



# SPORTS CLUB VOLUNTEERING 2018 SUMMARY REPORT

FEBRUARY 2019

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## HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

- > This summary report shares some of the key findings from the research conducted by the Sport Industry Research Centre of club volunteers in 2018
- > Read the full report [here](#), including lots more detailed insight and the key recommendations to come out of the research.

# INTRODUCTION

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

In October 2018, Sport England's Active Lives survey reported that a total of 6.3 million adults had given their time at least twice in the last year to help make sport and activity happen. This is a huge contribution, with people giving their time in a range of different ways – from coaching and committee roles, to providing transport and marshalling at events.

Approximately 75% of these people volunteer in a local sports club (*ref: Taylor, 2003*). It is therefore a key setting for Sport England's volunteering strategy and it is important that Sport England supports clubs to ensure that their volunteers are having a positive experience, feel valued and want to continue giving their time.

The 2018 Sports Club Volunteering Survey collected data from those key volunteers who run sports clubs to

increase our understanding of the current challenges and opportunities sports clubs face in relation to engaging and retaining volunteers. This provides a useful, alternative perspective to the overall population levels of volunteering recorded by Active Lives.

Further research is planned in Spring 2019 to explore in more detail the experience and outcomes of sports volunteers themselves, the likelihood of them continuing to give their time to sport, and any barriers they envisage to remaining as a volunteer.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY A CLUB?

The definition of clubs in this research is a community sports club with a recognised governance structure, that has a membership programme in place and is affiliated to its recognised national governing body (NGB).



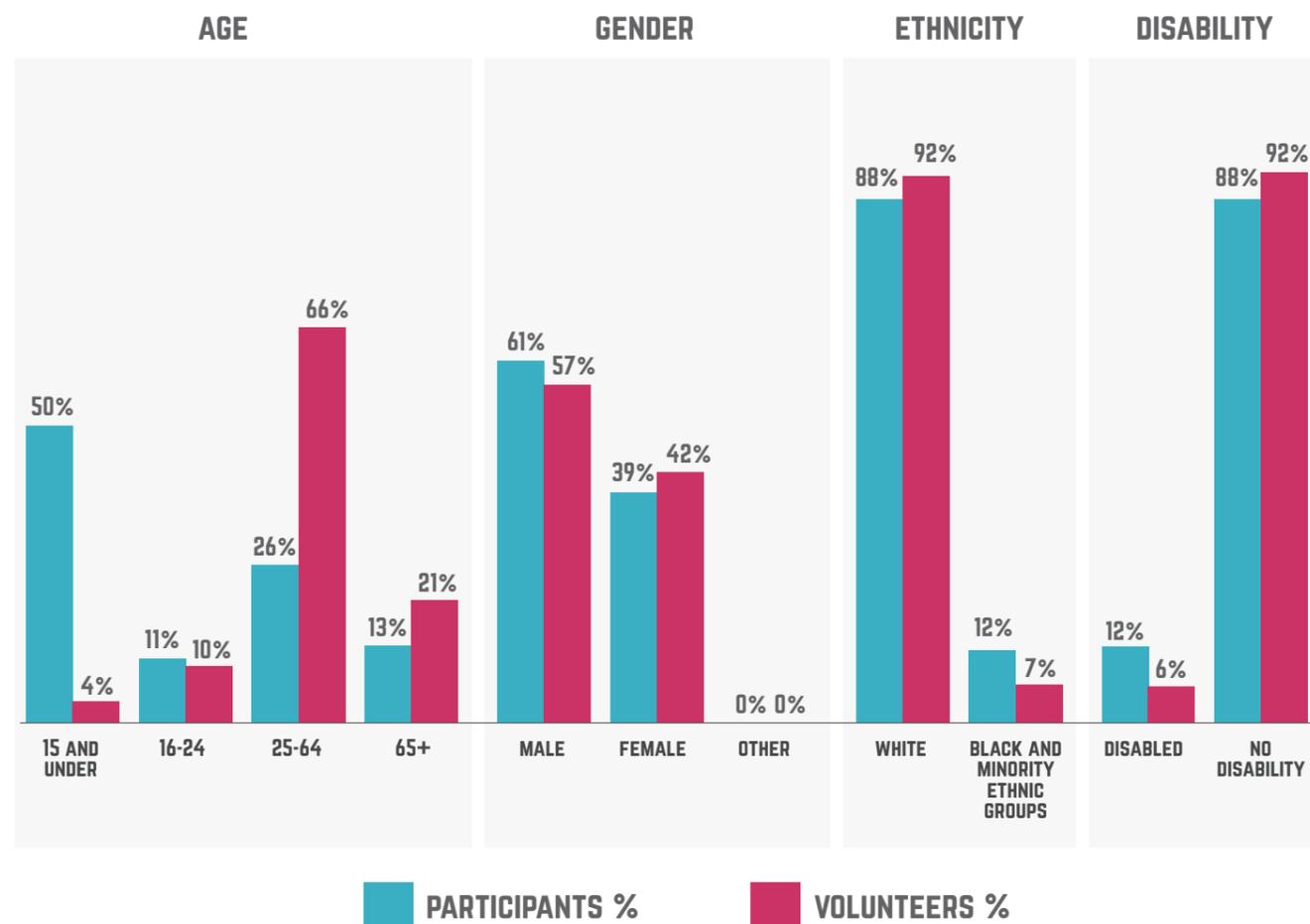
**6.3M ADULTS  
VOLUNTEERED  
AT LEAST TWICE  
IN THE LAST YEAR  
TO SUPPORT SPORT  
AND PHYSICAL  
ACTIVITY**

