

A Winning Team?

The impacts of volunteers in sport

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*The Institute for Volunteering Research
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Executive summary

A pilot study was conducted in 2007-08 to explore the impact of volunteering in sport. The project was funded by the Volunteering Hub to help sports clubs assess the impact of volunteers in their clubs and to develop methods for others to use in future. The study created questionnaires appropriate to sports volunteering based on the Institute for Volunteering Research's Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit (VAT).

The research process

The research reviewed major reports on sport volunteering and worked with ten case studies in three sports: six grassroots clubs and two regional bodies in rugby union and hockey; and two Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) groups.

From information and feedback gathered from the case studies, questionnaires were created with six areas of impact:

1. Enjoyment and satisfaction;
2. Quantity and quality of volunteers' work;
3. Personal development;
4. Financial and economic impacts;
5. Social impacts;
6. Sense of community.

Each impact area is represented by three indicators, with statements about experiences or views with which respondents are asked to show their level of agreement or satisfaction. Open-ended questions allow them to add comments. Impacts on four stakeholders are explored:

- volunteers
- players;
- clubs
- the community.

Dividing the players into adult and young members, five questionnaires were prepared for each case study. The questionnaires were kept short - a maximum of four pages - informal and jargon-free. This was prompted by feedback that people would be put off by anything that seemed too bureaucratic, and would not fill in a lengthy questionnaire. Appropriate graphics were inserted to lighten the tone; the questionnaire for young players, some as young as seven, replaced tick boxes with smiley or grumpy faces. The face symbols were also used by some adults with learning difficulties in disabled riding groups.

The questionnaires were distributed by clubs and groups, by email and in printed form, and the regional bodies in rugby and hockey put them on their

intranet for member clubs to use if they wished. One hundred completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher for analysis, as shown:

Respondents to pilot study

Respondents	Total	Sports clubs	RDA groups
Volunteers	25	15	10
Adult members	25	12	13
Young members	22	11	11
Club officers	19	12	7
External orgs	9	2	7
Total	100	52	48

This is not a large dataset on which to base conclusions. However, the research was focused less on conducting a comprehensive impact assessment than on testing the format for wider use, and this aim was satisfied by the response.

The extent to which the pilot results can be taken as representative is affected by three factors: situations and findings may vary in different sports; selection of case studies was determined by the national governing bodies (NGBs); and self-selected responses may bias findings. Two particular points should be noted: NGBs recommended Clubmark or ClubsFirst accredited clubs, implying a level of organisation which may not be typical; and young volunteers were not well represented among respondents.

The findings, however, are felt to be indicative of the impacts of sport volunteers, offering useful initial evidence and the basis for more detailed assessments in future.

Findings of the pilot

Impacts are presented in three sets:

- expected or 'obvious' impacts;
- less well-known impacts; and
- more controversial or potentially negative impacts.

In the back of the net ... the obvious impacts

Widely claimed impacts of sport volunteers are validated by the study.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of sport in local communities,

- providing opportunities, and improving health and fitness
- providing enjoyment and fun for participants
- bringing people together socially
- developing skills and confidence.

The presence of volunteers in clubs and groups enables them to function successfully and, indeed, to exist at all. Most players express high levels of satisfaction with the quantity and usefulness of the help and support they get

from volunteers, and club officers agree that volunteers ensure a satisfying and rewarding experience for all. Volunteers contribute significantly to the value of clubs' work, income and financial welfare, and to building and enhancing their profile and reputation.

Volunteers' work in their clubs and with external organisations creates affordable opportunities to take part in sport, and has a positive impact on the health, fitness and wellbeing of players, riders and the community.

The sheer enjoyment of sport comes across very decisively. Riders and players describe the fun and buzz they get from their involvement. The social aspect is major; everyone agrees overwhelmingly that they have made new friends and contacts. There are also marked impacts on personal development, improving confidence, social skills and sporting skills, and this is particularly strong among young people.

What is noticeable is that players and riders gain more than volunteers themselves. While they benefit from a sense of satisfaction and the social aspects of their volunteering, impacts on their personal development, fitness and health, are more muted or absent. This is particularly true of sports clubs, although less so of RDA groups.

At a trot or a gallop... less well-known impacts

These impacts have large claims made for them in relation to volunteering in general, but there has been little research on them in sport:

- building a sense of community
- building trust among people
- mutual understanding and breaking down barriers
- participation in other activities
- employability and performance.

These impacts, which embrace social capital indicators and economic effects, show mixed results. They are very strong for young players and riders, enhancing their sense of belonging, their trust in other people, and their understanding of people from different backgrounds or with differing abilities. Among adult players and riders, there are some increases in their sense of community, understanding of other people and participation in other activities, but fewer gains in trust.

The majority of sports club volunteers experience relatively little in the way of social capital impacts, although these are more significant for RDA volunteers. And most volunteers report few effects on their performance in other areas of their lives and on their employability.

These economic impacts are strongest for young people – players and riders, and some young volunteers. All the young players – and a majority of adults too – say their performance at school or work has benefited. In addition, there are some impacts in terms of choosing a career, finding employment and also, for RDA riders, gaining greater independence.

To the sin-bin? questionable impacts

The two sets of impacts reviewed so far predominantly favour users of volunteers' services. This final set is more about volunteers' experience, raising issues that are potentially problematic:

- volunteer management
- volunteer training
- volunteer overload
- succession planning
- shortages of volunteers.

Although volunteer management is a much debated topic, the volunteers in the pilot study are generally satisfied with how they are supported and managed. Club officers are less enthusiastic in their assessment of the support and management given to volunteers, while RDA officers are more positive about this and about training. Some club volunteers highlight deficits in both management and training, and most club officers feel that volunteers do not receive sufficient training for their roles. Training opportunities focus on coaching and umpiring, and the cost of outside training is a significant barrier.

There is widespread agreement on the problems of volunteer overload, the dependence of clubs on a nucleus of volunteers, the increasing workload of volunteers, and the lack of succession planning for leadership roles. All the case studies see shortages of volunteers as a problem, largely due to lack of time through work, education or family responsibilities and to a range of attitudes that deter people from giving their time free.

Issues and implications

The report reviews issues that arise from the piloting, including the disproportionate impacts on users and volunteers, the benefits of sport for young people, volunteer management, training, rewards and recruitment, infrastructure support, and resources. It makes general recommendations in these areas for the consideration of clubs, sport and volunteering infrastructures, researchers, policy makers and funders.

The pilot study has demonstrated a useful format for identifying major impacts and issues relevant to sport volunteers. The Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit has provided a basis for developing specific questionnaires for sports volunteering. Several case studies used it as an opportunity to examine their volunteer arrangements and make changes.

The benefits of carrying out an impact assessment are:

- ensuring everyone feels they have an input into the club or group;

- highlighting the impacts and value of volunteers' contribution and giving them feedback on the benefits they bring to the club/group;
- a sound evidence base for developing the way the club/group recruits, supports and manages its volunteers;
- promoting the club/group to the public, potential members and volunteers, and potential partner organisations;
- providing evidence of impacts and needs to funding bodies, NGBs, sports infrastructure and policy makers.

1 Introduction

1.1 The research

The research was conducted in 2007-08 by the Institute for Volunteering Research at Volunteering England (VE), with funding from the Volunteering Hub. Its main objectives were to:

- Explore the impact of volunteering in sport on volunteers, clubs, and other stakeholders;
- Test out the appropriateness of the Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit (VIAT) ¹ as a way of assessing the impact of sport volunteering;
- Explore volunteer management practices within sports clubs and their influence on impacts;
- Provide recommendations to Volunteering England and other volunteering infrastructure agencies on steps needed to enhance the impact of volunteering in sports;
- Provide guidance to sports clubs on how to assess the impact of volunteering.

Until recently, sport was not seen as part of the voluntary sector. Volunteering England has led on embracing sport within the volunteering world, while some third sector infrastructure organisations still generally consider sport to be a separate sector, outside of the voluntary and community world. Yet people who run and help sports organisations tick all the boxes that define volunteering: spending time, unpaid, for the benefit of others.

The impacts of taking part in sport have been widely assumed and incorporated into government initiatives on health, child obesity, citizenship and social inclusion. But there is relatively little hard evidence on who benefits, how and why. There is also much discussion and action on the issues affecting volunteers in sport, such as management and training, but these areas too merit further investigation.

The Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit (VIAT) was the first resource to provide ready-made, flexible tools for measuring and assessing volunteering impacts. Users of the toolkit are encouraged to adapt the generic tools to their own organisation and field, and many have done so successfully. This project is to adapt the toolkit to provide sport-specific assessment tools as a resource for clubs, county and regional sports associations and National Governing Bodies (NGBs) that wish to assess the impacts of their volunteers.

1.2 Methods

The research carried out a brief review of major reports on sport volunteering, its impacts and issues. The main focus was on ten case studies in three

sports: rugby union, hockey and riding by disabled people. They comprise six sports clubs, two regional bodies and two Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) groups. All are run by volunteers, with these exceptions: England Hockey Midlands Region Office has a small paid staff but relies on a network of volunteers; the Avon Riding Centre employs a few people to maintain the stables; and some of the clubs pay coaches. (See Appendix A.)

The case studies

Aylestone St James Rugby Club
Clifton Rugby Club
De Montfort University Rugby Club
East Midlands Rugby Union Constituent Body
Leicester Ladies Hockey Club
Clifton Ladies Hockey Club
Leicestershire Schoolgirls Hockey Association
England Hockey Midlands Region Office
Avon Riding Centre
Springbridge Carriage Driving Centre Group

National Governing Bodies - the Rugby Football Union (RFU), England Hockey (EH), and the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) - were consulted on the selection of clubs and groups, and in the development of the research. The case studies were chosen to represent a range of sizes and organisational structures, but the NGBs had the final word. The RFU and EH wanted only clubs which had achieved Clubmark or ClubsFirst accreditation to be included as case studies.

Interviews were carried out with: NGB representatives; regional representatives; volunteer officers in the sports clubs and RDA groups; volunteers and players; and other stakeholders.

An impact framework was developed, based on the Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit and amended to include factors and impacts specific to sport volunteering. Following feedback from the NGBs and case studies on the framework, questionnaires and focus group topic guides were produced. The questionnaires were tested in the case studies and refined, as necessary. The tools are available on-line from Volunteering England (www.volunteering.org) together with guidance and advice on assessing the impacts of sport volunteering.

A conference 'Getting Ahead of the Game' was held in March 2008 to disseminate the findings of the research, and to review issues around impacts, measuring impacts and volunteering in sport.

The report begins with a review of what is already known about sport volunteering from recent research reports. Following that, Section 3 describes the process of the research. Results of the piloting are shown in Section 4 and conclusions are drawn in Section 5.

