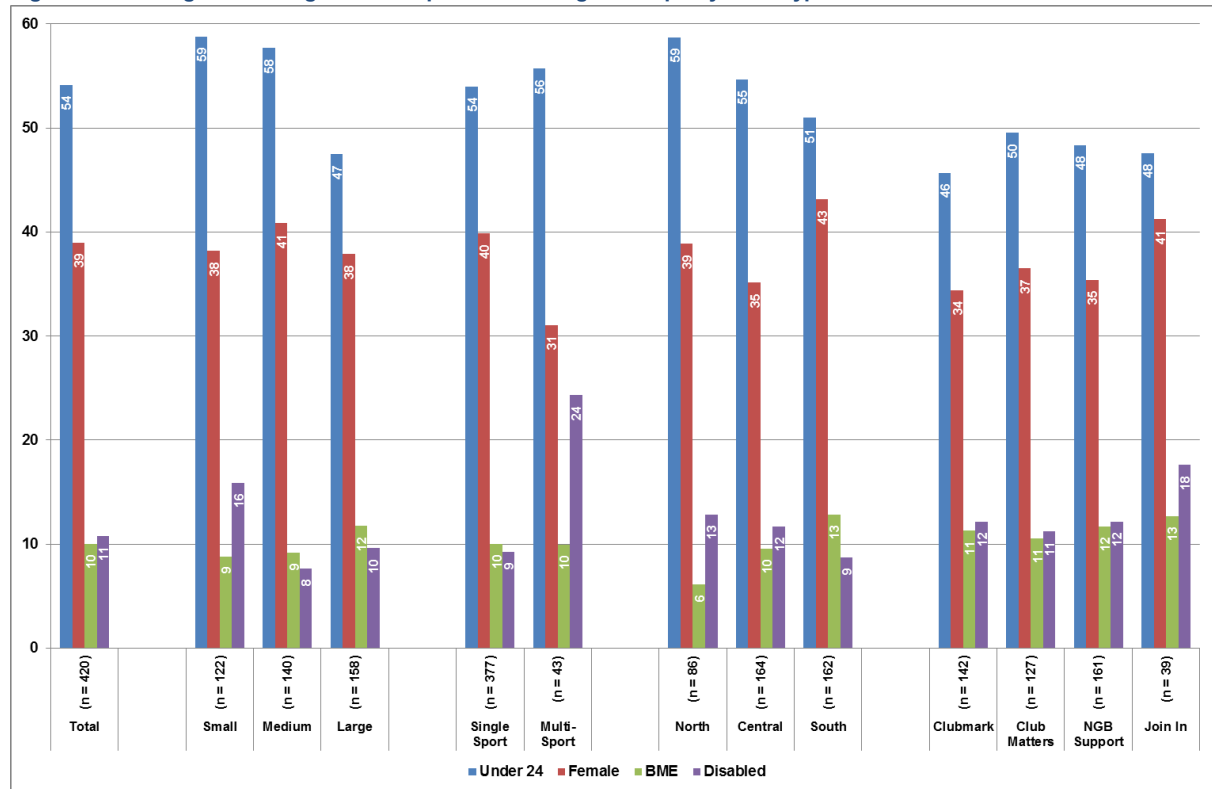


The proportion of participants from each of the target groups identified above shows some interesting variations between different club types (Figure 10). For example, smaller clubs (with fewer than 50 participants) and medium sized clubs (between 50 and 125 participants) appear to have a higher proportion of young players (59%) than their larger counterparts (47%). Similarly, the proportion of disabled participants is higher than average at small clubs (16%), as well as at multi-sport clubs (24%).

Conversely, young volunteers make up a smaller proportion of the workforce at smaller clubs (9%), but are better represented at clubs engaged with their NGBs (16%), as well as with Clubmark (17%), Club Matters (15%) and Join In (16%). Disabled volunteers are well represented at small clubs (10%), multi-sport clubs (11%), and those engaged with Join In (16%). There is less variation between clubs for female and BAME volunteers, though clubs in the South of England do appear to have higher proportions of both (46% and 6% respectively), while female volunteers are also well represented at clubs engaged with Join In (41%).

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Figure 11 - Average Percentage of Participants from Target Groups by Club Type

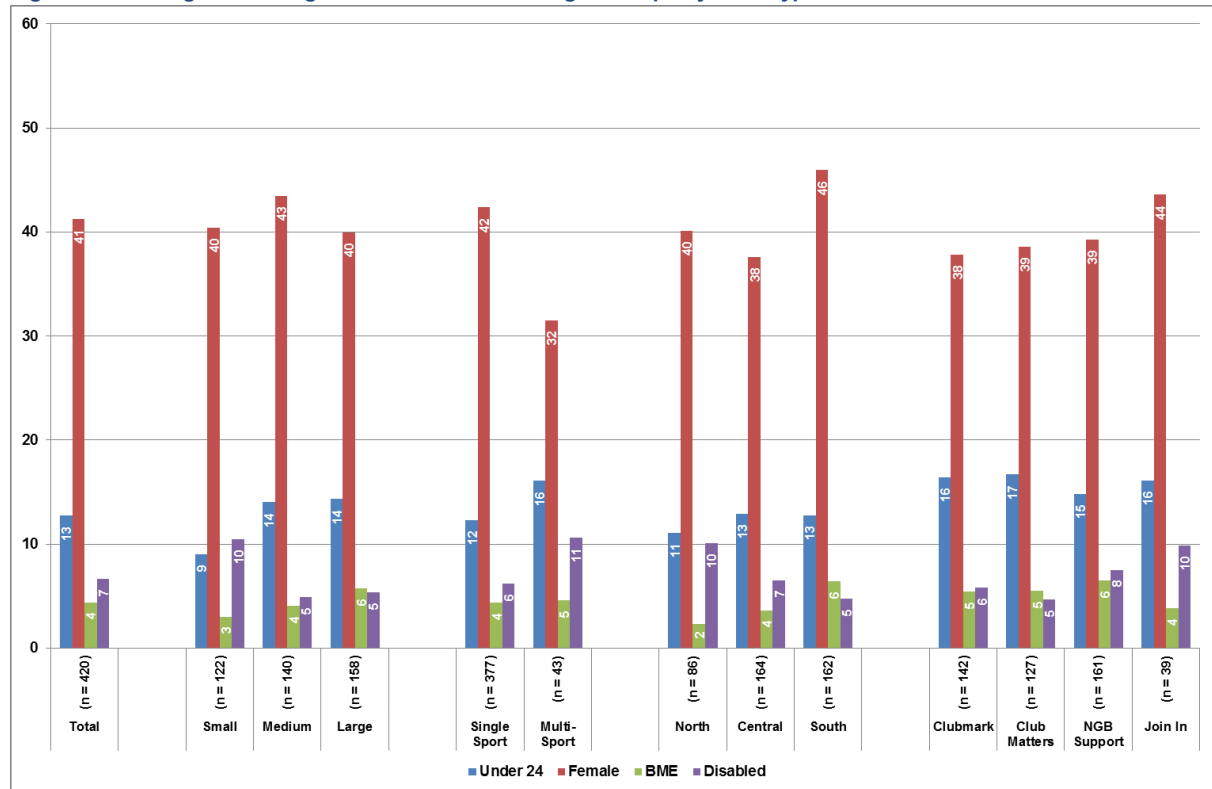


There are several points to note in explanation of these patterns. First, the relationship between overall club size and the number of volunteers, as determined by the survey, is strong and positive. In other words, the larger the club, the more volunteers required to support its operation, creating more opportunities for volunteers from the target groups.

Second, it is larger clubs that are more engaged with the various programmes designed to help them recruit and manage volunteers. For example, 58% of clubs who stated that they were actively engaged with Clubmark had more than 125 playing members. Third, the higher proportion of disabled volunteers at the 43 multi-sport clubs in the survey appears to be driven by the 12 that provide disability sport, where an average of 22% of volunteers is disabled.

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Figure 12 - Average Percentage of Volunteers from Target Groups by Club Type



3.3.2 Responses to Under-representation

Clubs have enacted a variety of strategies to redress the imbalance between volunteers of different age, gender, ethnicity and disability. Several clubs have established junior committees, with specific, generally easy tasks allocated to younger members. The aim is generally to develop a volunteering habit from a young age:

"We have just had an 11 year old volunteer join the junior club committee, she wants to get involved putting on activities for the kids who are not watching the rugby, selling sweets and putting a sweet stall on."

A similar approach is also being applied by one hockey club in South Yorkshire, who explained:

"We try and work with kids in our club; on our youth committee we've got three young volunteers and they are doing certain things. Eventually one of them will take on a larger role. It's just getting them to be club orientated."

Many of the clubs stated that they had found it difficult to recruit young female volunteers however:

"You've got quite a lot of students that play in the first team. The men students are absolutely prepared to turn out and help out with coaching, junior coaching. The ladies, they can't persuade them, they don't really play a role. We've got actually a really good lady captain this year, but the female students turn up, they come and play for their team, they train, they do all of that, but they're actually not interested in investing back in the club; whereas the men will do all."

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While clubs appear to understand some of the barriers to engaging with volunteers from under-represented groups, there was some doubt as to how the various practical and cultural barriers might be overcome. One club representative from the midlands explained:

"You might ask someone to organise a function or run a raffle, and buy them a drink for doing it. We've relied on that for years, but a lot of our players in the first team are now Asian background, and we don't have many Asian social members. Part of that is alcohol. I don't know how you crack that nut."

This was a common theme for a number of clubs: the need for more volunteers from target groups was clearly understood, but existing volunteers lacked knowledge of how to recruit them, suggesting that there is a role for NGBs and other agencies to be more proactive in sharing knowledge of successful strategies and tactics.

"I'd love to have some women involved because I find them efficient, conscientious and they show empathy, and sometimes you need that. Different people want different things."

Key Points

- As many as 61% of all participants are under the age of 25, but only 13% of volunteers fall into this category. Women are more prevalent among the volunteer base than their participation profile would suggest, but disabled people, and those from black and minority ethnic groups are under-represented.
- Large clubs, and those that have engaged with programmes designed to support volunteer management (e.g. Clubmark and Club Matters), appear to have had more success in recruiting young people and BAME volunteers than their smaller counterparts. Clubs in the South have a higher than average number of female and BAME volunteers. Multi-sport clubs have a higher than average proportion of disabled volunteers, often because they also offer disability sports.
- Clubs are generally well aware that their workforce lacks representation from young, female, BAME and disabled volunteers. While there are signs that some clubs are attempting to address the issue, evidence of success is sporadic at best. The ability of NGBs to share knowledge could be critical in this regard.

3.4 What Roles do Volunteers Take?

The definition of volunteering used by Sport England refers to "...an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives". In theory, this could extend to any activity, though in practice the range of volunteering positions in sports clubs tends to be well defined, with roles falling into three broad categories: Core or Committee roles; Participation Support; and General Helpers.

Core or committee roles in sports clubs tend to be formal, in the sense that they are defined by the requirements of the role, and in the case of many clubs, are elected positions, voted on at each annual general meeting. These roles include the positions of Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Welfare Officer. People in participation support roles may be appointed or elected, and may be ongoing for as long as the volunteers are prepared carry out the task. This includes (assistant and head) coaches, team captains, match officials and fixtures secretaries. General helper positions are less formal roles, often appointed spontaneously,

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depending on the immediate requirements of the club. This reflects the nature of the work involved, which is often short-term and *ad-hoc*.

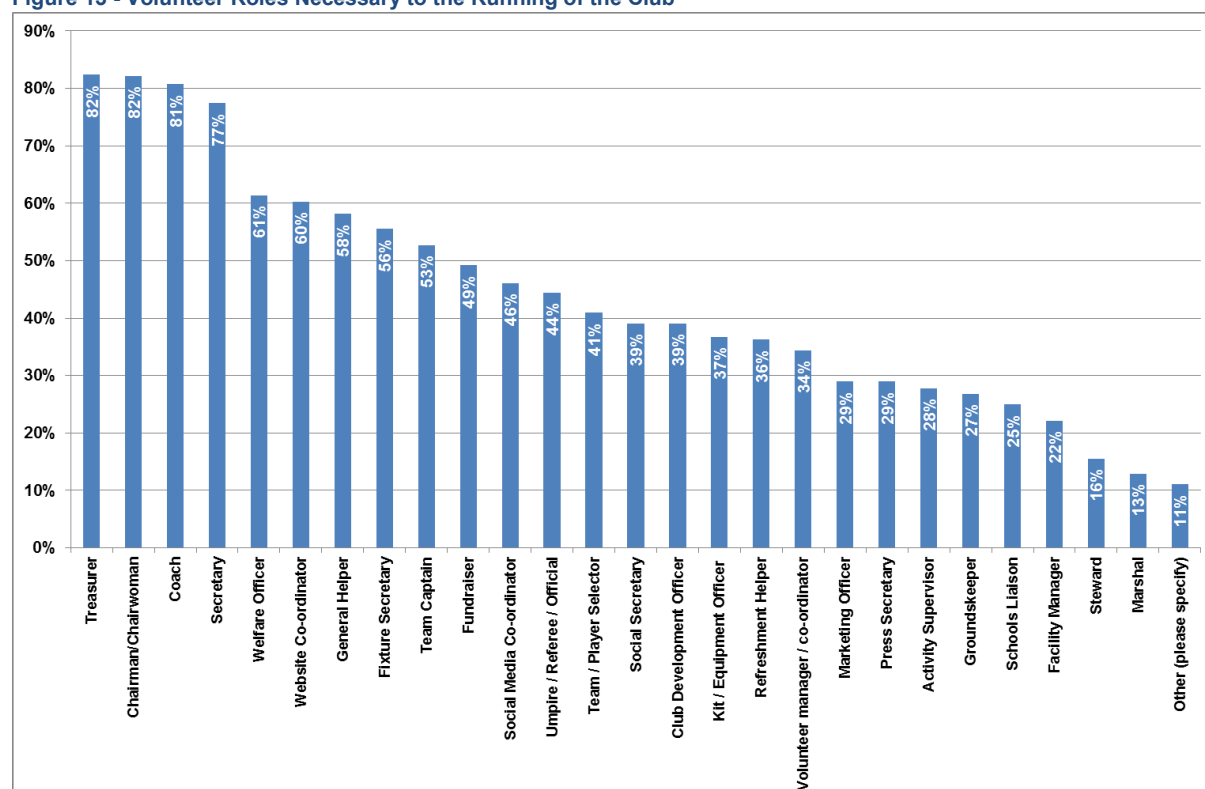
3.4.1 Volunteering Roles

When asked which roles were necessary to the running of their club, four key positions stood out among the responses (Figure 13): Treasurer (82%), Chair (82%), Coach (81%) and Secretary (77%). This is predictable to some extent, since National Governing Bodies (NGBs), local authorities and other agencies that provide support require clubs to be formally constituted, with access to their own bank account, in order to be affiliated and considered eligible for funding.

Beyond these positions, more than half of the respondents identified Welfare Officer (61%), Website Co-ordinator (60%), General Helper (58%), Fixture Secretary (56%) and Team Captain (53%) as being key to the operation of their club. The prevalence of Welfare Officers and Website Co-ordinators among club volunteer roles reflects the emphasis placed in recent years on both safeguarding and the use of technology in the operation of voluntary sports clubs, while Fixtures Secretaries and Team Captains might be thought of as more traditional positions supporting the organisation of participation.