# WHO VOLUNTEERS IN CLUBS?

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

- > 13% of volunteers are under 25 years old, whereas 61% of participants fall into this age category
- > Women are better represented in the volunteer base than in the participation profile of clubs
- > Disabled people, and those from black and minority ethnic groups (BAME) are under-represented
- > Large clubs, and those that have engaged with programmes designed to support volunteer management (e.g. Clubmark and Club Matters) have had more success in recruiting young people and BAME volunteers.

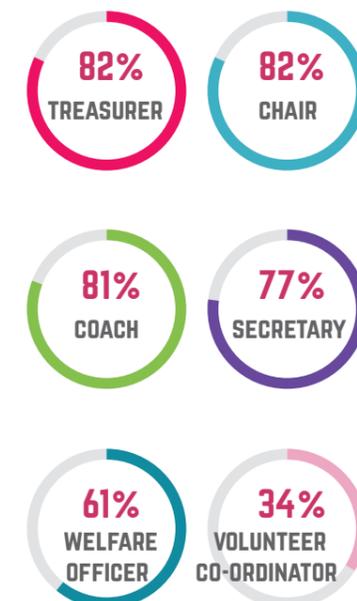
**WHILST THERE ARE SOME SIGNS THAT CLUBS ARE ATTEMPTING TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF LACK OF DIVERSITY, EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS IS SPORADIC AT BEST.**



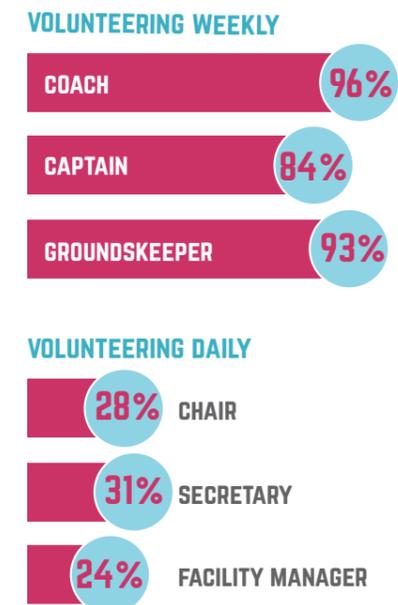
# WHAT, AND HOW MUCH, DO VOLUNTEERS DO?

- > On average, clubs have one volunteer for every nine members
- > More than 80% of all clubs view chair, treasurer and coach roles as essential to the running of their sport. These roles are also the hardest to fill, and the most time consuming
- > The majority of roles require engagement at least once a week, especially those which support participation
- > Volunteer roles with a strategic, long-term remit e.g. club development or schools liaison are seen as 'desirable' rather than essential and tend to be limited to larger clubs with sufficient volunteer capacity
- > Clubs place emphasis on daily operations, with less emphasis on growth. Larger clubs are most likely to recruit people into more outward facing roles that promote further growth. In this sense a virtuous circle is established, in which participation growth generates more volunteers, who provide capacity for further outreach
- > Only a third of all clubs consider volunteer co-ordinator as a necessary and discrete role, with the majority opting to incorporate this into another role
- > The use of job-sharing to manage capacity tends to be limited to less essential roles. Committee roles are much less likely to be shared, whereas match officials and club development officers are more likely to be fulfilled by volunteers carrying out multiple roles.