2 Sport volunteering – what we know

In this section:

The scale of sport volunteering

Different sectors and roles

Volunteer characteristics and motivations

Issues and barriers in sport volunteering

Volunteer management

Impacts of sport volunteers

2.1 The scale of sport volunteering

Volunteering in sport is one of the main areas of voluntary work in this country, with up to six million people participating. In 2002 research for Sport England identified 5.7 million sport volunteers and the National Survey of Volunteering estimated a similar number in 1997 (Taylor et al., 2003; Davis Smith, 1998). The Active People Survey conducted by Sport England in 2005-06 suggested a lower figure – more than 2.7 million (Sport England, 2006).

Different surveys have concluded that between 13 per cent and 26 per cent of the population participate in formal volunteering in sport (Davis Smith, 1998; Nichols et al., 2004; Attwood et al., 2003; Low et al., 2007). The 2007 National Survey of Volunteering found that 22 per cent of all current volunteers were involved in helping sports and exercise organisations (Low et al., 2007). According to the Active People Survey, around five per cent of adults volunteer for sport at least one hour a week and three per cent volunteer up to four hours a week (Sport England, 2006). Forty per cent of people involved in coaching, leadership and face-to-face work in community sports are volunteers (SkillsActive, 2006).

Sport England's 2002 National Population Survey estimated that volunteers contribute 1.2 billion hours each year to sport, with a value of over £14 billion and equivalent to 720,000 additional full-time paid workers (Taylor et al., 2003). It produced the following figures for volunteer numbers in ten sports. Football, cricket and bowls had the highest volunteer involvement: 430,000, 230,000 and 135,000 volunteers contributing 96 million, 28 million and 15 million hours respectively. Rugby union had 82,000 volunteers; swimming and motor racing each had 61,000 volunteers; hockey 57,000 volunteers; golf 43,000 volunteers; equestrian 40,000 volunteers; and athletics 30,000 volunteers (Taylor et al., 2003). These ten sports therefore involve over one million volunteers.

Despite its scale and importance, volunteering in sport *'has not received the recognition and support from Government it deserves'* and has been described as the *'poor relation'* of the voluntary sector (Taylor et al., 2003).

2.2 The distribution of sport volunteering

Different sectors for formal volunteering in sport include sports clubs, schools, young person organisations, disability organisations and major events (Nichols, 2006).

According to Sport England, sports club dominate formal volunteering, with 75 per cent of volunteers and over 80 per cent of total volunteer hours associated with sports clubs. The sector with the second highest participation is young person organisations, such as the Guide Association and Scout Association, with 14 per cent of formal sport volunteers and 8 per cent of total volunteer hours (Taylor et al., 2003).

In education, more than 40,000 young people in higher education volunteer in sport, contributing 7.7 million hours with an estimated value of £90 million (de Souza, 2005). Primary schools have over 70,000 sport volunteers contributing over one million hours; secondary schools have over 20,000 volunteers giving about 800,000 hours; and special schools have about 1,000 volunteers and over 50,000 hours. There are also significant numbers of sport volunteers in disability organisations: Riding for the Disabled (England) has around 16,000 volunteers, contributing more than 3.5 million hours each year to 500 groups.

Major events also attract large numbers of volunteers: more than 10,000 volunteers gave a million hours to the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester, 6,000 volunteers contribute 50,000 hours to the London Marathon; 5,000 help out at Wimbledon and 1,200 at the Open Golf (Taylor et al., 2003; Russell Commission, 2005).

2.3 Roles in sport volunteering

The majority of sports clubs are run by committee volunteers in the roles of President, Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and so on. Additional roles can include Club or Team Captains, Team Manager, Membership Secretary, Fixture Secretary, Publicity/Marketing Secretary, Website Manager, Welfare Officer and Child Protection Officer. The Rugby Football Union identifies 139 volunteer roles. In riding and carriage driving for disabled people, volunteer roles include Committee member, Trustee and Group Organiser, as well as activities around care of the horses and assisting with rides. Volunteers in sports clubs and RDA groups also contribute in coaching and instructing, helping to run events and fundraising.

Volunteers are frequently multi-taskers, playing a variety of roles within one organisation or one activity (Welch and Long, 2006). In 2002, 88 per cent of volunteers were involved in coaching, 85 per cent undertook administrative roles and 82 per cent were officials, referees and umpires (Taylor et al., 2003). Sport England found that 18 per cent of club volunteers give 62 per cent of the total hours (Nichols, 2006).

2.4 Volunteer characteristics

Volunteering in sport attracts all kinds of people, although there are strong tendencies towards male and young volunteers. Men are more active in sport volunteering than in most other fields, outnumbering women by two to one (Taylor et al., 2003). The 2007 National Survey of Volunteering similarly showed that 30 per cent of men volunteered in sports and exercise, and 16 per cent of women (Low et al., 2007). In community sports projects, coaches and face to face workers are nearly 70 per cent male, and managers 60 per cent male (SkillsActive, 2005). A survey of club administrators for CCPR found 80 per cent of respondents were male (Welch and Long, 2006).

However, there is greater parity among sport volunteers who put in up to four hours per week, in higher education, and when non-member volunteers are taken into account (de Souza, 2005; Nichols and Shepherd, 2006; Taylor et al., 2003). In other words, many of the 'support' volunteers who do not hold formal roles and who contribute fewer hours are women, and there is also high participation of female students in sport volunteering.

Young people are very involved in sport volunteering, with 47 per cent of all youth volunteering taking place in sport (Russell Commission, 2005). In 2007, more than a quarter of current volunteers aged 16-24 were involved in sports and exercise, with only those aged 35-44 and 45-54 volunteering at a slightly higher level (Low et al., 2007). In 1997, this was also the case, although significant levels of involvement were found at that time for people aged 25-34 and 35-44 (Davis Smith, 1998). It may be over-simplistic to suggest that the same people are still involved – only ten years older. If this is so, it might appear that sport volunteering now is not attracting as many people in the 25-34 age range as a decade ago.

Despite the high participation rates of young people in sport volunteering, they *'typically contribute to minor activities'* rather than holding key roles. Club committees and officer holders tend to be older people, and this domination of key roles *'may constrain opportunities for younger volunteers'* (Taylor et al., 2003). CCPR's survey of sports clubs found that more than 85 per cent of respondents were over 40 and nearly a quarter over 60 (Welch and Long, 2006). RDA volunteers have *'an ageing demographic profile'* and the organisation needs to increase its recruitment of younger, fitter volunteers (Brooke-Holmes, 2005).

Volunteers in sport tend to be of high socio-economic status, in terms of years in education, employment status and occupation, reflecting general patterns among all volunteers. Similarly, they are more likely to be white. Sport England found significant participation by people from other ethnic backgrounds, but the 2007 National Survey of Volunteering showed that, compared to White people, Asian and Black people volunteer in sport and exercise organisations at half the rate or less (Sport England, 2006; Low et al., 2007). Volunteers of minority ethnic backgrounds tend to be more involved in coaching and face-to-face work (15 per cent of all volunteers) than in managing clubs (just three or four per cent) (Welch and Long, 2006; SkillsActive, 2005). People with a disability volunteer in sports at lower levels

than people without disability, but still at significant levels (Sport England, 2006).

2.5 Volunteer motivations

Just as in any type of volunteering, many different types of factors motivate a person to volunteer in sport. Motivation can vary from person to person and over time for any individual. Motivations generally encompass altruistic/moral and instrumental factors (Taylor et al., 2003; Coleman, 2002).

Altruistic motivations include the desire to put something back into a club or sport, often by former players, and *'to help make my organisation successful'* (Welch and Long, 2006; Nichols and Shepherd, 2006; Cuskelly et al., 2006). A second set of motivations relates to parents whose children are playing at the club and who want to support their participation (Nichols and Shepherd, 2006). More than half of volunteers in sports clubs initially volunteer because of a child's involvement (Nichols, 2006). The desire for social benefits like friendship, camaraderie and being part of the club is also a significant motivation (Welch and Long, 2006; Taylor et al., 2003; Cuskelly et al., 2006).

Volunteers in RDA groups expressed three main motivations: altruism and giving benefit to others; friendship and social affiliation; long-term involvement with and loyalty to the group (Brooke-Holmes, 2005).

A study of motivations among New Zealand sport volunteers identified four key *'drives or values'* – generosity, love of sport, social connection and appreciation – and nine *'motivational segments or mindsets'* (SPARC, 2006). Australian rugby volunteers are motivated predominantly by the enjoyment of being part of a club and helping others, because they like to be involved and to contribute to the community (Cuskelly et al., 2006). They placed most importance on the *'extent to which the club cared about their performance as a volunteer'* (rather than other management practices) and decisions about continuing to volunteer *'appear to be influenced by opportunities to have fun when volunteering and being part of a club rather than motives of altruism, concern for the community and personal development'* (Cuskelly et al., 2006).

Among young people, altruistic and social reasons are important motivators to volunteer in sport, but instrumental reasons are also important (Taylor et al., 2003). They want to help people and support the club to do well. They are motivated by interest in the sport and affiliation to their club. But young people also see volunteering as an opportunity to acquire experience for the future, apply their knowledge, skills and abilities, and develop leadership skills (Eley and Kirk, 2002; de Souza, 2005; Coalter, 2004; SPARC, 2006). Some see it as a path to a future career in coaching, sport management or administration (Eley and Kirk, 2002).

While positive reasons predominate among sport volunteers, Sport England's research also highlights negative motivations and pressures to volunteer –

fear that the club will collapse, and that there is no-one else to fill their roles (Sport England, 2003). In the CCPR survey of sports club administrators, one-third gave the latter reason (Welch and Long, 2006).

2.6 Issues and barriers in sport volunteering

Three main problems face sports clubs: a shortage of volunteers, difficulty in recruiting new volunteers and the fact that work is increasingly left to fewer people (Taylor et al., 2003; Nichols, 2005; SPARC, 2006).

Shortages of volunteers

In Sport England's survey of sports club volunteers, three-quarters said there were not enough people willing to volunteer at the club, and two-thirds said increasing workloads were left to fewer people. This was also identified as a major problem a decade ago (Nichols et al., 1998). A large majority of club administrators said that they had difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteers, and that this had worsened in recent years (Welch and Long, 2006).

However, Sport England found that while 40 per cent of clubs were seeing a fall in the number of volunteers, in another 40 per cent numbers were increasing, so the problem is '*not all-pervasive*' (Taylor et al., 2007).

Succession planning

Succession planning for leadership roles is a particular concern. Taylor et al. quote a club secretary who describes it as '*a real problem*', noting that '*most clubs don't even consider it*' (Taylor et al., 2007). In a study of Australian sport, it is noted that '*failing to plan for the replacement of volunteers in key positions may result in a sudden loss of knowledge, skills and experience and has the potential to disrupt the operation and management of community sport organisations*'. Moreover, declines in the length of the average volunteer 'career' increase the need for succession planning and leadership transitions; but these '*are not necessarily negative events*' for clubs and can provide opportunities to move them forward (Cuskelly, 2005).

Heavier workloads and professionalism

Increasing workloads both burden current volunteers and deter new ones. The New Zealand research described the problem of sport volunteers having to '*work overly hard as "slave labour"*' (SPARC, 2006).