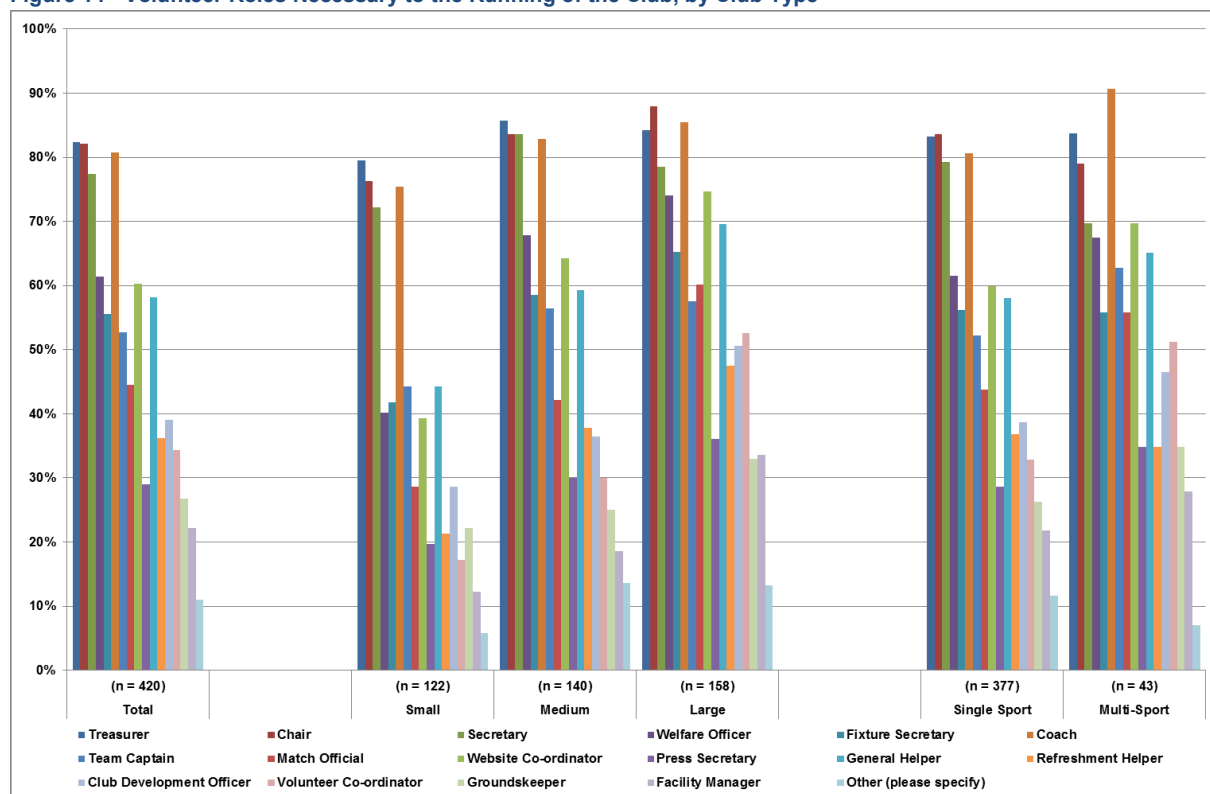
While all clubs saw the four key roles of Treasurer, Chair, Coach and Secretary as being the most necessary to the running of their club, there was evidence in the survey of the effect of club size on volunteer deployment. Figure 14 makes clear that as the number of members increases, clubs deem it necessary to appoint volunteers to a wider range of roles. The proportion of clubs with a Website Co-ordinator role increases from 39% of small clubs, to 64% of medium-sized clubs and 75% of large clubs. Similarly, 29% of small clubs state that they need to appoint match officials, compared with 42% of medium sized clubs and 60% of large clubs.

Figure 13 - Volunteer Roles Necessary to the Running of the Club



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Figure 14 - Volunteer Roles Necessary to the Running of the Club, by Club Type



Clubs were also asked which of the roles that they deemed necessary were currently filled, in order to identify any shortfalls in their workforce, and the survey confirmed the importance of the four most prominent roles. Not only are Treasurer, Chair, Coach and Secretary thought to be the most necessary roles in volunteer sports clubs, but they are also the most likely to be filled, with around 90% of clubs stating that they had someone in place to carry out these tasks. Reassuringly, some 84% of clubs also had a Welfare Officer in post.

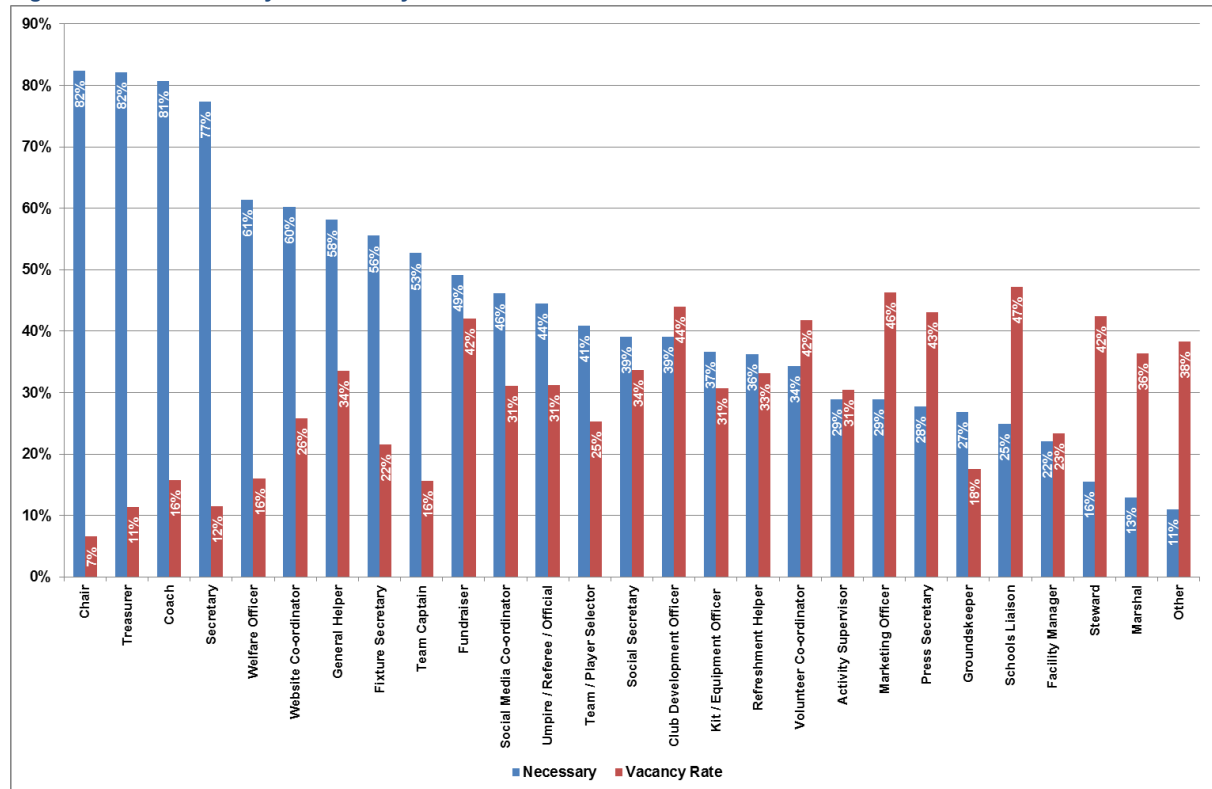
The volunteer roles with the highest 'vacancy' rates were Schools Liaison (47% of posts unfilled), Marketing Officer (46%) and Club Development Officer (44%). Interestingly, each of these roles may be considered to have a remit to recruit new playing members, suggesting that clubs tend to place less emphasis on growth, focussing more on maintaining their *status quo*.

In general, Figure 14 seems to indicate that larger clubs are most likely to recruit people to fulfil the ancillary roles that support their social, promotional and developmental activities. In this sense, the workload is spread among a wider group of volunteers at larger clubs, though the individual burden may be higher, as there are more members to serve.

The core positions of Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and Coach are seen as equally important across all club types, but in smaller clubs, the volunteers who carry out these duties are more likely to be responsible for other aspects of club administration at the same time. This generates a different kind of pressure, which is particularly apparent when an individual volunteer is unavailable for any period of time.

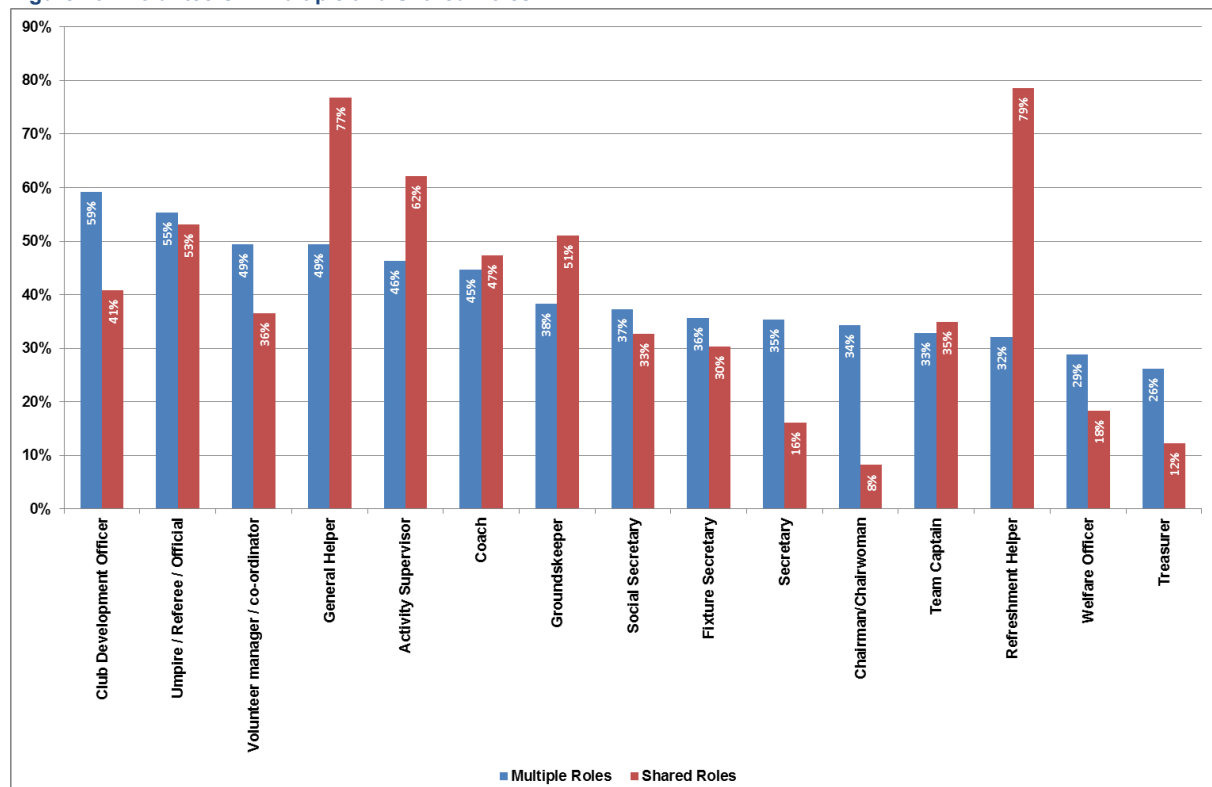
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Figure 15 - Role Necessity and Vacancy Rates



One way in which clubs manage the demand for volunteers is to ask volunteers to take on multiple roles. Alternatively, a role might be shared between more than one individual. Figure 13 indicates the extent to which this is true for a selection of roles, with several points worthy of note.

Figure 16 - Volunteers in Multiple and Shared Roles



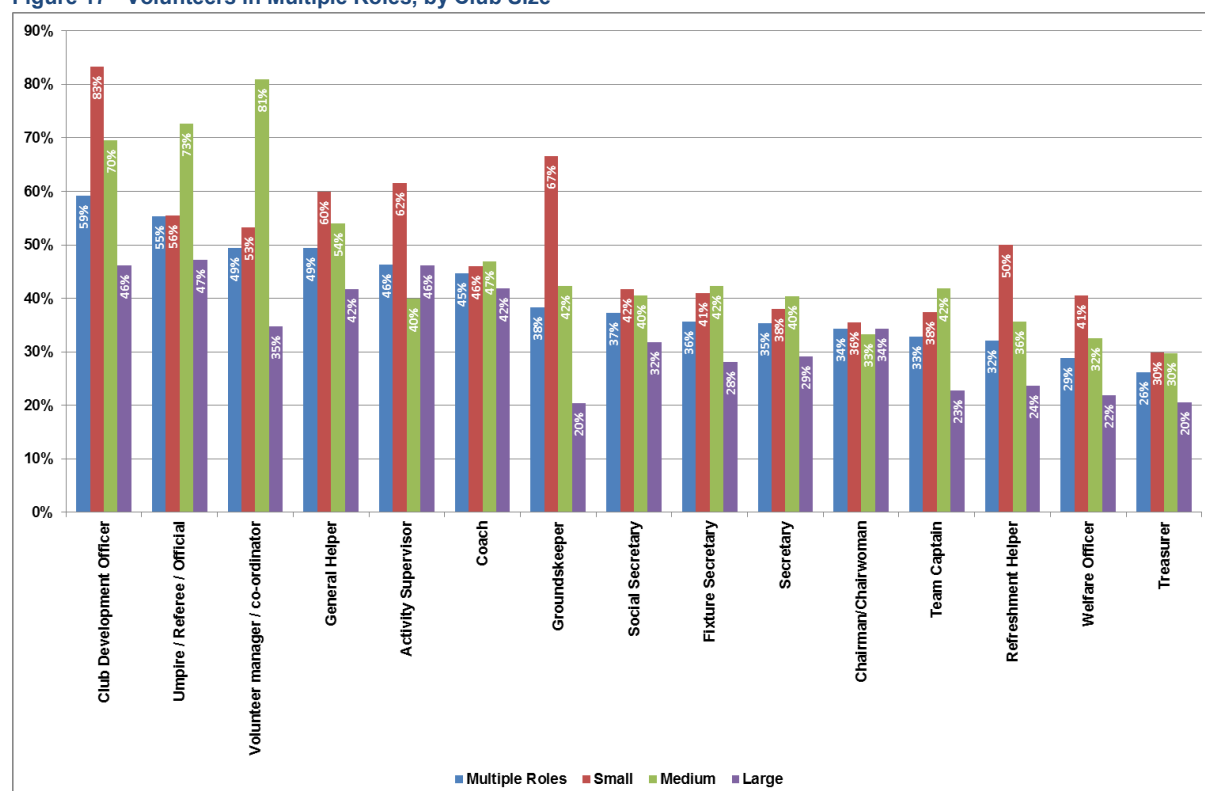
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Some specific roles are much more likely to be undertaken by volunteers who are already engaged in another position. In 55% of clubs, the role of match official is fulfilled by volunteers carrying out multiple roles, with the figure for Club Development Officers higher still, at 59% of clubs. At the other end of the scale, only 26% of clubs are served by a Treasurer who also volunteers in other ways. Similarly, the role of Welfare Officer is carried out by a volunteer with multiple roles in only 29% of clubs. Conversely, the roles of Refreshment Helper (79% of clubs), General Helper (77%) and Activity Supervisor (62%) tend to be shared between volunteers. The key positions of Treasurer (12% of clubs), Chair (8%) and Secretary (16%) are much less likely to be shared, along with the position of Welfare Officer (18%).

As a general rule, volunteers in smaller clubs are much more likely to have more than one volunteer role, and this is particularly true of Club Development officers (83% of clubs), Groundskeepers (67%) and Activity Supervisors (62%). Two notable exceptions to this rule are the roles of Match Official (56%) and Volunteer Co-ordinator (53%) - in both cases, the reliance on volunteers in multiple roles is highest in medium-sized clubs. One volunteer from the North of England gave a good illustration of the pressure that can be generated by volunteers undertaking multiple roles:

"The chairman of the senior rugby club is the treasurer for the juniors. The coaching co-ordinator is also the sponsorship secretary. Everybody has two or three different roles. If you go through both sets of clubs then we have around 20 different committee positions, with around 10 people doing these roles."

Figure 17 - Volunteers in Multiple Roles, by Club Size



Volunteer shortages and turnover in personnel add to the burden placed on the volunteer workforce, meaning that key individuals within clubs are tasked with additional roles and responsibilities. The number of volunteers in multiple roles demonstrates the flexibility of the workforce, but also highlights how dependence on a relatively small group of volunteers has

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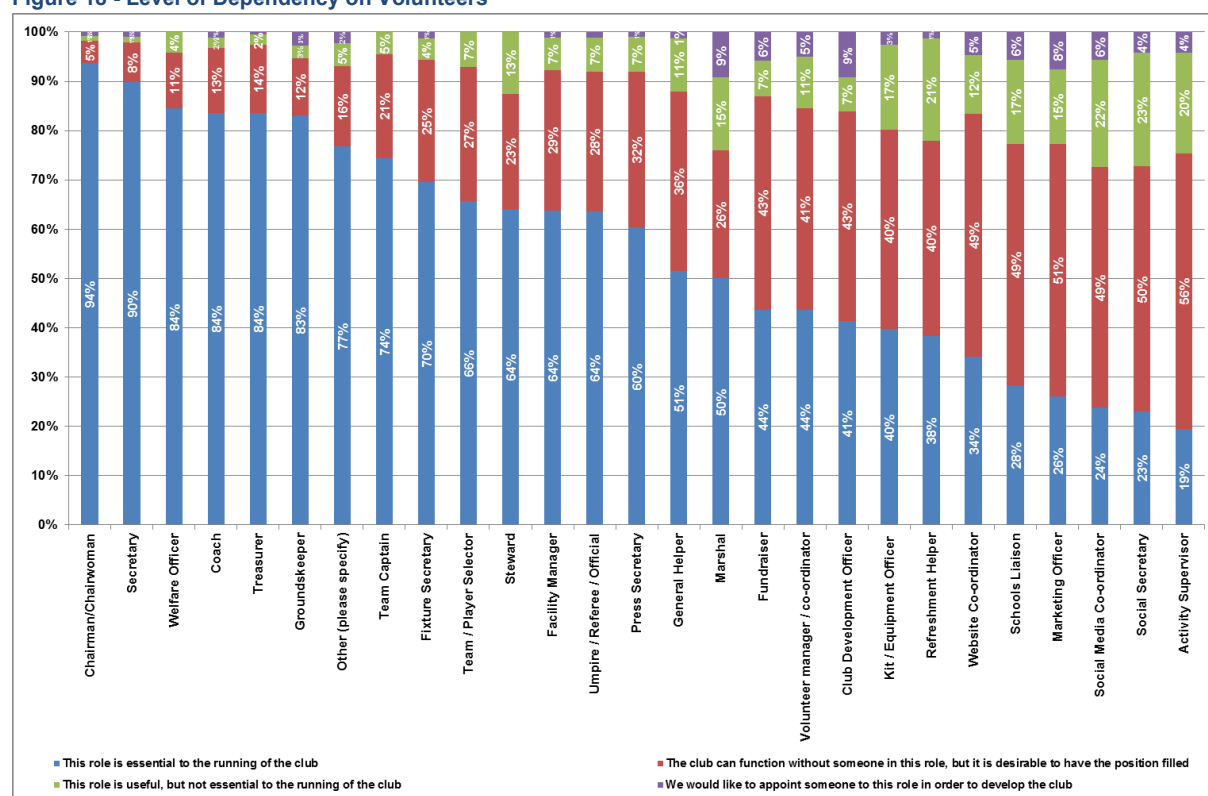
the potential to create considerable risks for clubs. This fact is not lost on the volunteers themselves, many of whom recognise the consequences of making the decision to stop volunteering:

"A lot of our committee are coaches, so the group that are 'doers' get involved as opposed to those who just come along and swim. On the whole, the coaches have taken more responsibility in the club and don't want the club to become static and start dying off. We want to attract new people in to the sport. It is hard to get people in to the committee to take a role like that so the coaches do seem to be running the club."