## ESSENTIAL ROLES



## FREQUENCY OF VOLUNTEERING



## HIGHEST VACANCIES



# RECRUITMENT AND CAPACITY

**WHILE 29% OF CLUBS RESPONDING TO THE SURVEY HAVE INCREASED THEIR NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS IN LAST 12 MONTHS, ONLY 15% HAVE SUFFERED A DECLINE WITH 55% EXPERIENCING NO CHANGE**

- > The majority of clubs who have grown their participation base over the last 12 months, have also seen a corresponding increase in the number of volunteers
- > 70% of clubs plan to recruit volunteers through word of mouth, with 41% making appeals through social media
- > Existing connections and relationships with the club are important reasons for volunteers wanting to get involved:
  - 52% parents wanting to support child
  - 51% recruited by member of the committee
  - 35% begin volunteering journey by coaching younger participants, 28% by coaching team mates.
- > Clubs find recruitment a challenge but most aren't taking a strategic approach or adopting new or creative recruitment methods. Recruitment is more likely a response to membership growth or external pressures such as new legislation
- > The most successful clubs are those that have an embedded culture of volunteering which is instilled within all members.

## CHALLENGES

75% of clubs feel they do not have enough volunteers to meet current operational demands.

### Impact of volunteer shortage on clubs:

- 57% report pressure on volunteers
- Nearly 40% feel it restricts their ability to increase participants
- 25% are unable to provide coaches.

There are tensions between club development objectives and desire to manage volunteer workloads more effectively.

In most cases, clubs would prefer to deploy additional coaches, officials and other helpers to ease the burden on their existing volunteers rather than delivering more activities.

Clubs generally seek volunteers with an underlying understanding of their sport and an emotional connection to the club, which limits the appeal of recruiting external volunteers.



# RETENTION

*THE NEED TO BALANCE VOLUNTEERING WITH THE CONFLICTING DEMANDS OF HOME AND WORK CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY SPORTS CLUBS*

According to this research, there is little evidence to suggest an imminent decline in the number of sports club volunteers, with only 12% expected to withdraw their services in the next 12 months.

## **Reasons for considering withdrawing time, as cited by clubs:**

- Lack of time – 44%
- Work commitments – 38%
- Family commitments – 34%

Clubs deploy a number of strategies to manage volunteer workloads, including job-sharing, volunteer co-ordinators and utilising IT.

Well run reward and recognition programmes for volunteers can help to support retention.

## **Strategies used to reward and recognise volunteers include:**

- Saying thank you – 91%
- Through club communications – 54%
- Through awards evenings – 47%

## **CHALLENGES**

According to those taking part in the research, volunteer numbers at clubs are generally stable. However there is a need for additional capacity, particularly in certain roles like coaching.

Knowing how to identify and recruit volunteers who will engage with the club in the long-term is an on-going challenge.

The need to balance volunteering with the conflicting demands of home and work continues to be one of the biggest challenges for community sport clubs and approaches are needed that make volunteering more manageable and help people to fit it in around other commitments.

More traditional, structured volunteering is the norm, with only some clubs developing a more flexible approach to the recruitment of volunteers e.g. through offering ad-hoc or micro volunteering.

Whilst clubs responding to this survey felt volunteer numbers in their clubs were generally stable or growing, Active Lives statistics showed a drop in volunteering levels between 2016/17 and 2018/19.



# DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS

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. However, accessibility and affordability of qualifications remains a common concern, with costs considered prohibitively high.

A significant number of clubs have taken advantage of at least one programme of support for volunteer management:

- 38% received assistance from their NGB
- 34% have engaged with Clubmark
- 30% have used the resources on Club Matters
- Engagement with these support programmes is higher amongst larger clubs
- A high proportion of clubs are unaware of support programmes available to them, suggesting an opportunity for greater reach and engagement.

**CLUB MARK AND CLUB MATTERS GENERATED AN IMPROVEMENT IN VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT IN 70% OF CLUBS THAT USED THEM**



# 70%

**OF CLUBS HAVE QUALIFIED VOLUNTEERS IN SAFEGUARDING, FIRST AID AND COACHING**



# FIND OUT MORE

For more information into the challenges and opportunities that clubs face in relation to volunteers, please read the **full report**, which includes detailed insights on:

- The skills and experiences required by clubs
- Capacity and capability gaps within clubs
- Volunteer vacancies and turnover
- Challenges and methods to growing and retaining the volunteer base.

## FURTHER RESEARCH AND SUPPORT

- [Active Lives Adult Survey Report - May 17/18](#)
- [Spotlight on Volunteering & Gender](#)
- [SRA Club Survey Report](#)
- [SIRC Club Count Report](#)
- [Club Matters](#)
- [Club Mark](#)





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