In the UK, heavier workloads are attributed to greater numbers participating in their sports, more paperwork and bureaucracy, more stringent NGB procedures, more complex registration, more detailed assessments, more professionalism, technological change, health and safety laws, child protection and CRB checking procedures (Taylor et al., 2003; Taylor et al., 2007; Nichols, 2005; Brooke-Holmes, 2005; Schulz, 2005)². The trend towards greater reliance by sports clubs on grants from national sport infrastructure bodies has increased the pressures for professionalism, target setting and development planning in line with government objectives (Nichols, 2005; Schulz, 2005).

However, it is worth noting that the most frequently cited reason for heavier workloads was increased sports activity – junior, female or veterans' participation – rather than bureaucracy or volunteer shortages (Taylor et al., 2007). Other studies do highlight the barriers posed by greater bureaucracy and accountability required of sports club volunteers: 70 per cent of club administrators felt that concern about the level of responsibility prevented people from volunteering, and nearly a third identified fear of legal action as a deterrent (Welch and Long, 2006).

Pressures for professionalism were viewed as a barrier. It was perceived by more than a quarter of sports club volunteers that volunteering increasingly required specialist skills (Taylor et al., 2003; Nichols, 2004; Nichols et al., 1998). It was becoming more difficult for clubs to involve casual volunteers who help out occasionally (Nichols, 2004).

Lack of time for volunteering

Lack of time affects sport volunteering, as many other areas of voluntary work. Four out of five club administrators said people were prevented from volunteering because it was too time consuming (Welch and Long, 2006), while a quarter of Sport England's respondents said that having little time left after paid work was a reason people didn't volunteer (Taylor et al., 2003). As 70 per cent of sport volunteers have paid jobs, this can be a major factor (Taylor et al., 2003). RDA groups felt that the demands of paid employment were the main deterrent to volunteering (Brooke-Holmes, 2005).

Time pressures were found to be most common amongst those with professional/managerial jobs and parents with dependent children (Gershuny, 2000). Nearly a quarter of respondents said that conflict with family commitments was a key issue affecting their voluntary work (Taylor et al., 2003; Welch and Long, 2006). Among former volunteers, lack of time and conflicting demands from family and paid work were primary reasons for stopping (Taylor et al., 2003).

Young people's readiness to volunteer is also affected by lack of time, due to pressures to study and to find paid work (de Souza, 2005). There is an increasing desire among young people to use spare time to earn income and to preserve some leisure time (Taylor et al., 2003). Students are more likely to look for a part-time job than to volunteer (de Souza, 2005). The availability of these kinds of jobs has reduced their willingness to work voluntarily.

Competition

Sports clubs as a sector also find themselves in an '*increasingly competitive leisure market*' with the rise of alternative providers such as private sector fitness clubs and gyms (Taylor et al., 2003; Nichols, 2005). This ethos of service provision can transform the relationship between the organisation and its members from '*one of participation to one of consumption*' (Nichols, 2005). Competition for members can affect club numbers and hence volunteering potential (Nichols, 2006).

Another kind of competition can be created by the increasing practice in clubs of paying a few staff – chiefly coaches and instructors – which may provide a disincentive to people to contribute their time free and can create tensions between the different work culture of paid and unpaid staff (Taylor et al., 2003; Schulz, 2005).

Attitudes and cultural changes

An important factor deterring volunteer involvement in sports clubs was thought to be attitudes – a *'consuming not contributing'* culture. This is characterised by a *'pay and play'* mentality and a *'childminding'* attitude by parents who drop their children off and pick them up afterwards without participating in any way (Taylor et al., 2003). Wider cultural changes, such as the rise of the *'compensation culture'*, underlie many potential volunteers' hesitancy about getting involved, especially where children are involved (Gaskin, 2006; Taylor et al., 2003)

Even when parents do volunteer at their children's clubs, this is often time-limited. When the child stops playing the sport or being involved with the club, the parent volunteers move on (Taylor et al., 2003).

Other barriers to involvement

Other factors affecting the willingness of people to volunteer reflect the way volunteering is organised and acknowledged: *'the club is asking more of you because of pressures from other organisations'*; *'things could be better organised in the club so you feel your efforts are sometimes wasted'*; and *'you are not appreciated or thanked for your efforts for the club'* (Taylor et al., 2003; de Souza, 2005). Club administrators said potential volunteers were deterred by lack of recognition and feeling undervalued, lack of rewards, poor club facilities and inadequate training (Welch and Long, 2006).

More than a third of club administrators said that people didn't volunteer because they weren't asked and smaller numbers identified lack of money, child care and transport as barriers (Welch and Long, 2006). The cost of transport was also a barrier for RDA volunteers, preventing those on low incomes from getting involved (Brooke-Holmes, 2005).

Recruiting new volunteers

Most club administrators agreed that *'a flow of new volunteers would really make a difference'* but they *'didn't really know where to look for volunteers outside of our own organisation'* (Welch and Long, 2006). This reflects the predominant recruitment pool of club volunteers – people already involved with it, as members or families of members. Among RDA volunteers, open recruitment strategies, including advertising and using volunteer centres, have proved successful although the most common approach remains word of mouth and personal contacts (Brooke-Holmes, 2005).

Sport England's survey found that there are potentially 1.5 million people who would be interested in volunteering in sport. But of these, more than 200,000 weren't volunteering because they did not know how to get involved, or because no-one had ever asked them (Sport England, 2003).

2.7 Volunteer management

Apparent shortcomings in volunteer management are not just due to neglect or lack of resources, but are deeply rooted in the history and tradition of community sport in this country.

The informal nature of sports clubs

Sports clubs are traditionally 'mutual support' or 'membership' organisations powered by shared enthusiasm rather than operating on a 'service delivery' model, with all its implications of professionalism (Nichols et al, nd). Moreover, if 'volunteer management' is an alien concept, *'the word "volunteer" was all but non-existent within the world of sport': 'people giving of their time freely ... do not consider themselves as volunteers, nor, until now, did the NGBs consider these people as volunteers ... until recently, there was no link between sport and the voluntary sector'* (de Cruz, 2005).

An analysis of '*organisational effectiveness*' in sports clubs noted the existence of '*antipathy, or even hostility, towards the concept of management*' and a culture of '*self-help and contribution*' which emphasised informality in the running of the club. 'Management' has unwelcome associations with the exercise of authority, hierarchy or discipline, and professionalisation of management '*is seen as a fundamental threat to the culture of the organisation*' (Taylor et al., 2007).

The 'informal' club is '*socially orientated*', emphasising camaraderie, sociability and friendliness in the way volunteers are organised, rather than '*orientated to more formal notions of organisational effectiveness*' (Taylor et al., 2007). The prevalent management style is '*characterised by interpersonal control – dependant on personal relationships*' and '*the informal network of relations acts as a reward for continued involvement*' (Nichols, 2005).

Informality is a source of pride, and this leads to a '*co-operative, intuitive system that has evolved with few formal procedures*' (Taylor et al., 2003). The 'informal' club is characterised by '*insularity and independence*' and a resistance to external assistance. It frequently experiences volunteer shortages, long-serving key volunteers, increasing workloads and lack of development. It may be run by '*stalwarts*' – long-term loyal volunteers – who may exhibit a '*bunker mentality*' in the face of new challenges (Nichols, 2006).

At the other end of the spectrum, the 'formal' club embraces a more managerialist philosophy, involving procedures such as volunteer audits, job descriptions and training, a more strategic approach to club development and forward planning, and receptiveness to external assistance. Social benefits remain the primary motivation of volunteers, but organisational effectiveness - and delivering a good service - are also important (Nichols, 2006).

Several authorities on sport volunteering feel that the pressures on club volunteers, detailed above, and the increased emphasis on 'professional' practices are contributing to a shift towards the service delivery model

(Nichols et al., nd). However, informality and the *'mutual aid impetus'* which have powered the club scene in this country continue to dominate (Adams and Deane, 2005).

Professionalisation

In Australian sport, professionalisation of management structures and systems has proceeded over the past 30 years (Cuskelly, 2005). A 2006 survey looked at the distribution of rugby clubs on the formality/informality spectrum and concluded the following: 'traditional' clubs (minimal use of volunteer management practices) = 36 per cent; 'operational' clubs (some formalised practices) = 26 per cent; and 'contemporary' clubs (relatively formalised and comprehensive practices) = 38 per cent. The report noted that volunteer retention was *'perceived significantly more problematic'* in traditional versus contemporary clubs (Cuskelly et al., 2006). However, the downside of professionalisation in Australia has been to increase the complexity of volunteer roles and reduce the influence of volunteers in community sport: *'except for the most highly committed volunteers, sport has become too complex and uncertain to manage and operate'* (Cuskelly, 2005).

The most obvious signs of a more formal approach to volunteer management are the creation a volunteer co-ordinator role and production of a volunteer strategy. In Sport England's survey of clubs in 2002, fewer than five per cent of clubs had these (Taylor et al., 2007). And in the survey of club administrators, a minority of clubs had volunteer support systems, such as mentoring schemes, volunteer training courses, task sheets for new volunteers or strategies for recruiting, retaining, recognising and rewarding volunteers (Welch and Long, 2006). However, it is worth noting that these approaches are gathering momentum and statistics should be updated on a regular basis.

Volunteer management initiatives

The traditional informality of English sports clubs – along with lack of time and resources – was found to be responsible for the quite limited impact of Sport England's Volunteer Investment Programme (VIP) which ran from 1997 to 2005 but was rarely adopted at club level (Taylor et al., 2007). VIP aimed, with the co-operation of NGBs, to raise the profile of sport volunteers, promote and support volunteer management and good practice. However, it has been characterised as *'a blanket, one-size-fits-all approach'* which, by focusing on individuals rather than clubs and stressing formality, created a *'square-peg-and-round-hole'* situation (Adams and Deane, 2005). More recent initiatives such as Clubmark, the Community Sports Development Programme and the work of County Sports Partnerships, have also had limited take-up and impact (Taylor et al., 2007).

In the view of two experts on support networks for sport volunteers, however, the NGB Modernisation programme and Step into Sport Scheme, with their focus on capacity building, are *'likely to deliver, in the fullness of time, a new generation of sports volunteers'* (Adams and Deane, 2005).

Both the Volunteer Investment Programme and Running Sport schemes, operated by Sport England, aim to encourage sports clubs to support and value their volunteers. Many NGBs have taken the initiative in the past few years to produce extended guidance on volunteers, issuing templates and good practice guidelines to their membership. They include the England and Wales Cricket Board's 'Volunteers in Cricket – Good Practice Guide', the Football Association's 'The Football Workforce' and those in rugby, hockey and disabled riding (see box). However, there is little available evidence of impact as *'volunteering in sport suffers from a lack of studies into the actual effectiveness of prescribed "Codes" and "Good Practice"'* (Hutter, 2005).