In this context, it is interesting that 34% of survey respondents felt that the role of Volunteer Co-ordinator is necessary to the running of their club as a discreet position. It appears that in the majority of clubs, this function is taken on by an existing member of the committee, often by default, as one interviewee from the West Midlands explained:

"If anyone it's me. But it's not a specific role within the club; it's just part of what you do. So we used to have meetings, but now we don't have so many meetings. We just agree what needs to be done. We do a lot of things by email now."

Figure 18 - Level of Dependency on Volunteers



In essence, it appears that larger clubs, with more participants and volunteers, are able to recruit individuals to fulfil the outward-facing roles, which promote further growth. In this sense, a virtuous circle is established, in which an initial surge in participation generates more volunteers, who then provide the capacity for further outreach. When the opposite is true, and the volunteer base is reduced, even temporarily, clubs will focus their efforts on the essential functions, withdrawing from the development roles that might reverse the decline in fortunes.

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3.4.2 Volunteering Level

The level of competition supported by volunteers varies from club to club, but it is interesting to note that of those surveyed, 18% stated that they supported competitors at elite or international level, while 39% of clubs operated at the national (competitive) level. The overwhelming majority of volunteering (83%) supports 'club' level participation however, with 80% of clubs delivering sport for beginners and 72% for recreational participants.

For clubs that operate multiple teams, there is a hierarchy which prioritises the success of the most senior squad or 'first team'. Nevertheless, the effort required to sustain teams at a range of levels is considerable, and many volunteers expressed the view that supporting junior participation was equally arduous, by virtue of the additional bureaucracy involved in safeguarding young players. While the administrative burden might be prohibitive for some however, in reality, this seems to be an issue of perception, and the majority of clubs are willing, if not happy, to undertake the work, as one football club chair from the South East explained:

"It's hard, when you've got a club our size where you've got 35 teams. It's a lot of administration all season and off-season. The leagues and the FA won't register our club unless these volunteers have been on a level 1 coaching course. I understand it, because it does teach you good practice, good techniques and stuff like that."

3.4.3 Volunteering on Behalf of Other Organisations

Club volunteers are frequently engaged in other forms of volunteering that underpin the delivery of their sport at various levels. The majority of volunteers interviewed in the course of this research were not only club volunteers, but also had roles which supported participation in other ways, such as serving on league committees or acting as match officials at events on behalf of the national governing body.

These additional commitments often arise as a natural extension of volunteering in support of the club, but volunteers may be required to participate in decision-making processes that generate a personal conflict of interests, forcing them to relinquish one or other role, even temporarily. The extent of the issue is limited to a relatively small number of volunteers, but it is important for NGBs to recognise that even as their volunteer workforce capacity grows, there may be a commensurate loss of capacity at the clubs they serve.

"Well we've got a guy who plays in our team. So he's chairman of the league, and he's the captain of the other team for us. So he has to divide his time. And also when he's the chairman he has to put our club to one side and be unbiased. He'll not play for us but sure that we've got someone that can cover for him. So it's compromise and it's juggling and it's being fair to all parties really."

Within multi-sport clubs, there is potential for conflicts of interest to arise between different sections of what is ostensibly one organisation:

"There's always an issue between the rugby club and the cricket club, who are the two main clubs who use the facility. Rugby have five teams, so there's in the region of either 60 or 90 players here, plus supporters, money goes behind the bar. Three pitches. We have one cricket pitch, so we can have a maximum

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of 22 players. So the bar takings crash during the summer, and that's a big issue for the funding and the money that goes behind the bar."

The networking benefits of volunteering for other organisations were implicit in conversations with volunteers, but

"Our volunteers operate within our club at county and national level so we are well connected with what support that is available."

Key Points

- There are four key roles in the operation of voluntary sports clubs: Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Coach. More than 80% of all clubs deem these roles essential to the running of their sport, and have someone in post. The role of welfare officer is seen as increasingly important.
- Other participation roles, such as fixtures secretary and match official, and more general positions, such as fundraising or social secretary, were generally thought to be less essential.
- Larger clubs are better able to identify individual volunteers to carry out the less essential roles, by virtue of their greater overall capacity. In smaller clubs, there is evidence to suggest that these tasks are taken on by volunteers with multiple existing roles.
- The use of job-sharing to manage capacity in volunteer sports clubs tends to be limited to the less essential roles, such as refreshment helper. Core committee roles are much less likely to be shared.
- Operational capacity can be placed under considerable strain when volunteers are unavailable to fulfil their role. Only a third of all clubs have a volunteer co-ordinator in place to manage such constraints however.
- The majority of volunteers support the delivery of sport at the club or recreational level, though as many as 18% of clubs provide elite or international level competition.
- Many people who volunteer at club level also support their sport by volunteering on behalf of other organisations, such as NGBs or competitive leagues, which has the potential to create conflicts of interest if not handled carefully.

3.5 Volunteering Delivery – Capacity and Frequency

3.5.1 Volunteer Capacity

The ability of volunteers to deliver capacity for their clubs is often reported to be under pressure, and the findings of the survey confirm this position. Of the clubs surveyed, only one in four clubs felt that they had enough volunteers to meet their current operational demands. More than two thirds of clubs said that they were short of volunteer capacity, and this was especially true of medium-sized (70%) and larger clubs (73%). This finding appears to contrast with the evidence relating to club size and volunteer roles (see sections 3.2.2 and 3.4.1), which suggests that larger clubs have more volunteer capacity to support outward-facing roles, rather than the delivery of sporting operations, and is indicative of a desire to recruit more volunteers to handle existing workloads.

Shortages in volunteer capacity generate a number of issues for clubs. More than half (57%) of the clubs in the survey report that volunteer shortages put pressure on individual volunteers.

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This issue is particularly acute in large clubs (65%) where the ratio of members to volunteers is higher, and those with declining membership (65%). This is not to diminish the effect of volunteer shortages on smaller clubs however, where individuals may feel additional pressure when operational roles are unfilled. Equally, clubs that have experienced recent growth may be under a different kind of pressure to respond to additional demand for volunteer capacity.

There appears to be a contrast between smaller clubs, whose priority is to maintain operations using existing resources, and larger clubs whose plans for expansion require further recruitment. Nearly 40% of clubs report that capacity shortages restrict their ability to increase the number of participants, which is of particular concern in light of Sport England's ambitions to increase the number of people taking part in sport and physical activity. Volunteer shortages also mean that a third of clubs are less effective in terms of the support offered to their participants, while one in four (25%) are unable to provide coaches. In short, when a club does not have enough volunteers, both the quantity and quality of its outputs are at risk.

There is evident tension therefore, between club development objectives (such as increasing the number of participants, improving playing performance, long-term strategic planning, etc.), and the desire to manage volunteer workloads effectively. In most cases, clubs would prefer to deploy additional coaches, officials and other helpers to ease the burden on their existing volunteers, though this will clearly vary from club to club, and over time as circumstances change.

Only 18% of clubs have no plans to respond to capacity shortages by recruiting more volunteers. Interestingly, this figure is much higher for small clubs (27%) than large clubs (11%). Conversely, larger clubs were much more likely to want to recruit volunteers via word of mouth (81%) or via social media (52%). When asked directly how they might deploy additional volunteers, interviewees were consistent in expressing a desire to share existing workloads across a larger workforce, rather than delivering more activities:

"The roles would be shared out more. I would hopefully relax a bit more. The club would be more resilient because it wouldn't be so dependent on a tiny number of key people. It's still too personality dependent because we're not big enough and we're not self-sustaining."

These apparent shortages in volunteer capacity must be viewed in context however. Almost 29% of clubs have increased the number of active volunteers in the last 12 months with the number of large clubs reporting growth higher still at 33%. At the same time, only 15% have suffered a decline over the same period (which figure is consistent across small, medium and large clubs). The evidence therefore suggests that most clubs are at least stable in terms of their workforce, although there is a clear desire for additional capacity across the board.

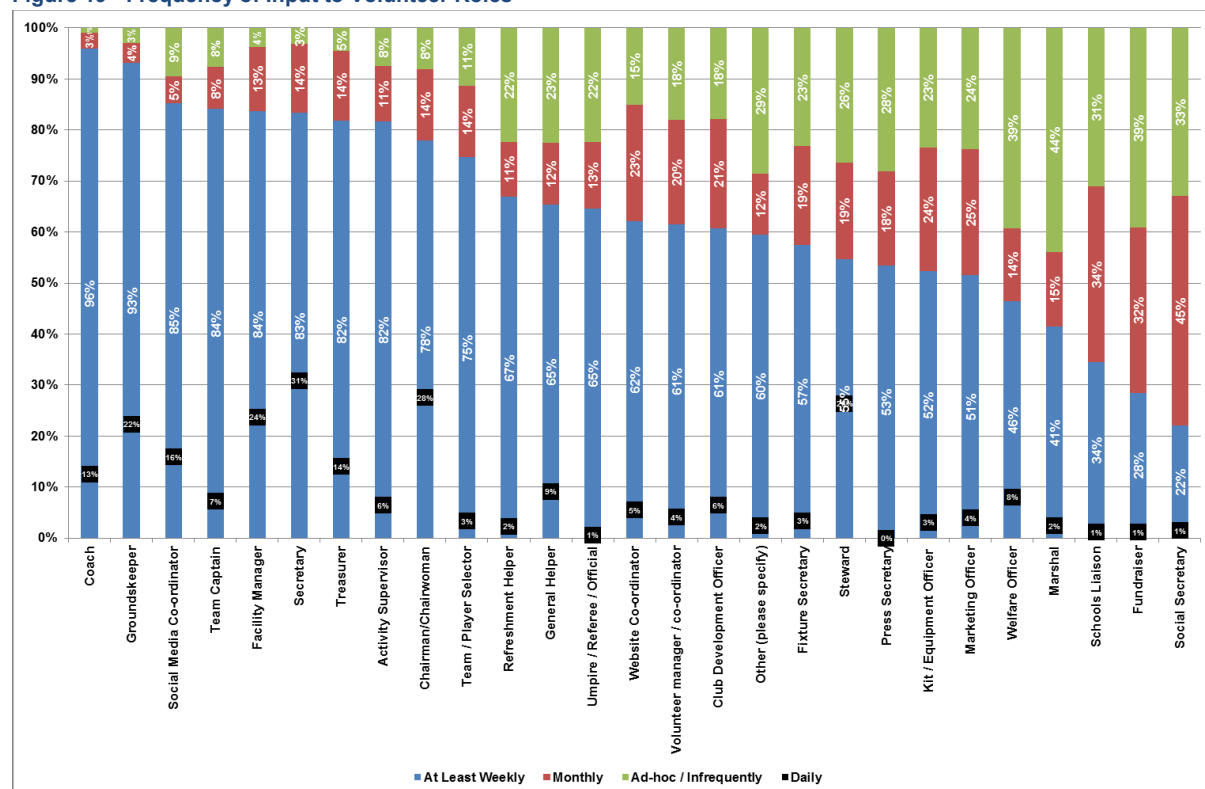
3.5.2 Frequency of Volunteering Delivery

The level of input required by volunteers varies significantly from role to role. Most volunteer roles require input at least one a week, in order to maintain output, as Figure 19 demonstrates. Roles which support participation, both directly and indirectly, such as Coach (96%), Team Captain (84%) and Groundskeeper (93%), tend to require more frequent and regular input, usually weekly, than administrative positions. This is to be expected, given the predominantly weekly cycle of competition and the preparation required to support it. Nevertheless, the core roles of Chair (28%) and Secretary (31%) often generate tasks on a daily basis. While this may be a simple matter of dealing with correspondence from NGBs, League committees, other

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clubs and members, it still demands time on the part of the volunteer, the majority of whom are of working age.

Figure 19 - Frequency of Input to Volunteer Roles



The frequency with which volunteers are required to engage in their roles is especially pertinent because of the impact on the ability of clubs to recruit and retain volunteers to undertake the work. The hardest positions to fill are those which consume the most time or which require a particular skill-set, most commonly chair, secretary, welfare officer, treasurer, and coach. In addition to time spent delivering activity, coaches and match officials are frequently required to spend evenings and weekends updating their qualifications or undertaking continuous (professional) development.

One commonly applied response to the issue of managing individual volunteer workloads is the use of rotas, drawing on a broad base of volunteers to deliver repetitive, often menial or unskilled tasks. Examples of tasks that might fit this pattern include serving behind the clubhouse bar, providing post-match teas, preparing venues for match day (e.g. marking pitches and moving goalposts into place), providing transport, or delivering fundraising raffles.

At clubs where the most senior team participates in a high level league, members of the squad may be required to sign up to a rota to deliver junior coaching sessions, as part of a *quid pro quo*. This is based on the understanding that 'first' rank participants receive additional support from the club in terms of advanced coaching, kit and equipment, or financial sponsorship. Such arrangements are particularly common in, but not exclusive to team sports, as the following quote from an air sports club in the North makes clear:

"It's a component part of the way the club operates that once you are a solo pilot one day in every four weeks you come and you do some voluntary work. So that's set up from the beginning. People understand that when they're training they won't have to do as much volunteering, but one they have trained,

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in order to get the gliders in the air they need people to help, and people are rostered on particular days to help."

In some cases, usually at larger clubs that are able to offer payment to a head coach, that individual will be charged with the responsibility of planning and enforcing a coaching rota involving the senior players. One Rugby Union club in the South East fleshed out a typical example of how this works in practice:

"[The head coach] will organise the rota for the first team players to come in, so he's very much hands on and involved with the club, not just specifically with the first team. Which joins the club up doesn't it, to one club? They know he's getting paid. They have no problem with that because they're benefitting from his experience and his knowledge. He actually greases all the parts and gets them all working properly, and if there's any bits that are broken he'll repair them."

3.5.3 When does volunteering take place?

The timing of volunteer input is crucial, in light of the demands placed on the individuals who put themselves forward. Clubs were asked to identify the times of the week when they have peaks of unmet demand for volunteers, with 37% pinpointing weekday evenings, 38% highlighting Saturdays and 33% Sundays. This is a reflection of the peaks in voluntary sports club activity, where most competition takes place at weekends and training on weekday evenings.

While underlining the expectation that volunteers (more specifically those of working age) give up their free time to support their clubs, this 'contract' is at the heart of all volunteering. Testimony from the focus groups and telephone interviews suggests that most are happy to do so, for a variety of reasons, though this support is not unconditional:

"You say to someone can you do this? And they'll say well look I can't, I work every other Saturday or I work one in three. So they can't commit. There's very few people in my club who are off work every Saturday. It wasn't like that 20 years ago. The pubs used to shut at three o'clock, the supermarkets, shops weren't open, people didn't work. Society's changed."

Key Points

- One in four clubs has enough volunteers to meet day-to-day operational demands, while more than two thirds say that they are running over and above capacity. This places pressure on individuals, particularly in larger clubs, where the ratio of members to volunteers is higher.
- Volunteer capacity constraints restrict the ability of clubs to recruit new participants, while a quarter of clubs are unable to provide coaches as a result.
- While some fluctuations are inevitable, volunteer numbers at clubs are at generally stable, with 29% reporting growth, 15% seeing a reduction and 55% reporting no change over the last 12 months.
- The majority of clubs have plans to deal with volunteer capacity shortages
- The majority of roles require volunteers to contribute time at least once a week, particularly those that support participation. Clubs report peaks in unmet demand at

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weekends, and on weekday evenings, reflecting the predominance of people of working age in volunteer roles.

3.6 Volunteer Development

3.6.1 Beginning to Volunteer

Volunteers become involved with their clubs for a wide variety of reasons, but the two most common reasons cited by clubs are that parents want to support their child's involvement in sport (52%) or recruitment by a member of the club committee (51%). Many volunteers feel that these are two sides of the same transaction, with recruits identified from among the ranks of parents by existing volunteers. Indeed, the majority of interviewees felt that this was the most common method of encouraging people to volunteer:

"It does tend to be more people that are involved in some way with the club, be it through children playing or actually playing themselves. Ninety percent of our volunteers are from our kids who go through the system."

"We have just had the junior AGM, the majority of the attendees are the parents of somebody in the junior section. Everybody on the junior committee has some connection to a child playing at the club. They are down on a Sunday and they get involved because of their kids."

One volunteer from London explained recruiting new members to become volunteers is a continuous and long-term process:

"Most people join a club, they join to play. They only start volunteering once they fall in love with the club and want to help. You are never going to put yourself up to have a position within the club until you have been in the club at least three years. One because you don't know the people, you don't know how it's run, you want to make sure you want to stay there and you want to see it's the right level."

Many club members enter onto a volunteering pathway as participants, most frequently as coaches or match officials. Among the survey respondents, 36% said that volunteers began their volunteering journey by coaching younger participants, with coaches supporting teammates at 28% of clubs. Similarly, at just over a third of clubs, participants began operating as match officials in support of their colleagues.

"A couple of our swimmers are older swimmers who have just left us, and they have just done the judges' course for us, because they said although we can't swim anymore we would still like to be involved somewhere, so if we do the judges' course we can come back and judge."

The general consensus is that sports clubs need more volunteers but are unsure how to approach the strategic task of recruitment effectively or creatively and need support. Similarly, clubs are open to the idea of recruiting from outside the club but in practice, this happens only sporadically, for a number of reasons:

- resistance from core volunteers who have been at the club for years, to new people;
- the steep learning curve faced by new volunteers from 'outside' of the sport;
- suspicion regarding the motivation of volunteers from outside the club and/or the sport, and;
- negative experiences of volunteers gaining qualifications at the club's expense, and subsequently moving on.

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3.6.2 Qualifications and Accreditations

The need to have achieved an accredited qualification is most important in volunteer roles that support participation. Of the clubs that responded to the survey, over 70% had volunteers qualified in safeguarding, first aid and coaching. Coaches at 23% of clubs are working towards an accredited qualification, while one in five clubs said that their coaches were currently working towards a **higher** level of qualification.

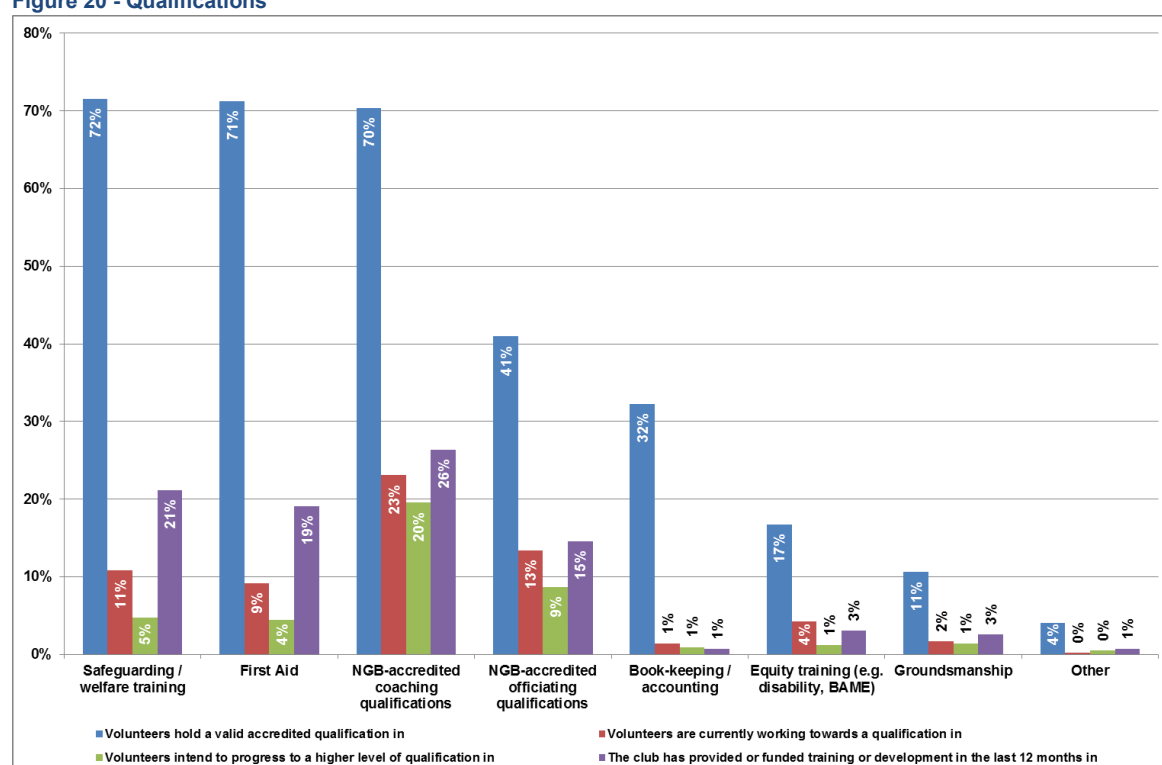
While the equivalent percentages for match officials were somewhat lower, (volunteers working towards becoming accredited at 13% of clubs and aiming for a higher grade at 9% of clubs), the data offer some encouragement that individuals remain keen to engage in the kind of training and development which will support their involvement, even if this eats further into their free time.

Clubs often choose to support their volunteers by subsidising the cost of their training, which was often seen as an investment. This also helps to mitigate the risk of coaches exploiting clubs' goodwill in covering training costs. In Yorkshire, hockey clubs ask trainee coaches to complete 40 hours of coaching in return for subsidising the costs of their qualification:

"They've got to do 20 hours coaching to get 50% of the cost back, and then they have to do another 20 hours to get the other 50% back. Because otherwise what you'll find is you'll pay for somebody to go through a coaching course and then they'll disappear and go to work somewhere else; so as a club you've got to get something out of it."

As with all investments however, the decision to fund training carries a risk that the recipient will take their expertise with them, should they leave the club. This is a particular risk for university students who will often leave upon graduation. As a result, many clubs offer direct and indirect financial incentives to volunteers, particularly coaches, which have the effect of raising costs.

Figure 20 - Qualifications



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Clubs are heavily reliant on NGBs to provide training for new coaches and match officials, but volunteers often have difficulty attending. Reasons put forward included: the cost of enrolment; distance from home; timing; and the number of places available. One volunteer in the North of England described how competition for places could be fierce:

"Having done a Level 1 not that many years ago, there were three hockey people on it and there were 21 students, some of which had never picked up a hockey stick in their life. They wanted it on their CV, and it actually stopped young people in the clubs getting on those courses."

3.6.3 Support Programmes for Voluntary Sports Clubs

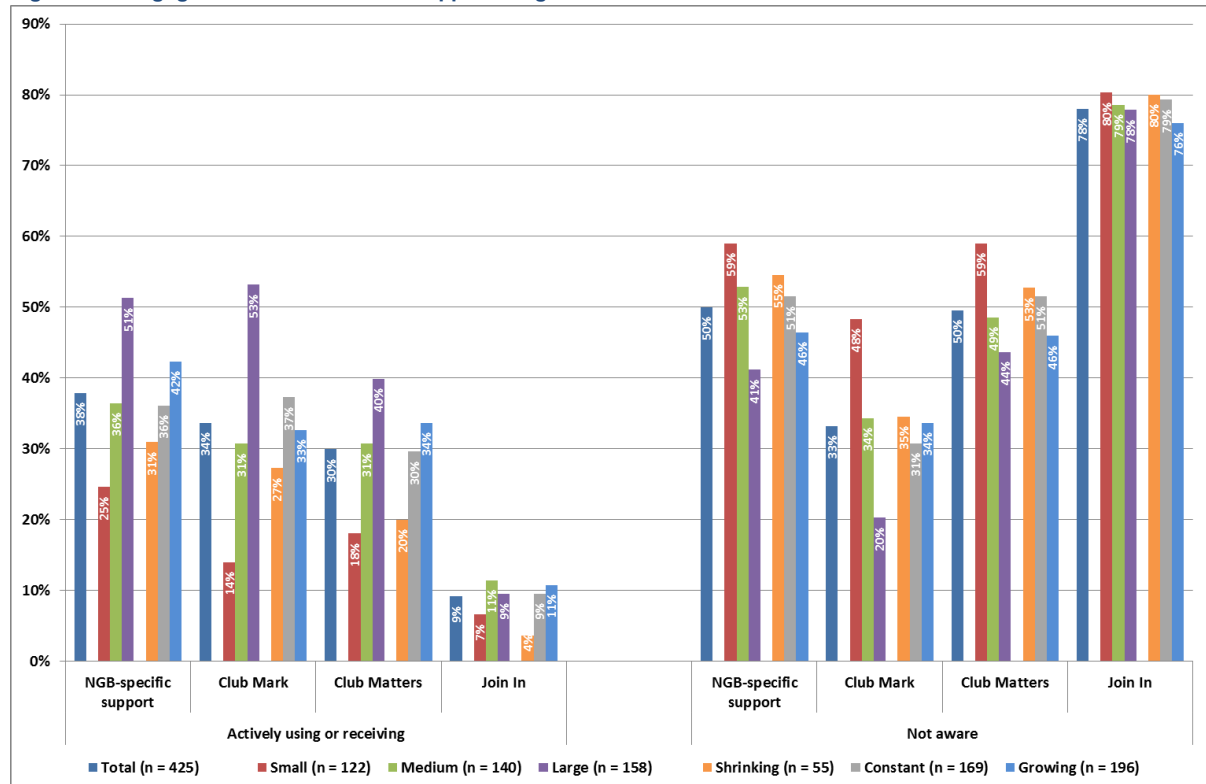
There is significant support available for clubs that wish to develop their volunteer capacity, from a variety of sources, and survey evidence suggests that many clubs have taken advantage. Engagement with programmes such as Clubmark or Club Matters has been promoted by Sport England and other agencies as a means of developing additional volunteer workforce capacity. NGBs also offer their own bespoke programmes of support for clubs, often in the form of training courses for coaches and match officials. Join In, a legacy programme of the 2012 Olympic Games, aims to match volunteers to opportunities in clubs in their local area.

Of the clubs surveyed online, 38% have received support from their NGB, while 34% are registered for Clubmark, and 30% have signed up for Club Matters. For comparison, just over 25% of clubs responding to the SRA Survey of Sports Clubs were actively using Club Matters. In contrast, only 9% of clubs are currently making active use of the Join In scheme. As Figure 21 demonstrates, engagement with these support programmes is highest among the larger clubs, with the exception of Join In. More than half of clubs (53%) with more than 125 playing members have engaged with Clubmark, and a similar number (51%) have received support from their NGB, while 40% of larger clubs use Club Matters. Smaller clubs are less likely to have engaged with any of the support programmes, with only 25% accessing NGB-specific support, and 14% applying for Clubmark. Volunteers from smaller clubs suggested that their ability to take advantage of this support was constrained by their existing volunteer capacity.

"We looked into doing the Clubmark, but the amount of work that's involved when it's like the two of us, and then we've just got the students. It was too hard to make it viable for us as a small club. I can't see the benefit of it."

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Figure 21 - Engagement with Volunteer Support Programmes



As Figure 21 reveals, clubs which are growing are more likely to have engaged with one of the support programmes, than clubs that are shrinking in size, though the differences are less pronounced. The graph also highlights the extent to which clubs are 'not aware' of the support on offer. Nearly 80% of clubs are unaware of Join In, while half of all clubs (and 59% of clubs with fewer than 25 members) are unacquainted with the Club Matters website, or any programme of NGB-specific support. Clubmark seems to have made the most market penetration, with only one in three clubs unaware of its existence, but even this figure is notably higher for small clubs, at 48%. There is therefore clear 'market potential' for each of the various strands of support on offer, though the challenge for NGBs and Sport England is to persuade hitherto disinterested clubs of the long-term value of engagement with programmes that may add to volunteer workload in the short term.

Most clubs that are actively using one of the four strands of available support have noted an improvement in their ability to manage volunteers (Figure 22). NGB-specific support appears to be the most effective, with more than three quarters of the clubs that had received it saying that they had noted an improvement. Clubmark and Club Matters generated improvements in volunteer management in just under 70% of clubs that engaged with each of the programmes, though the work involved in achieving Clubmark accreditation makes the benefits of the programme harder to sell to sceptical volunteers:

"The benefits of it are there, but I can totally see it's not for everyone. I had a lot of objections in my club. There were people asking why we have to do all this stuff, it's just more admin. And I said yeah, but once we do it, and there are some benefits that come from it. It does put you at the top of the piles."

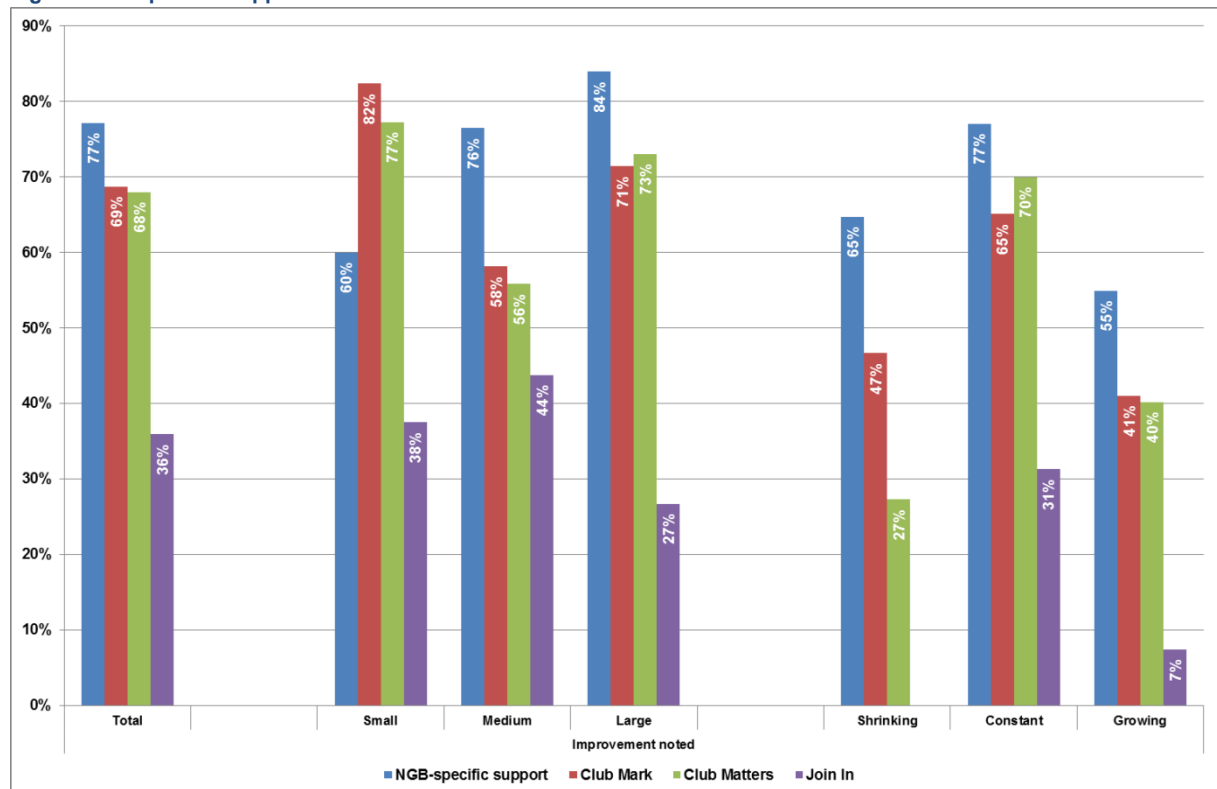
The preparation of a club development plan is a pre-requisite for Clubmark accreditation, which presents a significant barrier for clubs with limited capacity. Nevertheless, the primary benefit of Clubmark, cited by a number of clubs at interview, was the improvement made to

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club structure, though there were few detailed examples put forward of changes made as a result of achieving the accreditation. One roller sports club in the South was able to be more specific however:

"The framework of Clubmark acted as a checklist of all the things we needed to do in setting up the club, its governance, and the requirements for coaching, it has helped us as a club get all of these in place, and where there were gaps ensure they were filled. It has improved the club across all of its activities, its communications with members and their families and supporters and helped us increase our membership using a variety of forms of media. In short, it has helped us set up a great club that is growing and moving forward in a very positive way."

Figure 22 - Impact of Support



In contrast, the Join In programme was regarded as less successful, with only 37% of clubs who had signed up for the scheme noting a positive impact. Interestingly, Join In is the only scheme that can directly deliver new volunteers, but in interviews, clubs reported that the inevitable learning curve for volunteers with no previous involvement in their sport is problematic.