Volunteer support strategies in rugby, hockey and disabled riding

In 2002, the RFU launched a volunteer policy to *'support the recruitment, development, appreciation and recognition of those who volunteer to lead and administer the sport at all levels of the game'* (RFU, 2005). In its Action Plan 2005/06 it set out a 'volunteer investment work programme' which prioritised the appointment of Club Volunteer Co-ordinators, grants for projects to encourage both younger and older people to volunteer, and the production of good practice guides. It launched a *'leadership academy pilot'* to *'identify and develop the next generation'* of leaders and the Value the Volunteers initiative to recognise and reward volunteers.

England Hockey has adopted a Volunteer Support Strategy, promoting the appointment of Club Volunteer Co-ordinators, volunteer awards, good practice guides and leadership courses for young volunteers. It ran national volunteering surveys in 2004 and 2008 (www.englandhockey.co.uk accessed 10/01/2008). The RDA provides a range of support for volunteering, including a Volunteer Support Pack, long service awards, a promotional film aimed at recruitment, volunteer training and accreditation programmes (www.rda.org.uk accessed 11/09/2007).

Formalising the informal

The research on organisational effectiveness in clubs could not conclude that formalising volunteer management reduced problems associated with volunteers. It found *'no significant relationship'* between having a volunteer co-ordinator and experiencing fewer problems with volunteer recruitment, management and overload. And it found examples of informal clubs which had successfully avoided these problems (Taylor et al., 2007).

It is therefore over-simplistic to equate formalisation with success and vice versa. It is vital to recognise the specific character of sports clubs and *'achieve a management system which is consistent with the motivation of volunteers'* (Nichols, 2006) and which *'balances the needs of the "stalwarts" and new volunteers'* (Nichols, 2005).

The way in which 'professionalisation' is promoted needs to be *'varied, simple and sensitive to the different cultures in clubs'* (Taylor et al., 2003). Debating

whether it is better to leave traditional/informal organisations *'to their own fate'* or continue to work to change them, researchers concluded that *'the portents for change are not very good'* and there is perhaps *'a need to acknowledge that clubs can be effective whilst still retaining an informal culture'* (Taylor et al., 2007).

2.8 The impacts of sport volunteering

Volunteering in sport has impacts on clubs, members and players, the community, and volunteers themselves. Sport England notes that the community sport sector *'can make increasingly vital contributions to the health of the nation, community regeneration and cohesion, community safety and educational attainment'* (Taylor et al., 2003). Sport can contribute to government policy objectives such as active citizenship, improving health and reducing obesity (Nichols, 2005).

Impacts on clubs

According to Sport England, the nearly six million volunteers help to sustain over 106,400 affiliated clubs and serve over eight million members. These volunteers contribute 1.2 billion hours each year to sport which is equivalent to 720,000 full-time paid workers. The value of the volunteer contribution in sport is estimated at over £14 billion each year (Taylor et al., 2003). In hockey alone, the value of volunteers' work is estimated as £72 million (www.englandhockey.org.uk accessed 10/09/2007).

The Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) estimates more than 150,000 voluntary amateur sports clubs, of which nearly half have existed for more than 30 years (CCPR, 2003). These statistics in themselves indicate the substantial impact of sport volunteers.

The governing bodies of the sports in this research are emphatic about the huge value and importance of volunteers:

'Volunteers are the heartbeat of hockey in England' (England Hockey, 2007);

'Everything we do is only possible with the incredible and relentless input of the volunteers' (RDA, 2005);

'Without volunteers, grassroots rugby would not exist' (RFU, 2006).

In Sport England's research, volunteer focus groups identified three main impacts on clubs. Far and away the primary impact was ensuring clubs' survival through allowing them to continue and function; secondary impacts were lower costs, thus encouraging participation, and an inclusive atmosphere and culture (Taylor et al., 2003). Young people's focus groups felt that volunteering by young people had the effect of attracting other young people to the club (Taylor et al., 2003). However, there is little evidence of

more detailed impacts on clubs, such as on their ability to grow and develop, their sustainability and diversity, or their reputation and profile.

Impacts on players

The vast majority of clubs simply would not exist without volunteers and community sport would be negligible. The activities of volunteers enable clubs to operate and to offer opportunities to play sport to millions of people of all ages. Simply providing opportunities is therefore a crucial impact on players.

There is also some evidence of volunteers' impacts in developing players' skills, such as sporting skills and social skills; of enhancing personal development and educational performance; and of improving health and fitness. The positive impacts on children and young people in the areas of child obesity, educational attainment and social exclusion are recognised in current government policies on expanding sport participation (RFU, 2005; DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002). However, little systematic research has been done on measuring these impacts.

The RDA notes that impacts on riders include *'real and lasting therapy that not only benefits mobility, co-ordination and balance, but encourages confidence and self-worth, while having fun'* (RDA, 2005a). Ofsted recognises the *'added value'* of RDA activities for young people in *'improving communication, numeracy, literacy, social skills and confidence'* (RDA, 2005a). The RDA has recently created an accredited achievement awards programme with ASDAN, to *'allow us to more robustly show the great educational value of RDA programmes to young people'* (RDA, 2005b).

Impacts on volunteers

Evidence suggests that sport volunteers enjoy social benefits and also gain in terms of personal and skill development. Sport England found social impacts dominant, bringing camaraderie, friendships and socialising opportunities. Volunteering may also help people extend their social network by providing the opportunity to interact with people with different ages, backgrounds and experience (Eley and Kirk, 2002). Social benefits are closely followed by enjoyment and satisfaction from *'giving something back'* and from keeping the club going and thriving (Taylor et al., 2003).

While contributing to the club's welfare is important for young as well as adult volunteers, young people experience more functional benefits: the training and experience provided by volunteering; gaining skills and qualifications to enhance their CVs; and experiencing *'a degree of empowerment and recognition'* (Taylor et al., 2003). The Step into Sport programme, for example, gives young people *'the opportunity to learn, acquire and develop a range of skills, which are transferable to many areas, such as higher education and future careers'* (DCMS, nd). Student volunteers reported that volunteering enhanced their self-confidence, leadership, time management and organisational skills (de Souza, 2005).

A study of a sport-based volunteer programme run by the Youth Sport Trust through Millennium Volunteers found that most skills (such as planning skills,

group dynamic skills, speech skills and character building skills) improved after nine months of volunteering by young people. Volunteering also helped increase confidence, personal development and pro-social identity. Sport provides *'an avenue to learn social responsibility, leadership skills and confidence for life, not to mention the healthy lifestyle that is closely associated with sport and physical activity'* (Eley and Kirk, 2002).

An interesting impact emerged as young people's motivations and sense of reward changed over time; altruistic feelings became stronger and greater emphasis was placed by participants on working in and for the community, in contrast to the more dominant personal interest reasons for their initial involvement (Eley and Kirk, 2002). This demonstrates the effect of sport volunteering in increasing civic and community awareness among young people.

Of course, the negative impacts on volunteers – such as feeling overloaded and unable to stop because of a lack of replacements – should not be overlooked.

Impacts on the community

The provision of opportunities to play sport (and to volunteer in sport) has benefits for local communities (Taylor et al., 2003). Volunteers help sport development at grassroots level and may contribute at the policy level in terms of participation, health and fitness, social inclusion and citizenship (Taylor et al., 2003; DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002).

Sport England's survey of local authority officers showed their main perceptions of clubs' community benefits to be as providers of opportunities, with community integration, cohesion and empowerment, health and crime reduction also significant. A minority mentioned providing pathways and progression routes from school sport, improved quality of life, social inclusion and developing skills (Taylor et al., 2003).

Evidence of improved health and fitness, while often assumed, is rare: *'we do not know how many members of voluntary sports clubs are participating enough to make a difference to their health'* (Nichols et al., 2004). And the DCMS strategy document draws attention to the number of injuries associated with sport (DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002).

The role of sports clubs and sport volunteering in increasing community cohesion and social capital is also somewhat equivocal, although this impact is now widely applied to volunteering as a whole. Sports teams and clubs can bring people together with shared interests, values and understandings, which facilitate co-operation within groups. In terms of social capital, the *'small and parochial nature of most UK clubs'* suggests that they are more likely to contribute to bonding capital between similar people, rather than bridging (between dissimilar people) or linking (with people in power) (Nichols et al., 2004). The strength of this bonding can lead to the formation of cliques which may be exclusionary (Steenburgen et al., 2001). But although bridging and

linking activities may be *'fewer and weaker ...the power of weak ties should not be underestimated'* (Collins, 2005).

However, it is felt that this *'illustrates a general limitation of the concept of social exclusion, in that it has to define "exclusion" and the point at which this becomes undesirable, rather than a reflection of acceptable differences'* (Nichols et al., 2004). National Governing Bodies and individual clubs do place a priority on increasing diversity, but there are a number of barriers (and perhaps natural limits) to this in sport and within different sports in particular. De Souza, however, suggests that student sport volunteering is more inclusive and *'equality-conscious'* (de Souza, 2005).

Impacts on the community are gained from the positive effects of sporting participation and volunteering on young people. These can help engender a sense of community spirit, participation and citizenship, enhancing awareness of rights and responsibilities (Eley and Kirk, 2002).

The provision of sporting opportunities for young people, through various projects, raised young people's interest and performance levels, and contributed to improved behaviour and pupil performance (de Souza, 2005). Sport gives alternative options to sedentary activities like television and computer games and is important in *'keeping kids off the streets'* (Taylor et al., 2003). Being involved in sport can prevent them from lapsing into antisocial behaviour which is important for community safety and reduction of youth crime, and its associated costs to the community and the state.

This preventative role in terms of reducing antisocial behaviour and hence future costs to the education, benefits or justice system, indicates an economic as well as social impact on society. In harder financial terms, it has been calculated that *'the total net input to the economy from sports clubs may be considered to be £3,747,000,000'* (Welch and Long, 2006). This represents the spend by clubs plus the spend by players (minus the fees paid by the players to the club, already included in clubs' spend). And, as noted, club volunteers' work has a notional value of £14 billion. These are very substantial economic impacts.

A further positive influence on society is represented by the contribution of volunteers to the success of major events, like the Commonwealth Games and the forthcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games. These volunteers can provide a strong base for a core contingent of sport volunteers for the future.

3 The research process

In this section:

Initial scoping of impacts

Production and distribution of questionnaires

The response from the pilot

3.1 The initial scoping of impacts

The construction of the impact framework and questionnaires was initially based on the VIAT system of categorising volunteer impacts. This identified five types of impact, which were called 'capitals':

- physical capital: the concrete product or output gained by a recipient
- human capital: the acquisition of skills and personal development
- economic capital: financial and economic effects of volunteering
- social capital: building relationships, networks and social bonds
- cultural capital: strengthening cultural and/or religious identity and understanding.

These impacts were translated into the sporting context in a checklist of impacts which NGBs and case studies reviewed. The process underlined the value of customising generic volunteer impacts to particular fields of volunteering.