The experience of one club in South Yorkshire goes some way to explaining why Join In has had less of an impact than Clubmark and Club Matters. In essence, despite extensive efforts, recruiting volunteers who do not already have a connection with the club has proven to be a tough task:

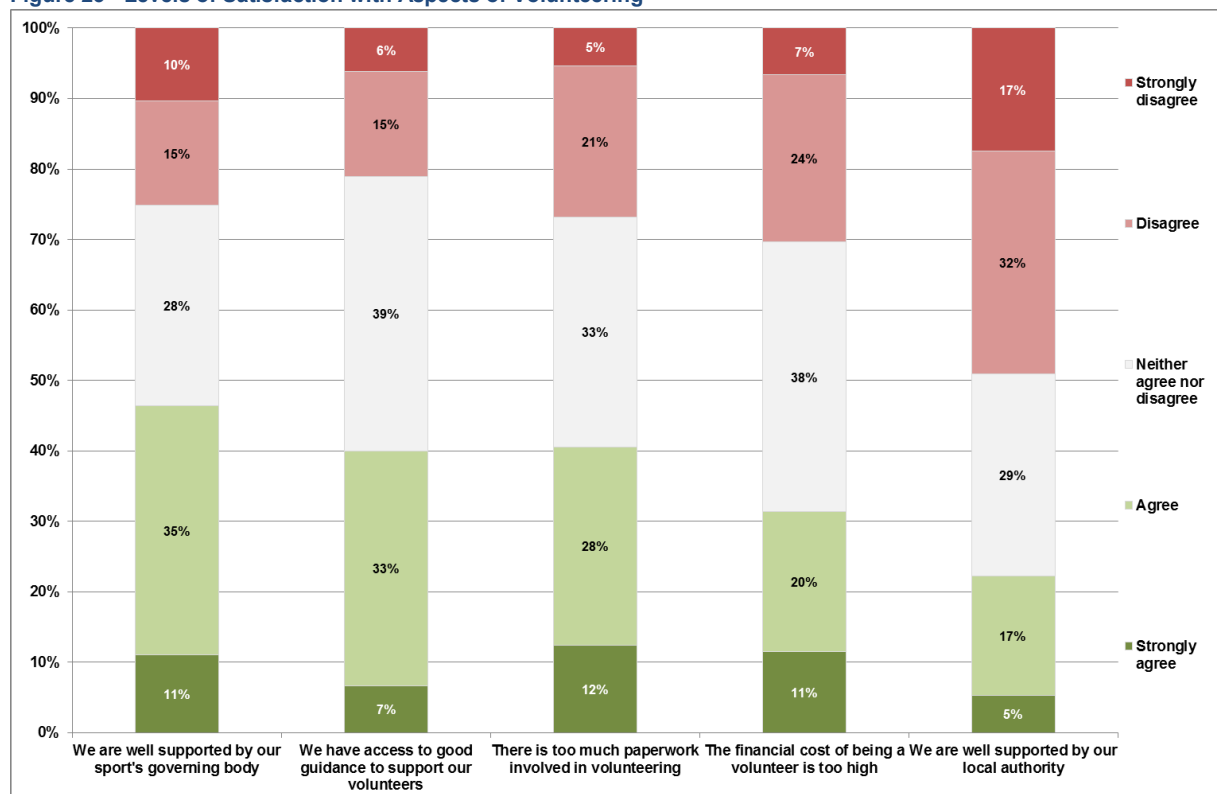
"We have a volunteer policy document and a recruitment document, and then we're linked into volunteer organisations in our town, that recruit and organise volunteers. But even having all those in place, the amount of people we've got from outside the club is minimal; we've had two."

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Interestingly, it is the smaller clubs that are happiest with the support they receive through Clubmark, 82% noting an improvement, with 77% reporting a similar effect from engagement with Club Matters. NGB support is felt to be more important by larger clubs with 84% noting an improvement as a result. More broadly, the majority of clubs report positive impacts in each case, though fewer clubs which have experienced growth over the last 12 months, have noted improvement in their volunteer management. The issue therefore appears to be how to persuade clubs to engage with the support available. Reasons cited by clubs for not engaging with the support programmes include capacity shortages, bureaucracy, and in the case of Clubmark, the time involved to complete the application process, as typified by the response of one swimming club:

"Club Mark is a highly bureaucratic process set up with the best intentions. Completing the process is one of the things that tries the patience of volunteers and paid staff. Much of it does not help us, it is just box ticking."

Figure 23 - Levels of Satisfaction with Aspects of Volunteering



Club officials are nevertheless generally satisfied with the guidance and support they receive from their governing body (Figure 23), though it is clear that local authorities have much less capacity to assist clubs in their area. Almost 50% of clubs feel that their local authority is not supportive, which is likely to be a reaction to the progressive withdrawal of local government agencies from the arena as a result of funding cuts.

Interestingly, while 40% of clubs feel that there is too much paperwork, only 31% believe that the financial cost of volunteering is too high, despite the frequent references to course fees by club representatives. This may be a reflection of club's willingness to subsidise training and development course costs, as part of a long-term investment in volunteers.

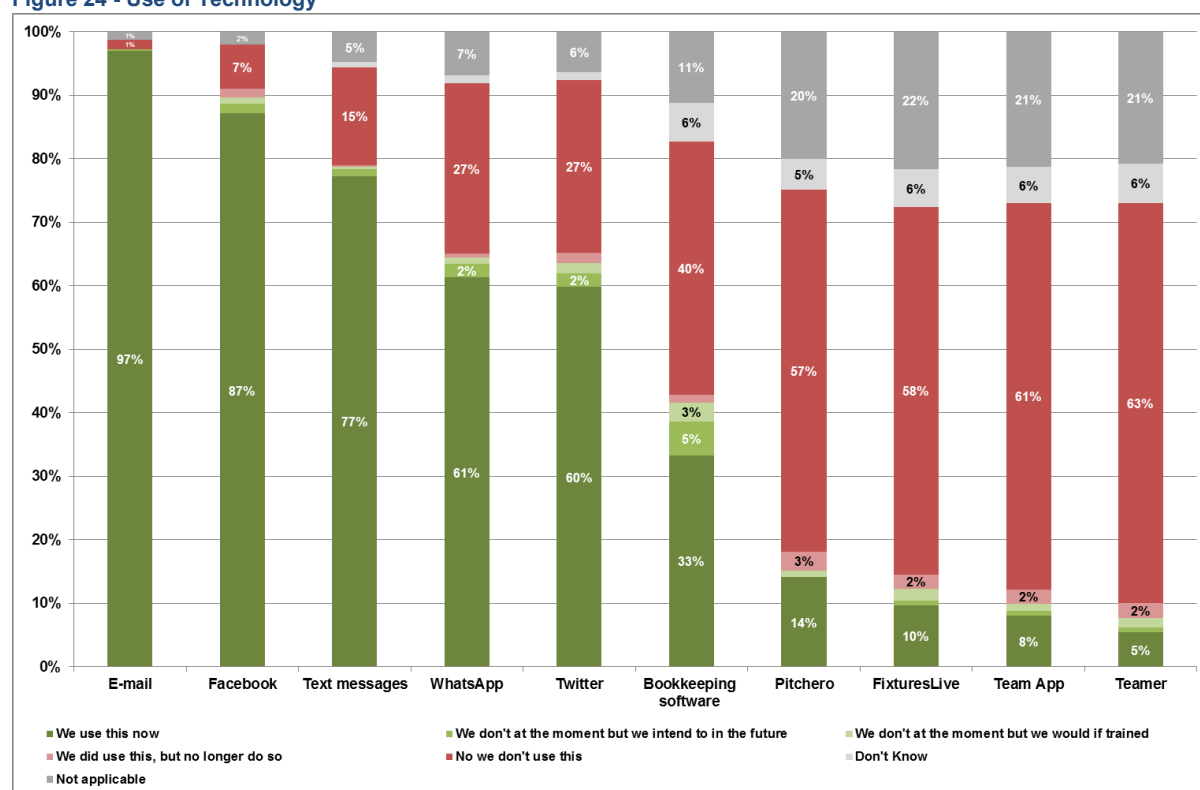
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3.6.4 Technological Support

In addition to the practical support offered by NGBs and other agencies, clubs have benefitted from the use of technology to ease the burden on their volunteers. Clubs employ a variety of software packages and applications, with a particular emphasis on communication technology. Almost every club currently uses e-mail (97%), with the majority also using at least one form of social media, most commonly Facebook (87%). The widespread availability and use of smartphones is reflected in the high proportion of clubs making use of text messages (77%) and WhatsApp (61%) to communicate with members and volunteers, while Twitter is also in use as a quick and easy way of sharing information (60%).

In contrast, only one in three clubs makes use of bookkeeping software to manage their finances and prepare accounts. There appears to be some potential for this number to increase however, with 5% of clubs intending to make use of accounting packages, and a further 3% stating that they would do so if trained.

Figure 24 - Use of Technology



The use of club management apps such as Pitchero (14% of clubs), FixturesLive (10%), TeamApp (8%) and Teamer (5%) is much less widespread. There is also evidence of some degree of 'churn', with a small but notable number of clubs stating that they no longer use the apps. Clubs also identified a number of other technological solutions that would support their operations, including new or improved websites, membership database software, and other online registration solutions.

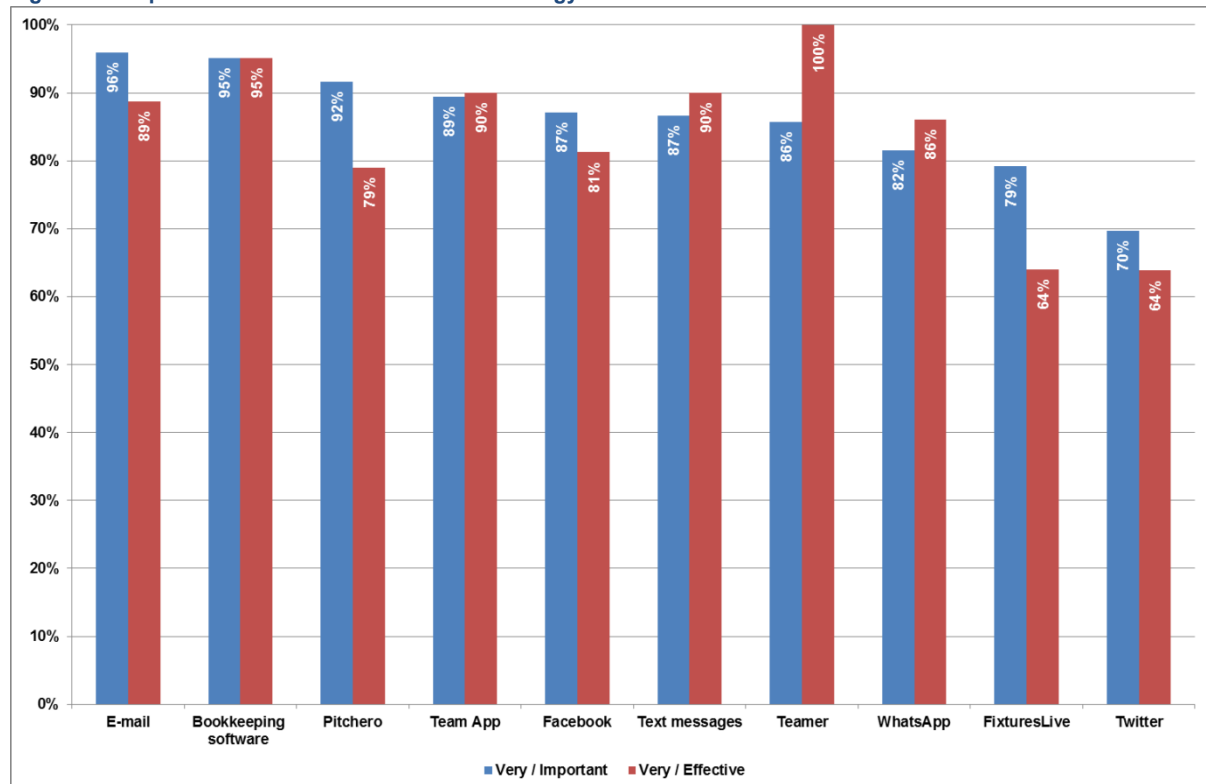
By simplifying the administrative processes of running a voluntary sports club, the use of technology might be expected to relieve a significant amount of the burden from volunteers. In practice however, all such systems are dependent on human input, and volunteers reported a number of instances where the effects of bureaucracy were still in evidence. For example, one in seven clubs (14%) reported that they had been hindered by the need to share

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passwords among volunteers. Over one in five (22%) had difficulty in accessing specific software, often because of problems with installation.

Once adopted, technological assistance rapidly becomes indispensable to club volunteers. Clubs reported that the technology they used was both important **and** effective in supporting their work (Figure 25), because of the considerable savings to be made, both financially, and in terms of time spent managing the administrative tasks on which clubs are so dependent. Nevertheless, nearly a quarter of clubs were concerned about current or future costs related to using technology, in the form of software licences or registration fees.

Figure 25 - Importance and Effectiveness of Technology

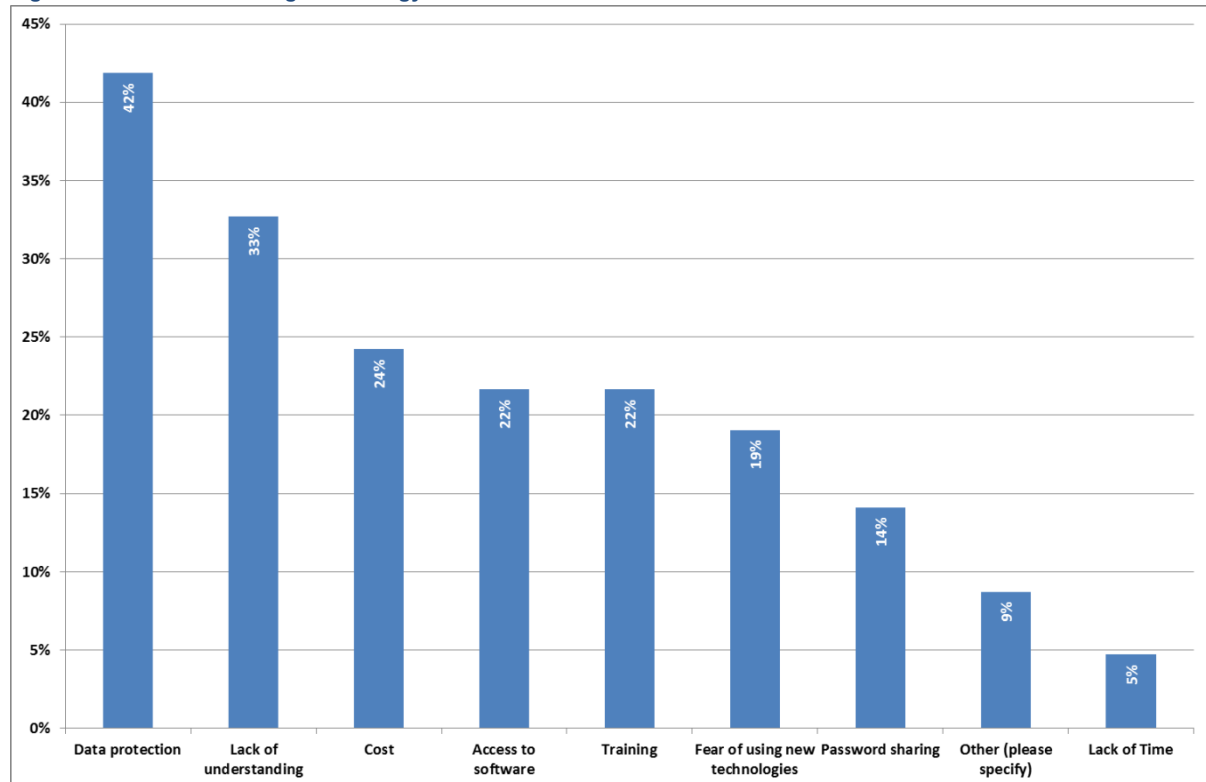


In many cases, the technology has enabled a simplification or streamlining of previously complex processes such as club affiliation, membership registration, and collection of fees. While not necessarily underpinned by a specific piece of software or application, the general principle of online club management has gained widespread acceptance, with e-mail becoming the default means of communication for most clubs, leagues and governing bodies.

Using technology to support club administration is not entirely pain-free (Figure 26). The introduction of the General Data Protection Requirement legislation in May 2018 generated notable anxiety among volunteers in relation to the handling of personal information. Just over 40% of clubs highlighted this as a significant issue, and it was considered by many interviewees to be an additional hurdle to be overcome. The perception of some technology appears to prevent some volunteers from enjoying the benefits that it might otherwise bring. A third of clubs lacked understanding, while nearly one in five clubs reported that fear of technology was a barrier to its use, and in interview, there was general agreement that these concerns were appreciably more apparent among older volunteers.

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Figure 26 - Barriers to Using Technology



The cost of using technology to support volunteers was an issue for one in four clubs, with just over a fifth saying that they had issues with accessing software, and a similar percentage lacking the necessary training to exploit it.

3.6.5 Retaining Volunteers

There is little evidence to suggest any imminent decline in the sports club volunteer workforce. Clubs report that the majority of their volunteers intend to carry on in their current roles for at least two years, with 40% continuing for the foreseeable future. Only 12% of volunteers (4.1 per club) are expected to withdraw their services within the next 12 months, and in some cases at least, this is due to the natural cycle of specific roles, such as team captain. In fact, clubs recruit an average of 4.4 new volunteers per year, suggesting that for the present time at least, this level of turnover is manageable.

The primary reason why some volunteers are considering withdrawing, is a lack of time to carry out their role, cited by 44% of clubs. Work commitments (38%) and family commitments (34%) were also key considerations. This corroborates the findings of the Active People and Active Lives surveys, which have consistently reported the impact of lifestyle changes and milestones (such as taking on employment or starting a family), on involvement with sport and physical activity. Of more concern, potentially, is that 27% of volunteers appear to have lost motivation, though again, this may be natural product of a volunteering lifecycle in which parents are inspired to support a club as a result of their child's participation.

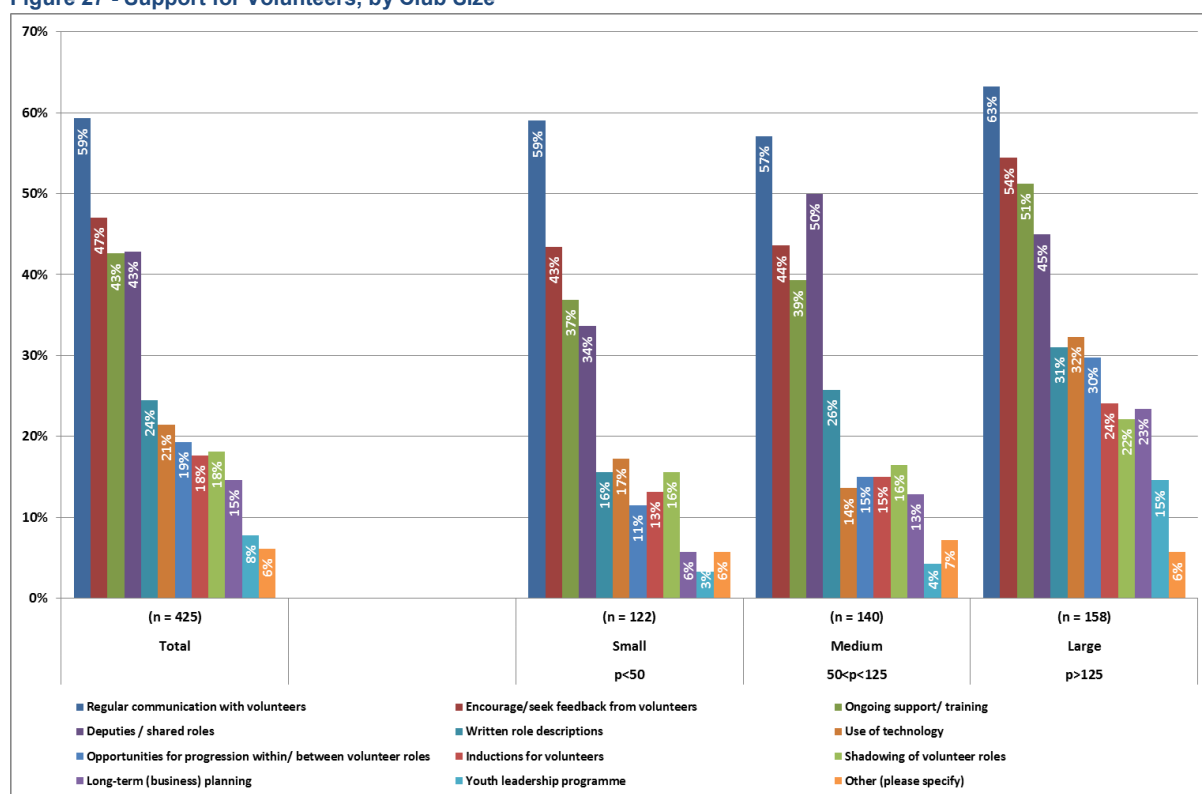
In response, clubs have employed a number of strategies to reward and recognise their volunteers, most commonly saying a simple 'thank you' (91%), with more than half (54%) using their website or club magazine to highlight individuals' contributions. Almost as many clubs (47%) use an annual awards night to the same effect, while 36% lay on social functions for their coaches, match officials and administrators. Just over a third of clubs reimburse

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expenses, while one club in five offers a discount on subscription fees in return for volunteer efforts.

Clubs also try to ensure stability among their volunteers in other ways (Figure 27), foremost among them being regular communication (59%) and encouraging feedback (47%), while 43% offer ongoing support and training. Some clubs, make an effort to share roles to ease the burden on key individuals (43%), which may include volunteers acting as deputies to a primary role holder. At a quarter of the clubs in the survey, the management of volunteers is supported by the use of written role descriptions, while only one in five clubs relies on technology in one form or another. In each case, these efforts to encourage stability among volunteers are more prevalent in larger clubs (Figure 25).

Figure 27 - Support for Volunteers, by Club Size



Key Points

- Volunteers are most commonly recruited either because of their child's involvement in sport, or an approach by a member of the club's committee. Recruitment is, by necessity, a continuous process, but few clubs take a strategic approach. For this reason, recruitment of volunteers from outside of the club or sport is patchy.
- Clubs are broadly supportive of the need to engage in training and development leading to accredited qualifications. This is particularly true of welfare officers, coaches and match officials, where the need for minimum standards to be maintained is recognised.
- A significant number of clubs have taken advantage of at least one programme of support for volunteer management, with 38% receiving assistance from their NGB, while 34% have engaged with Clubmark, and 30% with Club Matters. Only 9% of clubs have engaged with the volunteer matching opportunities afforded by Join In. The majority of those clubs that have engaged report an improvement in their management

of volunteers as a result. There is a significant potential market for Clubmark, Club Matters, Join In and NGB-specific support among clubs that have not yet engaged.

- Clubs are making increasing use of technology to ease the burden on individual volunteers, though in the majority of cases, the technology concerned is used for communication. E-mail is now the default method of communication within and between clubs, on grounds of cost and haste. Only a small proportion of clubs have made use of team management apps such as Teamer or FixturesLive, but those that have note their effectiveness.
- There is little evidence of any imminent decline in the number of volunteers supporting club sport, though time pressures may cause some to withdraw. Many clubs try to reward their volunteers in tangible ways, in order to encourage them to continue in their role.

3.7 Challenges and Opportunities

Clubs were asked in the online survey to identify their three most significant challenges in relation to volunteering. The discussion that follows summarises the broad themes and issues identified.

3.7.1 Balancing Conflicting Demands

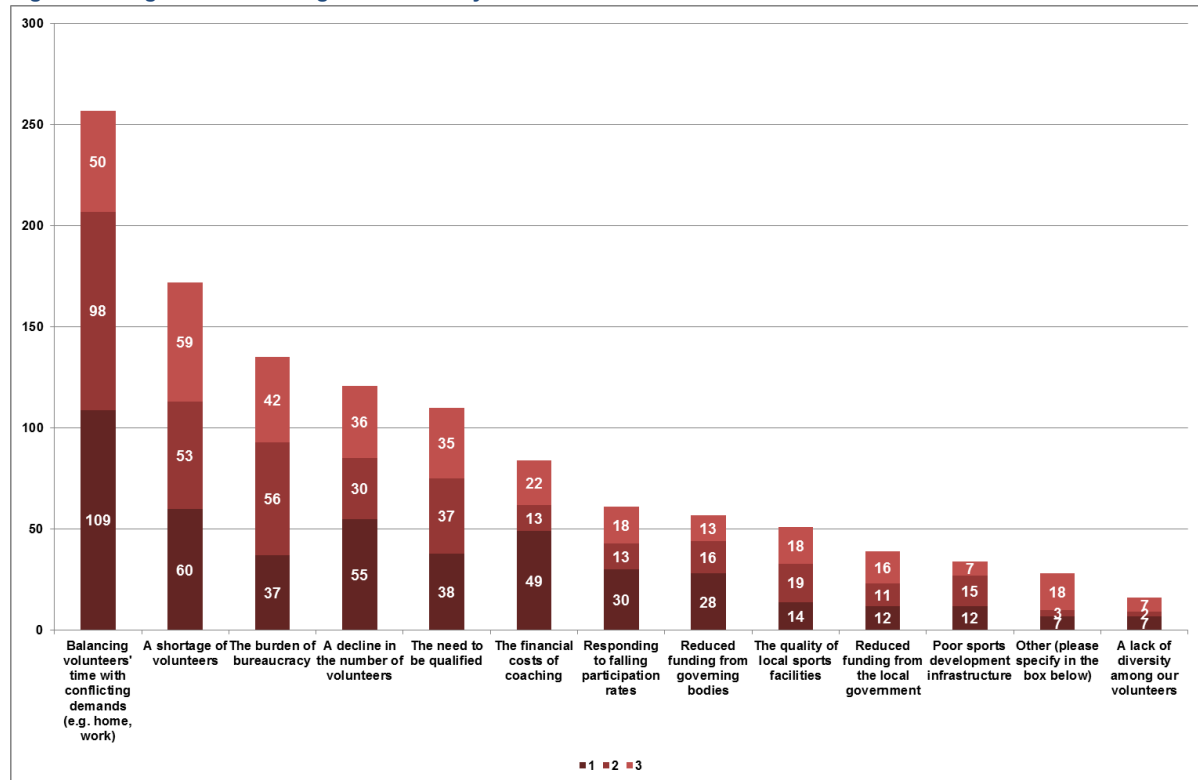
The single most important challenge facing volunteers is the need to balance involvement with the conflicting demands of family life and paid employment, identified by 60% of clubs (Figure 28). This not only confirms the findings relating to reasons for withdrawing from volunteering, but also hints at the pressures faced by individuals in continuing to support the operations of their clubs. As this report has demonstrated, volunteering is an activity that has to be scheduled around work and family commitments, but club volunteering may also lead to additional demands on time from other agencies concerned with the organisation of a sport, such as leagues and governing bodies. In addition, volunteering is not an activity restricted to sport, and the individuals who support clubs often give their time to other activities and organisations.

The most significant issue generated by the need to balance conflicting demands is clearly the pressure on volunteers' free time. The demands on volunteers in current core committee and coaching roles are frequent, extensive and carry a high degree of responsibility. This can be enough of a disincentive to put potential volunteers off altogether, particularly if individuals decide to prioritise family or paid employment at critical stages. Equally, for volunteers who also participate, the desire to continue to play may override their willingness to support others' participation through officiating or coaching.

As this report has already shown, the issue of conflicting demands is especially acute for volunteers who support their sport beyond the club environment, through the NGB or as part of a league committee. There was no clear consensus among interviewees as to how to manage the dilemma: some had been forced to choose between their club commitments, and the additional roles that they had taken on, though others felt able to continue in multiple roles, subject to certain caveats.

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Figure 28 - Significant Challenges Identified by Clubs



Given these demands on volunteers, it is surprising that, as a management response, job-sharing appears to be limited to the less formal volunteer roles. Only 12% of clubs had more than one person in the position of treasurer, with fewer still (8%) sharing the role of club chair. One club chair theorised that this reflected the specialised nature of the positions, and the skills required to carry them out effectively:

"Collaboration is hard and people naturally have different preferences in ways of working and they need to communicate appropriately to make sure that the service is consistent, which is not an easy thing to do. If I wanted to do accounts I wouldn't really get two people in to share the role, I would probably just get one person who is more suited to the job and have the other person doing something else."

In this context, traditional, formal club structures may act as a barrier in responding to some of the pressures created by the need to balance conflicting demands. Clubs that lack the flexibility to make short-term additions to their workforce run the risk of losing more capacity if existing volunteers cannot be supported to continue.

3.7.2 Managing Volunteer Workloads

The majority of clubs stated that their support team had either grown (29%) or remained constant (54%) over the last 12 months. Nevertheless, more than two thirds of clubs felt that they needed more volunteers to manage their existing workload, and that this deficit had a negative impact on their club's activities. This may reflect the widespread view among individuals interviewed for this research that voluntary sports clubs were subject to increasing bureaucracy, which interfered with operational delivery. Though the perception of this issue may be worse than the reality, there is still considerable concern at the dependence on volunteers with heavy workloads:

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"People who are already doing a hundred and one other things pick it up and do a hundred and two things. Because it's got to happen; some of these roles have got to happen haven't they, or it will all fall apart. So it's a case of somebody's got to do it."

"There'll be one or two characters, and if they go and you haven't got a system in place, the thing can [go] from here to there overnight. It is that fast. Every club functions that way, and it's something that [NGBs and other agencies] have never got their heads round ever. It starts with one or two committed individuals at every club. And it's how do you encourage and keep those, and unfortunately you don't last forever."

Nearly all clubs (90%) have the capacity to manage more volunteers, and most (82%) have plans in place to recruit, almost exclusively from within the club and most often through word of mouth (70%). In focus groups and interviews however, club representatives revealed that they would prefer to deploy new volunteers to share the existing workload, rather than put on additional activities. In essence, clubs may be operating at the limits of their volunteers' capacity, but any increase in the size of the workforce would be used to reduce individuals' burdens. One Rugby League volunteer from the North West explained how taking on multiple roles prevented their coach from being able to focus on their primary task:

"We have got a coach who is going out recruiting, organising their whole team rather than just delivering sessions, dealing with parents and other people, so they are not just focussing on coaching. So it would just be a little bit better if we had a couple more volunteers so take some of the pressure off the coaches."

There appear to be particular strains on clubs where the volunteer team is much smaller. When volunteers are forced to take on multiple roles to maintain capacity, the risk of disruption caused by resignation, illness or conflict with other demands on time are increased, and the consequence can be more severe. When a key volunteer withdraws their services, the club may reach a tipping point, which only significant intervention can prevent from resulting in clubs folding altogether. One sports development officer from Yorkshire outlined a typical case study:

"You see it in clubs where one volunteer insists on things being done a certain way, and that alienates the others, so they take a back seat. Then the club's down to, say, 3 volunteers supporting 50 players. If one of them decides they've had enough, you've got a problem on your hands, and we would intervene, because if one club folds, that's one less club for everyone else to play against. It takes between eighteen months and two years to turn that kind of situation around, working from the ground up."

Paradoxically, a sense of crisis can sometimes foster the will to engage:

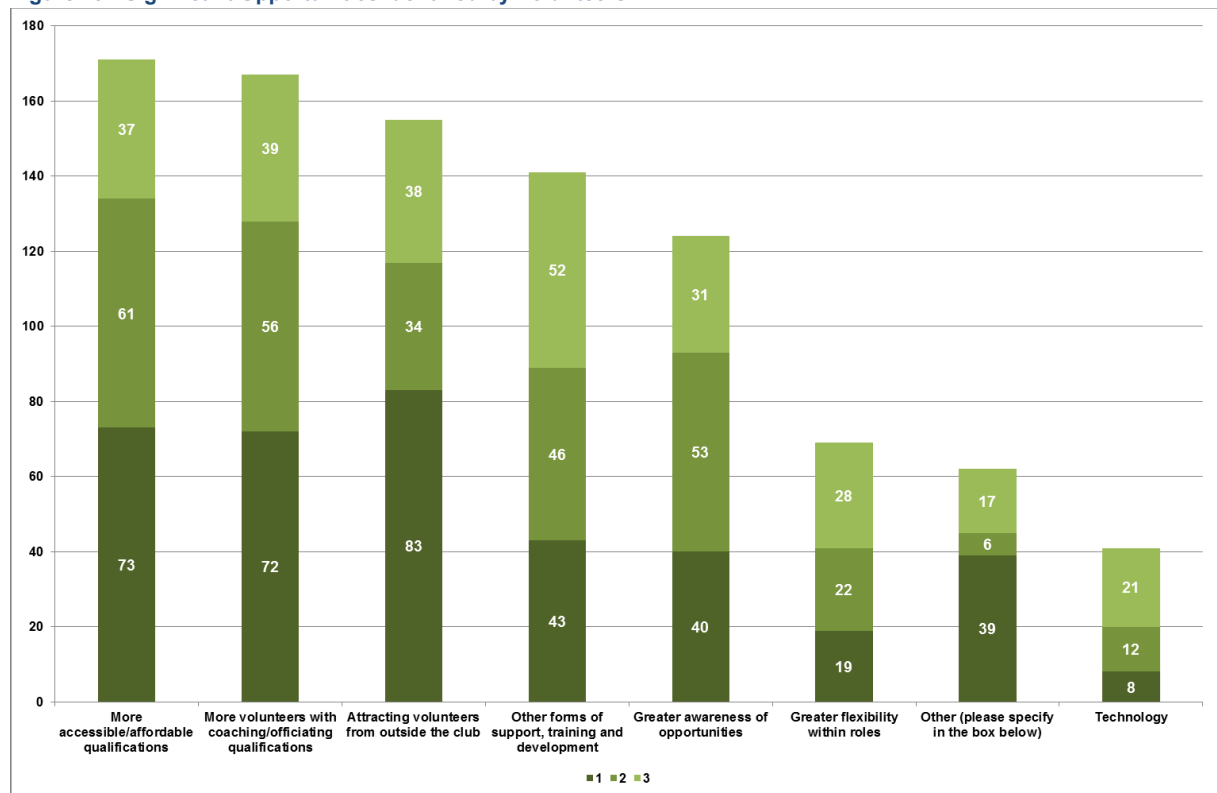
"A crisis causes people to come out the woodwork. Some parents do not want to get involved, and then suddenly to find out that nobody is going to be there to coach their child on a Saturday or drive anybody to a match, it's not ideal. At that point only is when some people say okay then, I will do something."