Case studies emphasised that, in sport, enjoyment, fun and satisfaction are primary outcomes of volunteers' work. Enjoyment and fun are the main focus of players' and riders' participation, and the main things which volunteers hope to provide for them. Volunteers themselves gain enjoyment from being involved in the sport and enabling others to take part, and satisfaction from 'giving something back' to the sport or the club which gave them (or still gives them) pleasure as players.

The questionnaires which were produced to measure impacts therefore presented six categories of impact, with enjoyment, fun and satisfaction as the first one. The term 'capital' was not used at all in the questionnaires or interviews, as it was felt to be potentially alienating jargon.

Feedback from case studies and NGBs indicated that the 'capitals' which required less emphasis in sport than in other volunteering fields were economic and cultural. Clubs felt that economic and financial benefits for volunteers and players were not dominant impacts, although most had some examples of people who had developed careers in sport as a result of their involvement.

For most adult volunteers, their volunteering did not have a significant impact on their career development, job performance and financial prospects, as the majority already had established professional careers and the appropriate skills to carry them out. The strongest beneficiary of economic impacts were clubs themselves, through volunteers' fundraising - whether small-scale and local, or grant applications – and by enabling clubs to keep their charges low, maintain or increase membership and hence membership and playing fees.

Cultural capital was perhaps the most loosely defined category in VIAT; it referred to a shared sense of cultural and religious identity, reinforcement of ethnic or faith identity, and inter-cultural understanding, as well as the broad concept of cultural activities. The nature of most sports clubs means that this is a minor element in sport volunteering, since most case studies felt that their membership was fairly homogeneous. While some have made efforts to diversify or declare themselves open to everyone, in effect they tend to draw on a fairly restrictive ethnic or cultural population – frequently related to their geographical area, the popularity of the sport in school curricula or its general public image. Therefore, reinforcement of cultural identity and exposure to and understanding of people of other backgrounds and cultures were thought to be low on the scale of impacts.

To a lesser extent, these comments also apply to social capital. While the case studies felt that volunteering contributed to one dimension of social capital - the development of friendships, contacts and networks – it was seen as less constructive in building cohesion and solidarity across communities. Again, this was partly due to the homogeneous nature of club membership. Both social and cultural capital can entail group bonding which is exclusionary rather than inclusive, and this tendency appears to be more prevalent in sports clubs than cross-community bonding.

3.2 The production and distribution of questionnaires

With this feedback from the case studies, five questionnaires were created with six potential areas of impact:

1. Enjoyment and satisfaction
2. Quantity and quality of volunteers' work
3. Personal development
4. Financial and economic impacts
5. Social impacts
6. Sense of community.

Each impact area is represented by three indicators, with which respondents are asked to show their level of agreement or satisfaction. Open-ended questions allowed people to add comments or explanations. Impacts on four stakeholders are explored:

1. Volunteers
2. Players

3. Clubs
4. The community

Dividing the players into adult and young members, five questionnaires were prepared for each case study, with wording appropriate to the different stakeholders and the name and other relevant details of the specific club inserted. There were differences between questionnaires for the sports clubs and the disabled riding groups, in which the different nature of the activity, users and potential impacts was reflected.

The questionnaires were kept short - a maximum of four pages - informal and jargon-free. This was due to case studies' feedback that people would be put off by anything that seemed too 'official' or bureaucratic - already a major issue among sport volunteers - and would not take the time to fill in a lengthy questionnaire. Appropriate graphics were inserted to lighten the tone, and the questionnaire for young players, some as young as seven, replaced tick boxes with smiley or grumpy faces. These were also used, at their discretion, for adults with learning difficulties in disabled riding groups.

The questionnaires were distributed by clubs, by email and in printed form, and the regional bodies in rugby and hockey put them on their intranet for member clubs to use if they wished. All completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher for analysis.

3.3 The response

One hundred questionnaires were returned, with the following distribution.

Respondents to pilot study

RESPONDENT	TOTAL	SPORTS CLUBS	RDA GROUPS
Volunteers	25	15	10
Adult members	25	12	13
Young members	22	11	11
Club officers	19	12	7
External orgs	9	2	7
Total	100	52	48

These were completed by six of the case studies, with four failing to distribute or return questionnaires, for various reasons.

This is not a large dataset on which to base conclusions. However, the research was focused less on conducting a comprehensive impact assessment than on testing questionnaire formats for wider usage, and this aim was satisfied by the response.

The extent to which the pilot results can be taken as representative is affected by three factors: the sports; the selection of case studies; and self-selected response. The three sports may not be typical of all sports volunteers in

England. Their NGBs wanted good quality clubs and associations to be included in the research and permitted only those that had gained Clubmark or ClubsFirst accreditation (or in one case, not accredited but vetted by the regional office) to take part. This implies a degree of volunteer competency and a level of organisation which may not characterise all clubs and associations.

The pilot study also depended on the willingness of clubs and individuals to take part. Self-selection by respondents means that they may not be representative of all sports volunteers. In particular, while the pilot had a good response from young players, young volunteers were not well represented, although the interviews included young volunteers. Self-selected respondents may be more satisfied than those who didn't respond, although we have no evidence of this.

The results of the pilot, however, are felt to be reliably indicative of the real and potential impacts of sport volunteers. They certainly offer further evidence on this topic, and provide the basis for more detailed assessments in the future.

4 The results of the pilot

In this section:

Expected or obvious impacts:

- **Volunteers are the lifeblood of community sport**
- **Improving opportunities, fitness and health**
- **Providing enjoyment and fun**
- **Bringing people together socially**
- **Improving skills and confidence**

Less well-known impacts:

- **Building a sense of community**
- **Building trust among people**
- **Breaking down barriers**
- **Participation in other activities**
- **Employability and performance**

More controversial impacts:

- **Volunteer management**
- **Volunteer training**
- **Volunteer overload**
- **Succession planning**
- **Shortages of volunteers**

The results are presented in three sets of impacts: expected or 'obvious' impacts; less well-known impacts; and more controversial or potentially negative impacts.

4.1 In the back of the net ... the obvious impacts

This paper now reviews five expected impacts – those which are widely assumed and claimed to be major benefits of sport volunteering. The term 'club' is used to cover all the case studies, whether clubs, associations or RDA groups or centres. Distinctions are specified where appropriate.

Volunteers are the 'lifeblood' of community sport

This is indisputably true. Club officers agree that the presence of volunteers enables their club to function successfully and, indeed, to exist at all.

'Without the volunteers, there would be no club – it's that simple'
(volunteer officer, hockey club);

'Our club only functions because of volunteers' (volunteer officer, rugby club);

'One of the key factors of the successful function of the centre is the volunteers; without their hard work and dedication there would be no centre' (volunteer officer, RDA group).

Volunteers strongly endorse the satisfaction they get from enabling their organisations to exist and function successfully. Volunteering gives them a chance to put something back into the club or sport, and RDA volunteers agree that it gives them the chance to help disabled people enjoy horse riding or carriage driving.

The majority of rugby and hockey players are very happy with their club and the way it is run, and all the RDA users are. There are high levels of satisfaction with the amount and usefulness of the help and support they get from volunteers, and the opportunities they have to develop and progress in the sport. Almost all young players and riders are very happy with their club or group and the volunteer support they receive. Club and group officers agree – many strongly – that volunteers ensure a satisfying and rewarding experience for all.

Inevitably some volunteers perform to a higher standard than others: *'the majority of volunteers are brilliant but as with all clubs "the few do the most". There are some posts held where they don't quite deliver, but again this is typical of lots of clubs'* (honorary treasurer, rugby club); *'much depends on the key person (usually the manager and coach) for each team, and some are better than others'* (volunteer, hockey club). The vast majority of volunteers are considered to do a very good job.

What they think of volunteers

'Our club has a great set of volunteers who have been involved in the club for many years and who put a lot of hard work into working on committees, publicity, working with the various youth teams, working in the kitchen on match and training days to provide hot food, drinks etc' (female committee member, rugby club).

'In general, the club is well served by the volunteers and especially the management team' (adult player, rugby club).

'(The group) gives support to all, both drivers and carers and volunteers, and is operated in a very friendly way, always involving the local community in social events' (volunteer, RDA group).

'I think my coach is a very good coach. Very encouraging, always very positive even when we have done something well or not. Also my manager is very well suited to her role. My coach and manager also keep us very well informed' (young player, county hockey association).

'They are kind people, and we learn lots of things. They always listen' (adult rider, RDA group).

'I feel all the volunteers have a good understanding of working with people who have disabilities, and work well as a team' (adult carriage driver, RDA group).

'I consider it (regional rugby association) to be a very well organised and friendly organisation' (volunteer officer, rugby club and regional association).

Officers feel that volunteers contribute a great deal to the value of the club's work, to its income and financial welfare, and to building and enhancing its profile and reputation. They describe a wide range of work in the community – with schools, colleges, county sports partnerships, youth and community groups, local authorities, local businesses and media, festivals and open days – all aiming to promote the sport, attract people, raise their profile or fundraise. Although the study did not get a large number of responses from organisations external to clubs, all agree that volunteers' work promotes the sport in the community and has a number of benefits for the people who are reached by this. For most clubs, however, community work and outreach are limited by resources of money and volunteer time; they would do more if they could.

The majority of players and riders know that activities are provided by volunteers and not people who are paid to do it and, for most, this makes no difference. And if it does, it's in a good way.

These young hockey players give their reasons:

'It is very nice that people want to teach young people and they are not doing it for the money but because they enjoy it';

'It is vital that we appreciate what people do for the club as without them it would not be as good as it is';

'They are very committed individuals and do a good job'.

This last respondent added:

'However, it would be good for them to receive some reward for the great deal of time and effort they provide.'

An RDA rider notes:

'We do think it is very good of them to give up their time to help.'

Improving opportunities, health and fitness

The work of sport volunteers in maintaining clubs is responsible for the provision of opportunities to take part. Players and riders strongly agree that 'the chance to play (ride) and to be involved in the sport (with horses)' is a major impact of volunteers' work. Club officers generally agree that the club's work in the community and with external organisations raises awareness of

the sport among the public and brings new people into it. External organisations are unanimous that clubs 'provide valuable opportunities or services that wouldn't otherwise be available'.

Moreover, the fact that volunteers provide the opportunities means that they are affordable. A majority of adult players agree that 'if the club wasn't run by volunteers (keeping costs low) I wouldn't be able to afford to play'. And almost all young players 'very much' agree that 'playing for the club isn't too expensive for me and my family'. A young hockey player, explaining why she likes having volunteers run the club, comments *'they can provide just as good a service and it keeps the price down'*.

Providing opportunities to take part in sport has impacts on people's fitness and health – a claim made by sports infrastructure bodies and acknowledged in government policies to promote active sport in the population. It is confirmed by players' and riders' responses. All of them, and particularly the young ones, feel that being involved with the club is good for their well-being, health or fitness. All but one of the young players strongly agree with this, and a large majority of young RDA users say it makes them feel healthier and stronger. RDA group organisers and their client organisations strongly endorse gains in motor skills, co-ordination and strength among riders and drivers. Club officers and external organisations agree that volunteers' work in the community improves health and fitness.