The appointment of a volunteer co-ordinator is one solution to the issue of managing workloads that has been promoted by Sport England and NGBs. Feedback from the clubs

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suggests that relatively few have adopted this to date, with only 34% deeming it a necessary and discrete role, and only 20% having a volunteer in place to carry it out. In many cases, the responsibilities of a volunteer co-ordinator come under the remit of another volunteer in the club, most often that of secretary or chair. Consequently, tasks are commonly allocated on an ad-hoc basis, rather than in a strategic way, resulting in an increased risk of duplication or omission. It therefore appears that there is more work to be done to persuade clubs of the value of the volunteer co-ordinator role.

Figure 29 - Significant Opportunities Identified by Volunteers



As Figure 29 demonstrates, only a small proportion of clubs recognise the additional opportunities offered by the use of technology. Those clubs that do adopt technological solutions to supporting volunteers have benefitted from some notable efficiency gains, not least in the collection of subscriptions and match fees, with a number of clubs commenting that they had moved to cashless financial systems as a result. There is evidence of resistance however, particularly when the software or application in question comes at a financial cost, with some volunteers reluctant to use online technology for fear of falling foul of data protection regulations.

One response to the need to identify and develop new volunteers, which has been applied successfully in some clubs, is the use of written role descriptions. This helps to provide clarity in terms of expectations on individuals who might consider volunteering, though the adoption of the practice is far from comprehensive.

"I've been fighting for a year to write down the roles and responsibilities for each position. What they're actually getting much better at is ensuring there's a handover from year to year. I expected them to be doing lots of things and they didn't even know they had to do them."

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3.7.3 Managing Bureaucracy

One of the key selling points of moving to online administration is the reduction in the amount of paperwork involved. Indeed, actual form filling now appears to be the exception rather than the rule in terms of NGB affiliation, league registration and other administrative processes that underpin participation. This shift towards automation has not eliminated bureaucracy entirely however, with negative examples painting some officials in a poor light.

"We pride ourselves on being a really well run club and having that Clubmark accreditation is really big feather in your cap, but we really don't feel like we are getting any backing, support, or transparency around this to be honest."

The need for coaches and match officials to have a minimum level of accreditation recognised by their sport's NGB is generally accepted and understood by club officials. The perception that coaching courses serve only to generate income for NGBs is surprisingly pervasive among volunteers, while the need to complete repeated DBS checks continues to generate resentment among volunteers. One football club chair from London outlined how this can deter volunteers from coming forward:

"I'm not against them, but they've got your details and obviously if something goes wrong after they've done it should red flag, and then we should be told. And it's the same with child protection courses. They're good courses. But once you've been on one course, they're saying if you don't go on another one in two years' time you've got to start from scratch."

Occasionally however, it is other rules and regulations surrounding training and qualification that interfere with individuals' progress along their chosen pathway, as one striking example from the South West demonstrates:

"The NGB won't accept the Sport Active [welfare] qualification. They want their own one. The Time to Listen course for welfare officers for sport clubs should be pretty generic. So now what they've done is they've said our club has issues because our welfare officers don't have the Time to Listen qualification, when actually they do."

3.7.4 Keeping Costs Down

In general, voluntary sports clubs are keen to minimise the financial cost of volunteering in principle. As with many other aspects of volunteering however, it is the larger clubs that have greater capacity to act in this regard, often because they are based at facilities over which they have financial control. Asset-owning clubs are able to generate income, primarily from bar sales, but also from facility hire and coaching fees:

"It's a win, win situation because when people are coming in, they're coming in to drink. And that's what has maintained the membership of the club. The only revenue stream this club has got is the income from the bar, this room, the hire and of course membership. So everything relies on what we do currently in terms of income."

This is not available to all clubs however, and those which rent their playing facilities, or which use public space, are forced to be more inventive. This may limit the extent to which clubs can assist their volunteers, resulting in the costs being borne by the individual. The issue of payment for services can be a thorny one for club officials. Many clubs cover reasonable

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expenses incurred in the course of volunteering, most frequently in the form of travel costs. When clubs decide to make direct payment for services however, this can raise expectations among other volunteers:

"In the beginning everybody was voluntary, for about seven years. Then one person asked to be paid something and as soon as you paid one you had to pay everybody. Then nobody would do anything unless they were paid."

Club officials were consistent in calling for governing bodies to review the costs, both direct and indirect, of the training courses they provide. Many believe that course fees are prohibitively high, but a number of volunteers also highlighted the hidden costs of training, such as travel and accommodation for overnight stays. These costs can be compounded for self-employed or shift workers, who are required to attend courses during working hours.

"I understand it with the coaching courses, because it does teach you good practice, good techniques and stuff like that. But you make them have time off work to do courses, it just puts barriers in the way, and it's off-putting. We've seen people give up because they're having to do things."

For some volunteers, there are additional hurdles to be overcome:

"Most of our coaches are parents to children with special needs anyway so a lot of them can't take a weekend away to go and do an FA course. If they were going to do a course that was say 3 hours, 6-9 they can have to bring people in to look after the child. So often with our groups something like doing a course is just not as simple as it first sounds."

In addition to the costs of training courses, clubs find that they can be penalised for failing to supply suitably qualified personnel to support competitions:

"I'm struggling for a second judge for this weekend, so we will be fined £100 for not providing that judge. And we've already paid £200 in fines this year but if we haven't got judges what can we do?"

In other cases, volunteers can find themselves being punished for human error:

"They're very quick to fine you for minute mistakes, which is a bugbear of mine. One of the leagues we play in, seven-year-old kids have to sign a match card, and if their signature is put in the wrong place or not similar to what it was the week before they hit you with a fine! These kids are seven, some of them can barely write! It's another cost that we have to find, or teams have to find, and obviously we pay."

"We get fined for any mistake we make with admin. The amount of admin we do is farcical at times. It took me 20 hours of my time to get a transfer arranged, just to get it through the system. It was so convoluted."

3.7.5 Identifying New Recruits

Volunteers are motivated to support their clubs by a range of factors, whether this is the altruistic aspiration to maintain the club for the benefit of future participants, or the more personal but equally valid desire to gain coaching qualifications that may be used to earn income later as career development. This does however highlight one of the continuing

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dilemmas facing clubs in the voluntary sector, which is how to identify and recruit volunteers who will engage with the club in the long-term.

Club officials were clear in their view that growth in participation drives growth in the number of volunteers. There is little if any evidence, from either the online survey or the qualitative interviews, to support the idea that clubs plan their volunteer deployment strategically, in advance of player recruitment. Recruitment and development of volunteers is more likely to be a response either to membership growth, or to external pressures, such as new legislation (e.g. child protection and safeguarding, or GDPR). This reactive approach may explain why the majority of clubs (70%) recruit new volunteers through word of mouth, with a sizable proportion (41%) making appeals through social media.

Family and friends of participants are viewed as an especially legitimate target 'market' for volunteers. The majority of club representatives interviewed were in agreement with the idea that the recruitment of junior participants frequently led to the engagement of their parents as volunteers:

"We're not going to get many volunteers that just rock up at our place off the street saying 'yeah I'm Joe Bloggs, I'd like to volunteer to run that'. If we get more children through our door that means more parents, that means more volunteers that way. And that's the way it works at most clubs I'm sure."

The emotional connection to a club appears to be one of the reasons why the idea of recruiting volunteers externally has found only limited success. Club officials are open to the idea in principle, but in practice, external volunteers have a steeper learning curve, and without empathy for the sport and its participants, they may struggle for acceptance by existing members, who appear to question their motives. Indeed, some felt that their members might be suspicious of volunteers who have no prior connection with the sport, or their club's members, often because of a poor experience:

"We interviewed a few years ago because we got some interest through Voluntary Action, but then they never materialised after. So it does tend to be more people that are involved in some way with the club, be it through children playing or actually playing themselves."

Club officials are well aware that the burden placed on individual volunteers can be onerous; all the more so when a volunteer role carries with it an element of legal or financial liability. This is a particular concern for roles such as Treasurer or Welfare Officer. An individual's decision to refuse to volunteer is often based on their perception of the time involved or the complexity of the task, irrespective of the amount of technical and emotional support put in place by the club. The complexity of the work involved in more specialised volunteer roles, along with the additional responsibility, appears to act as a threshold over which some volunteers will not cross.

"If you're a director of this club you're volunteering but you've got all the legal liability, and that can frighten people I think. The role you're taking on is quite a responsibility. The person who stepped down as secretary felt the pressure of the whole thing. She felt she was letting people down and she stepped away from it on that basis. I was sad because she did a good job and we all got on very well."

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Clubs continue to rely on word of mouth to recruit the majority of their volunteers, and this often begins with informal requests for help with small but specific tasks, such as setting out tables and chairs for a meeting. While the formal role of volunteer co-ordinator may be a relative rarity, many sports clubs have individuals who will allocate these jobs on an ad-hoc basis, as one long-term Rugby Union volunteer from London describes:

"[The club chair] is a menace in a way. But without people like that, nothing would get done. I was down there the other day, and they were hosting a training session for new players. She gave everyone a job to do. Didn't matter if they were a member or not. Collecting the balls, putting the pads on the posts. Holding a tackle bag. By the end of the session, she'd got them all involved. And they loved it!"

Although involvement of this nature is more suitable to specific situations, such as one-off events or activities, this kind of micro-volunteering opportunity is often the first step on a pathway to a deeper level of engagement with the club. The key supporting concept is one of informality however. Potential volunteers can be persuaded to take on a formal role, if they are first engaged casually, without having to make a full commitment. This has the added benefit of relieving the strain on existing volunteers:

"I'm a great believer in lots of people doing a little, rather than a few people doing a lot because I think that leads to a longer term involvement. I've seen very good people just getting worn down and in the end walking away because they can't keep all the balls in the air. And they feel they're letting people down because they haven't done it."

These examples also underline the importance of role models within a club, who set the tone for new members. Club representatives repeatedly referred to a volunteering ethos, built up over a long period of time, which underpinned their operations. For clubs that are struggling to attract or retain volunteers, establishing such a culture may seem a daunting prospect, and an area where NGBs could be more supportive and proactive.

3.7.6 Investment in People

Clubs recognise the value of training and developing their volunteer workforce to the long-term development of their organisations. Finding the time and resources necessary is seen as a worthwhile investment on behalf of both the club and the individual. Clubs are facing rising costs on a number of fronts, and for the majority of clubs; volunteer development puts a significant dent in their budget. Nevertheless, clubs remain willing to underwrite the costs, for strategic reasons:

"In the past we've supported coaches because everybody is short of coaches. So we give them £50 towards their coaching courses. But this year we've taken that away and we're going to support judging. But you can't get the people in the first place. It's not increasing the number of judges in the county if there aren't judging courses. There's one judging course a year - that's in September."

Clubs are reasonably entitled to expect a return on this investment, in terms of a more developed workforce that is able to support the club more efficiently and effectively. But as volunteers become better qualified, so demand for their services increases. Committee members may be nominated to serve their governing body or the league in which their club

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participates. Match officials may be invited to join a panel of neutral referees or umpires. Successful coaches may find that other clubs are willing to incentivise them to move away. Clubs officials understand these risks, but recognise that there is little that a voluntary organisation can do to stop someone following a more lucrative path. In these circumstances, a pragmatic approach is required:

"If a volunteer is prepared to commit and help the club, we'll help them on their way. That's with the initial coaching course, which is a level 1. If they then decide that they want to progress further into coaching at level two, three, where you can probably earn money from coaching, then we might help them slightly, but generally it's the level 1 course."

There was a strong sense among club officials that the increasing requirements of NGBs for qualified personnel in key roles demand a *quid pro quo* in terms of flexibility. NGB policies can place severe constraints on clubs, particularly with regard to the provision of junior participation opportunities, and the penalties for non-compliance can be somewhat draconian:

"The leagues and the [NGBs] won't register our club unless people are on these courses. They will literally stop a whole club playing if these volunteers have not been DBS checked, if they've not been on child protection courses, and not been on a level 1 coaching course. They can stop every team playing; they're that strict with it now."

In many ways, this seems contrary to the ethos of voluntary sport, with its emphasis on participation and enjoyment. The overwhelming majority of clubs are keen to support the principle of mandatory accreditation for their volunteers, where appropriate, but believe they have a right to expect their NGB to be supportive rather than punitive. If clubs can continue to operate in the interim, they can reduce the risk of losing participants and volunteers, or folding altogether.

"If there were more courses and if they were half the cost I might possibly be able to persuade more people to go on them. Then we' have more coaches."

Key Points

- The need to balance volunteering with the conflicting demands of home and work continues to be one of the biggest challenge for community sports clubs.
- Clubs employ a variety of strategies to manage volunteer workloads, including: appointing volunteer co-ordinators; sharing roles among volunteers; using information technology, and; developing written role descriptions.
- Technology has clear benefits in streamlining administrative processes, but this does not eliminate the issue of bureaucracy entirely. Duplication of administrative processes, including DBS checks, generates antipathy among volunteers. NGBs are perceived to be generally supportive, while clubs believe that they receive little effective support from their local authorities.
- Clubs work hard to minimise the financial costs of maintaining a volunteer workforce. For asset-owning clubs, this is made possible by investing surplus bar takings, or facility fees, while other clubs use coaching income to subsidise the cost of training and development. The direct and indirect costs of NGB-led courses are a significant barrier to enrolment.

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- The recruitment of new volunteers tends to be a reactive response to increases in participation, with little strategic planning being the exception rather than the rule. Volunteers are most commonly recruited from among the friends and family of participants, or from among exiting playing members as they reduce their participation levels. Word of mouth continues to be the most effective method of recruitment.
- Clubs recognise the need to invest in the development of their volunteers, with reasonable expectations of a more efficient and effective workforce as a result. Better qualified volunteers (particularly coaches) may expect payment for their services however. Expectations of qualified and accredited personnel working in clubs require some flexibility on the part of NGBs.

3.8 In Summary...

These findings outline a generally healthy outlook for voluntary sports clubs in England, with a reasonably stable workforce. A clear, positive relationship exists between participant growth and volunteer recruitment. Clubs are keen to develop new volunteers, but require the support of NGBs and other agencies to identify and remove the barriers which currently prevent people from under-represented groups from putting themselves forward.

Nevertheless, the findings underscore the constant tension in voluntary sports clubs between managing existing volunteer resources, and fulfilling ambitions for growth and development. A strategic approach to volunteer management would see clubs identify and deploy volunteers in advance of an increase in participants, driven at least in part by volunteers in outward-facing roles. In reality however, the majority of clubs operate in a more reactive way, responding to participant growth by recruiting volunteers from among new members.

The most successful clubs, in terms of volunteer management, have developed a club culture in which all members are expected to contribute their time in some way. The dilemma facing clubs is one of planning and timing. Club development is dependent on being able to deploy a volunteer workforce of sufficient capacity, but identifying and recruiting the volunteers themselves is often a consequence of participant growth.

While two thirds of clubs claim to need more volunteers, most would deploy new recruits to relieve the burden of the existing workforce, rather than increase provision. The desire, expressed by many of the club representatives who participated in this research, is to spread the existing workload more widely and reduce the burden on existing volunteers. Crucially, clubs seek volunteers with an underlying understanding of their sport, and an emotional connection to the club, which limits the appeal of recruiting external volunteers.

4 Conclusions

The report gives information on the state of the sports club volunteering workforce in 2018. 425 clubs took part in the survey and around 50 of these participated in a series of focus groups and telephone interviews.

In summarising the results, it is important to note that the number of respondent clubs varied by sport, and by geography, but that the size of the sample prevented any detailed analysis of variation by sport. It is therefore important to interpret the results with some care, though there are clear and consistent differences between clubs of different sizes (when defined by membership numbers). It is also important to consider that the online distribution of the survey

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may have excluded clubs which are organised on an informal basis, or which are not affiliated to a National Governing Body.

With respect to what is already known about sports clubs in England, it is clear from the Active Lives and SRA Sports Club surveys that a significant amount of data exists regarding the extent and nature of the workforce. Volunteers understand the need for data to be collected to inform research, and how it can be used to improve the administration of coaching in their sport(s), but there is some evidence of survey fatigue impinging on the overall sample size.

Sport England's phased approach has compartmentalised research into the various aspects of the running of voluntary sports clubs, and enabled this report to go into greater depth on the specific workforce-related issues covered here. Nevertheless, a larger sample of clubs in the online survey would have permitted further analysis of differences between individual sports, and it is therefore important to consider how this might be achieved in future research exercises.

Recommendation 1: Sport England and its partner agencies should recognise the value of developing a panel of clubs who could contribute to volunteer research, giving due consideration to the GDPR legislation.

4.1 Club Volunteers

Based on the information reported in the survey, the typical ratio in clubs is one volunteer for every nine members, which is consistent with other published research on voluntary sports clubs, though this varies depending on the size of the playing membership. Clubs with fewer members have a higher proportion of volunteers, while larger clubs operate at a higher ratio indicating a greater degree of efficiency. On average, 18% of volunteers were recruited to their current role over the last 12 months, revealing the extent of annual 'turnover' or 'churn' among the workforce. Some caution is necessary in interpreting this figure however, since a volunteer who is new to a specific role may not be new to volunteering *per sé*.

The age profile of volunteers highlighted by the online survey is heavily skewed in favour of older volunteers. There are few, if any signs of any impending demographic cliff edge however, with clubs reporting only a small proportion of their volunteers signalling any intention to withdraw. In fact, the overall picture is one of modest growth in both participation and volunteering over the last 12 months. There is, nevertheless, evidence to suggest that young people, women, the disabled, and people from black and minority ethnic groups are consistently under-represented as volunteers in community sports clubs in England.

While there are few signs of decline in the sports club workforce, there is a strong case to be made for making the volunteer base broader and more diverse. The relationship between volunteer and participant numbers over time appears to suggest that larger clubs benefit from economies of scale in terms of deploying their (human) resources. Further research is required to establish whether the ratios evident in the survey sample are consistent across the wider voluntary sports club market. This might reveal variations by such factors as sport, geography, club size.

Recommendation 2: Sport England should consider extending Club Count to include details of membership and volunteer numbers by club, where available.

4.2 Recruitment

The most successful clubs, in volunteering terms, are those that have an embedded volunteering culture, which is ingrained into all members. While not officially a condition of membership, there is an acceptance that in these clubs, participants and non-playing members alike will be expected to volunteer in some way. Word of mouth is the most popular means of recruiting new volunteers, with friends and family of participants the most likely target.

This might explain how existing levels of under-representation among target groups are perpetuated. Clubs are aware of the **need** to identify and engage with more young, female, BAME and disabled volunteers, though there is less certainty regarding **how** to achieve this. In reality, the workload pressures on clubs are such that they prioritise recruiting 'enough' volunteers over any concerns over a lack of diversity.

It is clear that volunteer recruitment tends to follow on spontaneously from increases in participation, suggesting that there is little forward planning in this regard. Where strategic workforce development does occur, it tends to be the preserve of larger clubs, who are better able to fill the outward-facing club development roles which promote further growth. This virtuous circle may generate further increases in volunteering capacity in clubs where the workforce is already resilient, but clubs with fewer volunteers are less able to capitalise on gains of this sort. Nevertheless, most clubs are keen to recruit more volunteers, and believe that they have the capacity to manage an enlarged workforce.

While there has been some progress towards a more flexible approach to the recruitment of volunteers, the trend towards ad-hoc or micro-volunteering is by no means universal. The dedicated volunteer manager role has, to date, remained the preserve of larger clubs, with additional capacity in the workforce to identify a suitable candidate. The traditional culture of sports club volunteering, with its rigid, hierarchical structure will be slow to change. Sport England, and individual NGBs have a key role to play as champions of a more diverse and flexible volunteer workforce.

Recommendation 3: Sport England and its partner agencies should offer sustained support and guidance to clubs in recruiting a larger, more diverse and more flexible volunteer workforce, as part of a broader effort to change the culture of volunteering in sports clubs. Attention should be targeted initially on smaller clubs, and clubs that are in decline in membership terms, by promoting more flexible methods of volunteer recruitment and management such as micro-volunteering.

4.3 Experience and Retention

The evidence of this research exercise suggests that while 15% of clubs have experienced a fall in the number of active volunteers supporting their club in the last 12 months, there is unlikely to be any significant reduction in the workforce in the near future, though club representatives remain alert to the possibility. According to the survey, clubs expect only 12% of volunteers to stop in next 12 months, with at least 40% continuing for the foreseeable future. When volunteers withdraw their services, this is often the result of events beyond the clubs' control, such as illness, departure for university, a change in employment status, or starting a family.

In these circumstances, it is unlikely that the number of participants will outstrip the size of the volunteer workforce that supports them, particularly since so many volunteers are recruited

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from among the friends and family of participants. In addition, the traditional route into volunteering from participation continues to be a well-trodden path.

Technology has a significant role to play in promoting volunteer retention by streamlining workloads and reducing costs. This is particularly true of communication, with e-mail now the clear default solution. Social media is in widespread use for promotion, especially for clubs with a predominantly younger membership, but the use of software to support accounting and bookkeeping processes is more limited, while team management app take-up is restricted to a relatively small number of clubs.

There is further market potential for technological solutions, but the reticence of some clubs to move to online systems underlines the dependence on IT literacy, which favours younger volunteers. As the millennial generation matures, app usage may be expected to increase, but clubs (typically operating on limited budgets) only tend to adopt technology when there are clear benefits and minimal direct costs. Nevertheless, where technology is in use, it is regarded as effective, but concerns over data protection (especially in light of the recent introduction of GDPR legislation) are significant. NGBs are uniquely well placed to support clubs in their adoption of new technological solutions, provided that they recognise of the scale of the task involved in making the transition.

Internally, clubs are happy to adopt any practices that reduce the bureaucracy of club operations, particularly form filling and paperwork. Clubs have some legitimate concerns over the bureaucracy involved in volunteering however, with particular antipathy towards DBS checks, even when the logical premise is clearly understood. There is desire for the organisations that administer the sport such as NGBs, competitive leagues and local authorities to demonstrate a degree of flexibility particularly surrounding the application of rules designed to protect clubs and participants from legal exposure. For volunteering culture to change in clubs, there is a need for reciprocation on the part of the NGBs and CSPs that support them. Any action designed to reduce bureaucracy would generate significant goodwill.

Recommendation 4: NGBs should be flexible when responding to clubs' development needs. This might extend to: recognising qualifications and accreditations provided by other agencies; allowing clubs to operate while volunteers work towards qualifications; providing (online) support for administrative processes and procedures, and; being less punitive in the application of fines and penalties.

Recommendation 5: There is a strong case for NGBs to provide ongoing support to clubs that are in the early stages of adopting new technology to support their operations, particularly in the context of the introduction of GDPR legislation.

4.4 Roles

Within the hierarchy of voluntary sports clubs, core committee and coaching roles have clear primacy in terms of volunteer recruitment and retention. Clubs report that these are the hardest positions to fill, primarily because of the level of expectation and commitment required to fulfil them. Other positions that support participation are seen as ancillary, and are less likely to be filled, especially in small clubs, where core roles may encompass aspects of the less essential positions. In these circumstances, with fewer volunteers available, there is additional pressure on the workforce to cover a multiplicity of roles.

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The use of job sharing has been mooted as a strategic response to capacity issues, but in practice, its application has generally been limited to less essential roles, often on a rota basis. There is little evidence that core committee roles are shared between multiple volunteers, despite the acute demands placed on positions such as treasurer in clubs with very large memberships and high financial turnover. When asked how they would deploy additional volunteers, clubs expressed a clear view in favour of sharing the existing workload, as opposed to increasing output, though this applied more to roles such as general helper than key positions on the committee. This was also true of coaching, a common complaint among clubs being that there are rarely enough qualified coaches to cope with demand.

Volunteer roles with a strategic, long-term remit, such as club development, schools liaison, or marketing officer, are considered desirable, rather than essential. These positions tend to be limited to larger clubs with sufficient volunteer capacity, underlining the emphasis placed on day-to-day operational priorities at smaller clubs. The planning horizons for clubs with less volunteer capacity tend to be shorter, focussing on maintaining the status quo. Conversely, larger clubs, with more capacity are able to develop strategic plans for increasing participation and recruiting new members. This explains, to some extent, the tendency for larger clubs to experience more growth than their smaller counterparts.

Recommendation 5: Clubs should be encouraged to develop strategic approaches to volunteer recruitment and management in the context of long-term club development. Sport England's role in this regard may be considered as that of facilitator, enabling the sharing of expertise, best practice and innovation through the various channels at its disposal (Clubmark, Club Matters, CSPs). It is important to recognise that any shift towards long-term planning and development often requires both a culture shift away from short-term operational priorities, and additional resources to support the change of focus.

4.5 *Training and Development*

Clubs accept that in maintaining a viable workforce, there is an ongoing need not only to recruit new volunteers continuously, but also to develop and improve the specific skills required to undertake the roles to which they commit. In this sense, the argument for a degree of professionalism among volunteers has been won, with the majority of welfare officers and coaches, and a significant proportion of match officials holding an officially accredited qualification relevant to the role. Despite some concerns over financial and time costs, and around some of the bureaucratic constraints, there is a general level of acceptance and understanding of the need to commit to continuous development.

The clear priority for clubs, as expressed in both the survey and the qualitative interviews, is to recruit and develop more coaches to support both existing delivery, and plans for future expansion of activity. This is motivated by a number of considerations: clubs are responding to the stipulations of NGBs, local authorities, and other partners; they are also reflecting the expectations of participants, and; trying to bring about success on the field of play. The paradox for clubs lies in the expectations of qualified coaches to be rewarded financially for their input, resulting in a high level of turnover, which favours larger clubs with greater financial reserves.

Recommendation 6: Priority should be given to the need to increase the number of accredited coaches supporting voluntary sports clubs.

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Volunteers (particularly coaches and match officials) continue to undertake further training to progress along their chosen pathway, and most clubs are willing to provide at least some measure of financial support to reduce costs to individuals. As with any investment however, clubs seek to maximise their return, with some examples of innovative 'payback' arrangements in place. Nevertheless, the financial costs of training and development act as a significant barrier to entry for many volunteers. The indirect costs of attending training courses - travel, accommodation, and in some cases lost income - may be as significant as the course fees themselves, if not more so.

The perception remains among voluntary sports clubs that fees for training courses are prohibitively high, which hinders the growth of the volunteer workforce generally, but more specifically the coaching and officiating workforce. This is particularly significant in light of club's desire to recruit and deploy more volunteers to these critical roles, primarily to ease the workload on the existing workforce. Moves by NGBs and other training providers to develop online and modular delivery models have been well received, further reinforcing the potential role of technology in supporting volunteers. Timing and location remain crucial however, requiring a balance to be struck between the costs to providers of supplying the training, and the demand from volunteers for training and development.

Recommendation 7: NGBs and other training providers should continue the trend towards modular training courses, and consider the use of online learning to reduce the costs incurred by volunteers.

4.6 Support Programmes

Clubs that have engaged with the support programmes on offer from their NGBs and from Sport England have generally noted an improvement in their recruitment, development and management of volunteers. It is clear however, that a substantial proportion of clubs have not yet been persuaded of the value these schemes (or are even aware of them), in many cases citing the time and bureaucracy involved in preparing an application. If these twin hurdles can be overcome, there is clear potential to increase the number of clubs joining the programmes. The challenge for the providers of support is therefore to advocate for devoting the resources necessary to submit a successful application, by promoting the range of benefits resulting from engagement with the schemes.

For some small clubs with limited volunteer capacity, engagement with Clubmark and Club Matters appears to be a difficult proposition, even though the outcome is potentially positive. These clubs may require additional support from NGBs and from other agencies (including Sport England), to prepare and submit the necessary documentation, on the basis that an investment of this kind would reap the reward of stronger, more sustainable clubs across the board. Equally, there is a case to be made for considering whether the requirements for Clubmark, and NGB-specific equivalent could be tailored to suit smaller clubs.

There is clear 'market' potential for the various strands of support, with many clubs unaware that programmes such as Clubmark or Club Matters are available. This does not mean however, that these clubs are not engaged in long-term, strategic workforce planning. On the contrary, many of the principles behind the Sport England support programmes are in evidence at clubs, irrespective of size, location, sport or direction of travel. What is also clear however, is that clubs which have engaged successfully with Clubmark, Club Matters and NGB-specific support, have developed a more holistic approach to volunteer management, which appears to be supporting growth in participation and indeed in volunteering. The

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majority of clubs that have received support, report that their management of volunteers has improved as a result.

In general, voluntary sports clubs understand the benefits of workforce management tools such as shared workloads, support for volunteer training and development, contingency planning and written role descriptions. The challenge for NGBs, Sport England, and the other agencies which provide support, is in engaging those clubs that have not yet signed up for programmes such as Clubmark. Moreover, these schemes do not only benefit bigger, well-connected organisations, but also have clear, demonstrable gains for smaller, more independent clubs.

Recommendation 8: Sport England and its partner agencies should to encourage clubs to adopt strategic planning principles through the continued promotion of the Clubmark and Club Matters programmes. Further attention should be focussed on promoting Clubmark and Club Matters to clubs that are yet to sign up, by making the processes more accessible, engaging, and relevant, particularly for smaller clubs with less volunteer capacity.

4.7 In Conclusion

Regardless of the pressures on sports club volunteers, the level of commitment in evidence during this research was striking. The outlook for volunteering in English clubs is generally positive, though there are some issues that require NGBs and other stakeholders to respond thoughtfully and constructively. For many volunteers however, commitment is total:

"I don't just volunteer for the bowls club. I volunteer at my church; I'm on the board of governors at my granddaughter's school, I a member of the local Care Commissioning Group. I'm just that sort of person that says yes if I'm asked to help out. You do it because you want to help out. Not because you expect to get something back. But it makes you feel good. And it enriches your life."

David Barrett, Lee Edmondson, Robbie Millar and Ryan Storey
Sport Industry Research Centre, 2018

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of more than 50 clubs who contributed to this research by taking part in focus group and telephone interviews.

Appendix 1 Focus Group Questions

Theme 1

Our research indicates that the need to balance conflicting demands of volunteering with work and family life is the biggest single obstacle to recruiting and retaining volunteers.

Question 1

What support, if any, do you offer to volunteers to help them overcome this barrier?

Prompt: Incentives, use of technology, approaching individuals with fewer conflicting commitments (e.g. students, retirees), volunteer job shares, more flexible 'micro volunteering' opportunities.

Question 2

The research seems to suggest there is very little job share going on- why is this?

Prompt: Do the roles not lend themselves to this, or are there not enough people? Is it something clubs would be keen to encourage or is it not practical?

Question 3

Do conflicts arise between different organisations that you volunteer for?

Prompt: NGB, County, Club, Junior and Senior sections of the club.

Follow on, if 'yes': How do you resolve these conflicts?

Prompt: Prioritise needs of club?

Theme 2

Data suggest that club volunteers tend to be older than the participants they support, and are less likely to be female, disabled or from minority ethnic groups.

Question 1

Does the composition of your volunteers create tension or conflict in terms of representing the views of participant groups?

Prompt: Are young people/women/minority ethnic groups/disabled people under-represented on the committee?

Question 2

Do specific roles tend to be filled by men/women, young/old volunteers, and if so, why?

Follow-on: Do they want to be in those roles or do they have aspirations for more influential roles?

Question 3

Do you see this lack of diversity as important, or is it just about having the role filled?

Question 4

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Does the club aspire to be more diverse in its volunteer base, recognising the relationship to attracting more diverse participant base?

Prompt: Additional support? Targeted recruitment

Question 5

What is the appetite to recruit from outside of the club/ sport? what opportunities and challenges would it create and would the club be receptive to 'outsiders' with time and certain skills e.g. marketing, technology, website design etc. coming in?

Prompt: The research seems to suggest clubs see this as a good opportunity... but would it work in reality?

Theme 3

Clubs support their volunteers in a variety of ways, helping to fund courses leading to qualifications, providing technology, paying staff to undertake some roles. Research suggests clubs would benefit from additional support around recruitment and retention

Question 1

How does having a volunteer co-ordinator help with managing the operations of the club?

Prompt: Planning rotas for volunteers, identifying tasks, recruiting new volunteers

Question 2

How do paid staff support volunteers in managing the operations of the club?

Prompt: Paid coaches planning delivery of volunteers?

Question 3

Does your club recognise the value of training and development for volunteers?

Prompt: Employment prospects for volunteers, efficiency gains for clubs.

Follow on, if 'yes': If so, how does the club provide additional support in this regard?

Prompt: Subsidising course costs, identifying training opportunities

Question 4

Is the challenge knowing how and where to reach out to external, new volunteers, or about attracting volunteers internally from their own members?

Question 5

The main reason for quitting is not enough time/ competing demands- as a club, what do you think you could do to reduce this pressure?

Question 6

The research also shows that the shortage of volunteers with the right qualifications, and the cost of getting qualified are the greatest challenges for sports volunteering. Is a qualification a necessity in their sport, or a desirable- something the parents and participants seek, or that the clubs feel they need to be able to compete with other local clubs?

Question 7

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What is the appetite/ ability to use Activators alongside/ instead of coaches, people who have the right skills and behaviours to deliver quality sessions, but who haven't paid for a qualification?

How important is the title/ level of the coach v their skills and behaviours?

Theme 4

Volunteer shortages can have a significant impact on the ability of a club to maintain or increase its provision of sporting activity

Question 1

In relation to the insight on the hardest roles to fill; why are these roles hardest to fill? Is it perception that it is time consuming, or is it actually time consuming?

Prompt: Perceived as important roles? Or people lack the skills? Conversely, why are the easiest roles to fill, easy... less time consuming, ad hoc, no skills required etc.

Question 2

What would you do with more volunteers? Would you do more delivery, or would you share roles out more and reduce pressure on volunteers?

Prompt: Additional teams/fixtures, more social functions, increased fundraising, extending activities to new groups

Question 3

Which is required first- does volunteer growth only occur as a result of membership growth, or does membership growth occur as a result of more volunteers in specific roles?

Prompt: e.g. school liaison, marketing officer.

Question 4

How does your club mitigate against the loss of (key) volunteers?

Prompt: Long-term business planning, contingency measures