For the volunteers in hockey and rugby, however, there is no change. For all but one or two, health, fitness and well-being have stayed the same. This is probably a reflection of the posts they hold as volunteers – generally administrative rather than coaching – and may also take account of the stresses of being a club volunteer. In contrast, most RDA volunteers say their health, wellbeing and fitness have increased, probably due to the more active and hands-on nature of their voluntary work.

Providing enjoyment and fun

The sheer enjoyment of sport comes across very decisively. Young rugby and hockey players strongly agree that they get enjoyment, fun and pleasure from their involvement; half the adults feel as strongly, while the rest also agree.

RDA group users – both adults and young people – are overwhelmingly positive about the pleasure and fun they get from riding or carriage driving. Invited to suggest ways in which the group could be improved, two adult riders comment *'it's perfect as it is'* and *'I am very happy here'*.

'I love riding and we have lots of fun. The people are wonderful' (young rider, RDA group).

'I look forward to going. I like driving and talking to people there and helping with the horses and having a cup of tea after' (adult driver, RDA group).

Club and RDA officers agree that volunteers make the club or group an enjoyable and fun place to be. In both hockey and rugby they speak of the *'fun and exhilaration'* young players get from *'being physical with their mates'*. The mother of a disabled carriage driver says: *'When Emma and I arrive, all tensions disappear; it's lovely.'*

A young rugby player and volunteer – now under 16s coach and first team manager (and aiming to go for first team captain in a few years' time) – spoke warmly of *'the buzz'* of being around his mates and family, the fun and great atmosphere at the club, and the fact that the weekend puts him in a good mood for work on Monday.

Among volunteers, there is widespread agreement that they get enjoyment and pleasure from their involvement, but enthusiasm is a little more muted than among players and a couple of sports club volunteers dissent from this. Volunteers' assessment probably reflects some of the hard graft and strains of keeping clubs going: *'We do have fun as a committee – we wouldn't do it otherwise – but it can be a bit of a chore sometimes.'* Satisfaction at keeping the club functioning is generally higher than actual pleasure in doing so, although among RDA volunteers these are virtually equal.

Bringing people together socially

Emphatically. Players, riders and volunteers agree overwhelmingly that they have made new friends and contacts through their involvement. Sports club officers and external organisations feel that volunteers' work in the community contributes in a major way to developing friendships, contacts and networks among people. This impact is slightly lower in RDA groups.

Young players, riders and carriage drivers are unanimous about the strong social impact. All have made new friends at their clubs or groups.

The sociability of clubs and groups

'What I most like is the fact that there is not a single person in the club I don't like or who doesn't like me. I was welcomed right from the start and have a whole new circle of friends' (young female player, rugby club).

'It is relaxed and friendly. People are supportive and it is wonderful to be with similar people' (young rider, RDA group).

'My view is that we have a great club which is very friendly to all who come to it' (volunteer officer, rugby club).

'The people are all very welcoming and friendly which all adds to the pleasure of my visit' (adult carriage driver, RDA group).

'A father told me on Saturday that of all the clubs he attends we are the most inclusive and friendly club he has known. It's nice to know we are appreciated' (volunteer officer, rugby club).

Developing skills and confidence

The piloting produced evidence of impacts on personal development, but points to the need to differentiate between players and volunteers. Among players and riders, confidence and self-esteem, personal and social skills, playing/riding skills and understanding of the sport, are all considered to have increased, for many 'greatly'. Only a few feel they have stayed the same. These impacts are notably strongest among young players and riders, virtually all of whom have benefited significantly in these ways.

'It's lovely to see the girls gaining in confidence and self belief over their years in the squad.' (volunteer, county hockey association).

'I get a lot of satisfaction from seeing riders go from nervous novices at the start, and progressing over time to a reasonable level' (volunteer, RDA group).

'It definitely helps the lads become more mature, deal with different people and situations, and become more well-rounded' (volunteer, rugby club).

'It is very satisfying to watch riders improve and grow in confidence with each lesson' (volunteer, RDA group).

Club officers and external organisations generally endorse these impacts on people reached by volunteers' work in the community. Schools and centres whose members use RDA groups are very positive about gains in their confidence and skills: for example:

'It gives pupils excellent opportunities to develop personal and social skills, and improves gross motor skills.'

Among volunteers, however, development of skills and confidence is more muted. A majority of hockey and rugby volunteers say their involvement has increased skills like teamwork, communication, leadership and technical skills (but not 'greatly increased'), but for a large minority these have stayed the same. For many of these volunteers their confidence, self-esteem and self-management have not changed (twice as many as say they have increased). Among RDA volunteers, these impacts come across more strongly, with a majority reporting increases.

This more equivocal picture is felt to be partly due to the fact that people who become volunteers in sports clubs are capable individuals in the first place. The occupations of the rugby and hockey volunteers responding to the questionnaire were all professional, and most of them were over 45, suggesting that their skills and self-confidence were in pretty good shape before they began volunteering. However, some interesting individual lessons are learned: *'I have at least learned that whilst being a volunteer official I cannot be so autocratic as I am in my job'* (volunteer officer, rugby club).

For RDA volunteers there is often a greater element of learning new skills – whether caring for horses, riding and driving skills, or skills associated with working with disabled people – so there is more potential for personal and skill development, as in other more ‘service-delivery’ orientated volunteering.

The issue of volunteers’ skills development is also linked to training opportunities provided, and this is discussed below in Section 4.3.

Summary

These major impacts are all confirmed. Volunteers keep clubs and groups going, and provide good quality services for members and users. The opportunities that they provide enable people to have fun, make friends, improve fitness and health, and develop confidence and skills. Volunteers themselves benefit from a sense of satisfaction and the social aspects of their volunteering. However, among the club volunteers fitness and health, confidence and skills appear not to be significantly enhanced by their involvement. These impacts are greater for RDA volunteers.

4.2 At a trot or a gallop... less well-known impacts

This section focuses on five impacts that have been less publicised in the context of sport volunteering. These have had significant claims made for them in relation to volunteering in general, but there has been very little research done on them in sport.

Building a sense of community

The claims made for volunteering as a contributor to social capital emphasise the building of connections among people, increased community awareness and trust. Giving people a sense of belonging and identification with their community is believed to engender greater civic cohesion and responsibility.

The evidence for sport volunteering is mixed, as the review in Section 2.8 suggested it might be. These impacts certainly occur, but are stronger among players than volunteers. Half the adult hockey and rugby players say their sense of community and belonging has increased, while for the other half it has stayed the same. Adult RDA users, however, report more increases in their sense of feeling part of things.

Among young players and riders, almost all say that being involved has given them a strong sense of ‘belonging to a group or team’. The wording of this question for young players and riders is different, as it was felt that the concept of ‘community’ might not be readily grasped by them, but it still captures a sense of belonging to and identification with a larger group. A member of the Women’s Committee in a rugby club commented that teenagers get so much bad press, but at the club they *‘feel appreciated, they get a sense of pride and camaraderie that they don’t get anywhere else’*.

External organisations with which case studies have links, such as local authority departments and schools, endorse the view that volunteers' work increases people's sense of community and belonging.

Building trust among people

While it is clear that sports clubs enhance connections and friendships among people, the issue of trust is more equivocal. Perhaps reassuringly, this impact is greatest among young players and riders. A majority strongly agree that they feel like they can trust people 'because of the way people at the club treat me'. Adult riders and carriage drivers also report significant increases in their sense of trust, and this is quite marked among RDA volunteers. External organisations rate this impact of clubs and groups quite highly.

Among adult rugby and hockey players, though, most say their sense of trust in others has stayed the same as a result of their involvement; and almost all the sports club volunteers neither agree nor disagree that they have a greater sense of trusting people, while two disagree. Most volunteers have not experienced an increased sense of community and belonging as a result of their volunteering, though a few – and more of the RDA volunteers - have.

This probably reflects the fact that many adults have already developed views of their sense of community and how trustworthy other people are, and the findings indicate that their involvement has not changed their views; and some volunteers may have had negative experiences of others' reliability. The positive impact on young players, however, speaks well of clubs' ethos and volunteers' contribution. The different experience of RDA volunteers is probably related to the nature of the volunteering.

Mutual understanding and breaking down barriers

A key tenet of social capital is its bridging function: building relationships and communication among different groups, to create greater social cohesion. This is suggested to be an important effect of volunteering in general.

As already noted, it would not be expected that this impact would be so pronounced in sport volunteering. And indeed, almost all the hockey and rugby volunteers say their understanding of people from different backgrounds and cultures has stayed the same. Among adult players, they are split half and half on whether this has increased or has not changed. An NGB pointed out that the '*touring culture*' in sport meant players met others from different backgrounds. However, the existence of separate Black and Asian leagues in some sports (such as hockey) means this kind of exposure can be limited.

In riding for disabled people, however, there is a much more pronounced impact on volunteers' 'understanding of people from different backgrounds or with differing abilities'. And all the adult riders report increases in their understanding. This would perhaps be expected where volunteers who are able-bodied are working closely with clients with disabilities, but it is also a positive finding that this impact is so strong among the riders.

The biggest impact is on young players and riders. All but one player and one rider say their involvement in the club has helped them get to know and get on with people from different places and backgrounds. And for most this is 'very much' the case. A 16 year old hockey player explained that within her team and especially in opposing teams she regularly encountered people from different schools, areas, backgrounds and ethnicities, and had learned about both their differences and similarities in a positive way. For young disabled people, visits to the centres provide often rare opportunities to mix with different people.

Participation in other activities

Another dimension of social capital holds that taking part in volunteering encourages civic-mindedness and participation in other local activities.

There are moderate impacts on the levels of participation in other activities. A majority of hockey and rugby players, including young people, have got involved in other local activities, while general participation in leisure, sporting and cultural activities has increased for half of them but stayed the same for the rest. Young players are less likely to take on other activities in general. Club officers and external organisations feel there is a modest effect of encouraging people to get involved in community activities.

Opening up possibilities for disabled people

For RDA users, there is an increase in some adults' involvement in other local activities and general leisure, sporting and cultural activities. Most young riders, however, say that riding has encouraged them to do other new activities and has led to them doing other sports and hobbies. This reflects the positive aims and achievements of groups in expanding horizons and opening up possibilities for disabled people.

Volunteers are much less likely to participate in other activities. A large majority of rugby and hockey volunteers have not increased their involvement locally and their general participation in leisure, sporting and cultural activities has stayed the same. They feel this is due to the '*all-encompassing*' and time-consuming nature of their sport volunteering and the fact that sport is a passion. It is therefore less likely to be a gateway to other forms of participation than some types of volunteering.

RDA volunteers have got involved in other local activities more frequently than club volunteers, though for the majority general participation has stayed the same.

Exceptions to the pattern among club volunteers were found: for example, a rugby volunteer became a school governor, largely because of the experience and confidence he had gained at the club; several university rugby club volunteers have become coaches at local clubs; and some club volunteers progress to further levels of voluntary involvement in their sport, for example in county or regional associations.

Employability and performance

An important impact of volunteering in general is that it can be a stepping stone into training or employment, and that it has positive impacts on performance in other areas of people's lives. These effects can also be experienced by the people volunteers help.

For our sports club volunteers, however, there was no agreement that 'my volunteering has improved my performance at school or work, or my career prospects'. Most neither agree nor disagree, and a few actively disagree. More RDA volunteers do report this impact although most don't.

The impact is strongest on younger volunteers. University rugby club volunteers said they hoped or expected the growth in their skills and leadership experience would help them find employment, while young club volunteers felt their increased confidence, people skills and self-management had probably had a positive effect on their job acquisition and performance. A young rugby volunteer had gained skills and experience in teamwork and communication, had learned to deal with different sorts of people, both adults and kids, and felt he had become '*a good judge of character*'. All of these were useful skills in his job in sales and helped him perform better at work.

Most older sport volunteers already have careers and good performance levels when they start volunteering, and some are retired. The possible negative effect of volunteering on these was felt to be due to the amount of time they devote to the club and occasionally to bad experiences which had undermined their morale and confidence in themselves.

For players and riders, though, there are much more positive impacts on performance in other areas, such as school or work. A majority of adults agree this has improved and all young players do, most of them strongly, while many young riders also agree. External organisations such as schools generally endorse this impact.

Riders were asked an additional performance-related question - about progressing to competition level - which is something the RDA encourages and facilitates. Half of both adult and young riders report this effect.

Positive impacts on young people

Sports clubs have a number of good effects on young people's attitudes and behaviour. Rugby clubs emphasise that being involved with the team helps lads become more mature and responsible in other areas of their lives. The club instils '*discipline, respect and manners*' and provides '*a place to drink responsibly, learn to mix with older people, and form friendships*' (volunteer officer, rugby club).

In hockey too, club membership '*instils discipline, respect, self-respect, pride and camaraderie – they learn a lot about teamwork, how to work with each other, and they feel part of something worthwhile*' (volunteer officer, hockey club).

Being involved with a club *'helps keep youngsters off the streets'* and avoid getting drawn into anti-social behaviour. One rugby club has worked with the Youth Offending Service, taking young people interested in rugby to help out at team training as part of a community service order. This has generally had a positive effect on their behaviour and motivation.

The question was phrased differently for disabled riders and a third of both adults agree that riding has *'helped them gain more independence, or a job, qualification or career'* and a similar percentage of young people say it has *'helped them be more independent or think about training for a job'*.

There is also some impact among players in terms of choosing a career or finding employment, and among riders whose question also included gaining more independence. A third of riders, both young and older, report some impact in this respect.

For young players, their involvement is useful for their CV, Duke of Edinburgh award or Step into Sport portfolio, according to a hockey club officer. A school comments that its students' use of the RDA group is part of their ASDAN programme *'which is a stepping stone to the ASDAN bronze award'*.

In terms of creating aspirations and opening up options for a career in sport, there are also positive impacts. Nearly half the young players say they think they would like to have a job in sport when they're older, and a third of young riders say that riding has helped them think about training for a job. Most club officers feel that volunteers' work in the community to some extent *'provides ideas and options for training for a career in sport'* while all RDA officers say that it contributes to *'increasing people's independence and self-reliance, or the ability to train or work'*.

Summary

This section shows that sport volunteers have impacts in terms of increasing social and economic capital – community cohesion, employment and performance. These effects are much stronger on participants than on volunteers, and particularly positive for young players and riders.

4.3 To the sin-bin? questionable impacts

It is notable that the two sets of impacts reviewed so far predominantly favour players and riders. Volunteers' main gains are of satisfaction and social benefits, but most do not report benefits in terms of skills, fitness, sense of community, and employment-related benefits.

The final set of impacts is more about the volunteers' experience, raising issues that are potentially problematic.

Volunteer management

Given the debate about volunteer management in sports, it is interesting to see how volunteers in the case studies assess the way they are managed.

A majority are satisfied with how well they are supported and managed, and half of all volunteers responding are 'very satisfied'. However, a small number of volunteers in sports clubs (not RDA groups) are unhappy at the lack of support and management they receive. One said in interview that she had received no guidelines on becoming a youth team manager nor back-up in dealing with '*difficult parents, petty jealousies and offensive comments*'. After volunteering for five years, she had decided that the rewards were insufficient to continue.

Other rugby and hockey volunteers admitted that there were some deficits in the management of their work, but that they had not expected a great deal of active management and there was usually someone they could go to with any problems. However, some felt this would be simplified if there was a Club Volunteer Co-ordinator who was automatically responsible for volunteer concerns, rather than their having to seek out the club president or chair, whom they knew to be extremely busy.

One area of sports club volunteering which is under-represented in the piloting is that of 'general helper' rather than committee member or officer. One volunteer whose daughter had progressed through club and county teams had filled many gaps over the years, including transporting, sorting out kit, arranging a team in the manager's absence, contributing to PE, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) work in schools, and helping out with coaching or umpiring. It is telling that she comments that '*the "general helping" is largely taken for granted*'. Clubs may be more conscious of supporting volunteers in named roles than those who provide back-up support.

Communication is one problem area highlighted by sports club volunteers, both internally and externally:

'Communication is a classic problem area (despite many meetings) (volunteer, regional rugby association);

'Communication is not always the easiest as most of the volunteers are very busy, but that is life' (adult player, rugby club);

'Sometimes communication and explanations could be better... could do more to reach out to players who in school get less opportunity, less encouragement and less information' (volunteer, hockey club and association).

Volunteer expenses, freebies and opportunity costs

An important aspect of general volunteer management is meeting volunteers' out of pocket expenses. Most sport volunteers have low expectations on this count, mainly because they know the organisation doesn't have the resources.

Just under half the rugby and hockey volunteers don't have a problem with this; they say that the expenses they incur as a volunteer are not excessive, or are adequately reimbursed while two-thirds of RDA volunteers feel the same. The remainder either have no opinion, or disagree. People view some expenditure - for example, travel - as part of their contribution. Major outlays can usually be claimed for, but day-to-day expenses are not reimbursed in either clubs or RDA groups.

Most sports and RDA volunteers do not have access to perks such as free kit, tickets or training. One hockey club gives volunteers a free team jacket, *'to show they are valued'*.

There are clearly opportunity costs for volunteers in the amounts of time they put in to clubs and groups. This is time that could be devoted to something else, including earning money. However, most volunteers do not think in these terms – and for most, they are fitting their voluntary work around paid jobs or are retired.

Rugby and hockey club officers are moderately enthusiastic about the support and management given to volunteers, although only one strongly agrees that this is done well. RDA officers are more positive, with most strongly endorsing the quality of volunteer management. Most club and RDA officers do not agree that volunteers need relatively little support and management *'because they know what to do'*. Informal assessments in follow-up interviews were that volunteer management in sports clubs is best described as *'just doing what needed to be done'*, *'rather ad hoc'* and *'muddling through'*. This comment encapsulates a lot about clubs' volunteer management:

'Management of volunteers is not necessarily defined but it works as well as it can' (honorary treasurer, rugby club).

Volunteer training

Training presents a mixed picture. In terms of training received, or access to training courses, the majority of club volunteers are fairly satisfied, but a notable few are neutral or negative on the subject. They comment that no offers of training had been made, and it was assumed they knew what to do in their role. One volunteer, invited to join the women's committee in a rugby club, said it was assumed she knew meeting procedures, such as taking minutes, because she held an administrative job. No-one had asked what skills she had, and she had coped by *'learning through my mistakes'*.

Training for RDA volunteers elicits higher levels of satisfaction, with half 'very' and half 'fairly' satisfied. RDA officers also agree that volunteers are given sufficient training for their roles. In the larger RDA group, New Volunteer Training Courses are run six times a year; in the smaller one, Group Organisers train new volunteers as needed. There are also opportunities and routes for volunteer progression, with badges awarded by county or regional assessors, and the training paid for by RDA funds.

Some RDA volunteers suggested that much of the training is 'on the job' *'which is appreciated'*, but would welcome *'further training'* as well as courses on *'the different needs of students'* and *'an Assistant Leader Programme'*. Another proposed a mentoring system *'to ensure new volunteers are placed with more experienced people to cover basics – ie how to lead, change rugs, untack etc. as they do not always know what to do'*.

First aid training was a big worry for two volunteers with responsibility for sports teams; if a serious injury occurred, they felt they did not have the knowledge to respond correctly *'and could be making the situation worse by my actions'*. One hockey volunteer's experience is described in the box.

Most tellingly, a majority of sports club officers feel that volunteers do not receive sufficient training for their roles. Training is rarely provided nor are skills audits or training needs assessments carried out. Access to external training is given in most clubs, but this generally focuses on coaching or umpiring qualifications, and often has time and cost implications for the club and the volunteer. The cost barrier was a key factor in the experience of the hockey volunteer described above, and is reflected in this comment:

'Re volunteer support training/courses – we utilise the courses available but I have never understood why we have to pay to participate' (honorary treasurer, rugby club).

RDA volunteers also see *'more funding leading to increased training opportunities'* as a possible improvement to the group.

A hockey team manager's experience of training

When the club achieved Clubs First accreditation, it was a requirement that each team should have a first aid qualified person in attendance. Another volunteer was qualified so this was deemed sufficient; however, as she was an umpire, *'if a player was injured she was not in a position to deal with anything other than a major incident which stopped play.'*

'Bearing in mind the level of cost of attending a first aid course I was not put forward to attend one. I looked at volunteering for a course via work but we have the appropriate qualified numbers. ... In the match last Sunday, a player required hospital treatment. Whilst I was thanked for my actions, I used this opportunity to raise this with the club president in that my actions were based on common sense rather than any medical training. It has been agreed that I

and anyone else who feels that they require help in this area can undergo training. Hence this questionnaire has hopefully helped resolve my concerns.'

This volunteer, who has a full-time job, had also attended a Child Protection/Good Practices course in relation to youth sport, Discipline and Dispute Resolution training, and expressed his willingness to attend Club Volunteer Co-ordinator training. This gives an idea of the amount of training that volunteers may need to undergo.

Volunteer overload

There is widespread agreement among club and group officers that there is a 'risk of overload' on key volunteers. The data supplied by all volunteers shows that the majority put in at least one day a week, with a median input for sports clubs of six to ten hours, and for RDA groups of two to three hours. Key volunteers in both devote at least 21 hours a week. While this cannot be assumed to be a representative sample of all sport volunteers, it shows the levels of commitment of some volunteers – as confirmed by the case studies and literature.

Many of the respondents hold multiple roles in their club, or have a history of filling different roles. Rugby club volunteers commented: *'It seems to be the same people who are re-elected on to committees each year'* and *'As with all clubs "the few do the most"'*. Case studies frequently commented that club organisation depended on a nucleus of volunteers. The chairman of East Midlands Rugby Association observed that most clubs *'revolve around one or two people; if you take them out, it would collapse'*. A long-time rugby club volunteer, also volunteering with the regional association, said that clubs are run by *'ten to twelve willing people, while a hundred sit around'*, adding *'twas ever thus'*.

The Rugby Football Union commented on some solutions to volunteer overload:

'Our most successful clubs have solved volunteer overload by good delegation. They break roles into "bite sized chunks" and appoint deputies or assistants to support major roles.'

Demands on volunteers

'Being a volunteer is hard work. It is like taking on a second employment without payment. Family/life issues must be carefully balanced' (volunteer officer, rugby club and regional association).

'In my position as a trustee I am really one of the managers and that is a problem because the pressure is great and increasing, unfortunately' (volunteer, RDA group).

'It [the commitment to volunteering] grows. The demands of running rugby clubs are ever increasing as it becomes more complex with increasing regulations' (volunteer, rugby club).

'The workload is increasing – you have far more responsibility than when I started volunteering. All the necessary requirements, like registration, child protection (for example watching that people don't take photographs of the girls), first aid and so on. The bureaucracy is getting worse' (volunteer, hockey association).

'The group operates very well but the demands on the organisers do seem extreme – paperwork, CRBs, Risk Assessments, Horsecare etc. – with no financial help' (volunteer, RDA group).

Some respondents said that some *'stalwart'* volunteers do not delegate well and others hinted at *'cliques'* in clubs, with people holding on to high profile positions for reasons of status and a sense of their indispensability. A hockey volunteer with experience of several clubs and associations commented on *'ineffective but secretive management and coaching which can be very frustrating (if you're unlucky)'*.

Succession planning

Planning for succession in key roles is closely linked to the issue of overload. All sports club officers agree that this is a problem. Those one or two, or even ten or twelve, volunteers on whom clubs depend are under continual pressure to keep volunteering because, as one asked: *'who would take over?'* The issue is judged to be less pressing in RDA groups though still of concern. A current Group Organiser would like to resign and enjoy her husband's retirement, but does not know who would fill the role.

Clubs told how they try to identify and groom potential replacements, but that key roles are often rotated among the *'willing few'*. A hockey club told how it *'tries to spot people with experience and skills ... there's a little bit of coercion!'* Planning for succession in key roles usually required a lengthy lead-in phase. A rugby club president said that he gave one year's notice that he was intending to step down – and the club did find a replacement. A hockey club president said that after 30 years, she had decided she would like to stop, and had been pondering for several months who could take over.

By way of contrast, the university rugby club among the case studies said it generally has to hold elections for posts because there is more than one candidate standing. Because of the short-term turnover of members, there can be *'some problems'* with continuity but *'someone always helps out'*; *'local lads who've left stay in touch and help out when needed'* or the person who held the post the previous year might still be around. The contrast with community rugby clubs is thought to be due mainly to the time-limited nature of volunteer sports posts in higher education, and the perceived benefits of gaining experience and skills for the future.

Shortages of volunteers

The case studies would like to have more volunteers. Shortages have obvious impacts on volunteer overload, and also on succession planning and volunteer management. Many clubs feel that people's reluctance to volunteer is due to contemporary attitudes, as well as to real or perceived lack of time through work, education or family responsibilities. An RDA volunteer highlights the pressures: *'my experience as a volunteer has been extremely positive and I am keen to continue. However, working full-time as well can sometimes make it difficult to commit as much time as I would like'*.

Cultural changes deterring volunteering

'[There has been] a major change in the last five to ten years to a culture of "consuming not contributing" ' (volunteer officer, regional rugby association).

'When I got involved years ago, if you taught the sport or played, you were kind of under an obligation to see it through for the next generation. That has changed' (committee volunteer, hockey association).

'The competition from other interests (including more "spectating" rather than participating) makes it more difficult to get players and participants' (volunteer, rugby club).

'Parents drop their kids off and collect them afterwards – for them it's a cheap babysitting service' (volunteer, hockey club).

'They ask "will you pay me?" – people don't do favours any more' (volunteer, rugby club).

'The whole risk area is very off-putting to volunteers' (volunteer, rugby club).

'The social side of clubs is dying out ...you don't have "clubmen" like you used to ... attitudes have changed... wives are not so amenable now.' (volunteer officer, rugby club)

'Club loyalty is on the decline. Young players are more nomadic and change clubs more readily. They want the opportunity to play rather than being loyal to a particular club' (volunteer officer, regional rugby association).

The introduction of payment into community sport has had some negative effects. For example, the practice in some rugby clubs of paying players – or at least the first team – has introduced different motivations into the game and eroded loyalty. One of the case studies, which doesn't pay its players, commented that most of the clubs in its region pay their senior squad and it is having to compete for players. Similarly, payment of some club workers in both rugby and hockey, mainly coaches, was a disincentive to younger people to give their time free.

Despite the survey findings (cited in Section 2.4) of young people's high involvement in sport volunteering, most of the case studies would like more young volunteers. According to regional hockey and rugby associations, clubs often have '*an ageing volunteer force*' and this has led to youth initiatives in both sports. Older volunteers can have '*a dampening effect*' by '*frightening younger people off*'. It was acknowledged that '*sometimes it's hard to get rid of people*'; an example was given of a club founder who became senile but wouldn't bow out of the club. Eventually the club adopted new rules limiting tenure to two or three years.

Clubs' experiences do vary. This rugby club officer notes: '*We are very short of volunteers in the 50-65 age group, which means the work falls on a younger generation who also have family and work commitments*'. In another club, there is a shortage of younger volunteers because support for the game has '*missed a generation*' as the professional game has taken support away from grassroots rugby.

All the club officers agree – most of them strongly – that the club needs to find new ways of recruiting volunteers; and most RDA officers feel the same. A rugby club officer says: '*We need to attract more people into volunteering both at matches and on committees etc. ... some parents do not want to get involved in the running of the club*'. An officer of the volunteer-run RDA group comments: '*We need as many volunteers as possible to make the group work.*'

Summary

These impacts, which primarily affect volunteers, reveal some deficits in terms of the way volunteers are managed and trained, although volunteers themselves are more concerned about training than how they are managed. Training in RDA groups is more structured and satisfactory to volunteers. The issues of volunteer overload, succession planning and shortages of volunteers do affect the case studies negatively. They would like to recruit more volunteers, which would ease the workload and possibly make succession in leadership roles less problematic, but do not know how to do this. RDA recruitment potential is more promising because of the wider pool it draws from and more open recruitment approaches.

5 Conclusion

In this section:

Headline impacts

Issues and implications:

- **The benefits of sport**
- **Volunteer rewards**
- **Volunteer management**
- **Volunteer training**
- **Expanding volunteer numbers**
- **Support from the sport's infrastructure**
- **Resources**

Assessment of the piloting

The value of assessing impacts

Recommendations

5.1 Headline impacts

Keeping in mind the size and nature of the dataset, standout findings from the piloting are:

- Young people are the prime beneficiaries of sport volunteering. They experience positive impacts of being able to play (or ride), enjoyment and fun, making new friends, increased confidence and skills, improved performance in other areas of their lives, and gains to health and fitness. They increase their sense of belonging, trust and understanding of other people.
- Adult players also enjoy this panoply of benefits, to a slighter lower degree.
- For volunteers, the major positive impacts are the satisfaction they get from contributing to the club or group's survival and success, and the social benefits. There is a marked lack of impact in many of the areas which players experience, such as skills, confidence, health and fitness, and social capital-related aspects. Negative impacts are the pressures on them, the workload and responsibility they bear and, for some, deficits in training and management.
- Clubs and organisations benefit massively from volunteers. Through their hard work and fundraising, volunteers enable clubs to operate successfully, to create a sociable environment, provide low-cost opportunities to play, support and help players, and to some extent benefit communities. The main downside for clubs comes from shortages of volunteers and the pressures on those who do volunteer.

- Local communities benefit from the presence of clubs and the opportunities they provide, and from clubs' outreach work and collaboration with other organisations. Most of the impacts – encouraging people to take part in activities, breaking down barriers among people, developing confidence and skills, promoting sport and fitness – would be greater if clubs and volunteers had the capacity and resources to do more work in the community.
- The impacts of volunteers in riding for disabled people differ somewhat from those of sports club volunteers. Volunteers gain more in terms of skills, confidence, health and fitness, and social capital indicators, than rugby and hockey volunteers. Compared to club players, riders experience stronger impacts on their sense of trust and community, and participation in other activities.

5.2 Issues and implications

The results of the pilot raise a number of issues for the consideration of clubs, volunteering infrastructure and sports bodies, researchers and policy makers.

The benefits of sport

It is very encouraging that sport volunteering has such a decisive impact on the well-being and development of young people. The strong overall impacts on those taking part in sport, both adults and children, are a very positive finding. The role of sport in developing well-rounded, responsible and healthy young people should be further noted by policy makers and funders. The social capital, citizenship and social inclusion agenda is often the rationale for youth volunteering initiatives as well as sport participation programmes, and these findings confirm that channelling resources into sport so more young people can participate could achieve results. This is recognised in initiatives such as the RFU's Rugbywise Toolkit which aimed to involve disaffected young people in rugby as *'a positive pathway ... that engages, motivates and inspires citizenship values'* (RFU, 2005).

Yet a rugby club volunteer comments that *'regardless of what the RFU says, junior rugby clubs overall are finding life very tough'*. Both rugby and hockey clubs feel restricted in how much they can do with youngsters and urge more money to be put into support and development.

A review of voluntary sports clubs and social capital concludes:

'If greater involvement in voluntary sports clubs is correlated to more social capital, then the voluntary sports club movement should certainly be protected and ideally enhanced... If the government implemented policy to make voluntary sports clubs more accessible to lower socio-economic groups this may serve the dual purpose of rebalancing socio-economic participation in sport and providing lower groups greater access to social capital' (Andrew, 2004).

Volunteer rewards

Of some concern is the lack of reported impact on volunteers on a number of dimensions. The personal and skills development which volunteering in general provides for many people appears to be low in this sample of sport volunteers. And volunteers in sport are experiencing a level of pressure which many volunteers do not have to deal with. Thankfully for grassroots sport, the satisfaction and social benefits they gain from their contribution is felt by them to be sufficient reward. However, the apparent decline in the numbers of people willing to volunteer in clubs suggests the need to focus more on how they can be rewarded for volunteering.

In the volunteering world in general, it is now widely accepted that volunteering is a two-way arrangement. Volunteers do not have to be motivated entirely by altruism but are entitled to get something back from donating their time and skills. Organisations recognise that they are competing with many other demands on people's time – as well as with other volunteer-using organisations – and this has led to a rethinking of incentives and rewards for volunteers.

The RFU promotes ten reasons to volunteer in rugby (www.community-rugby.com accessed 09/10/2007):

1. It's fun!
2. Introduce you to new friends
3. Make a real difference
4. Develop talents
5. Gain new skills
6. Build your confidence
7. Improve your health
8. Boost your career options
9. Spend time with family and friends
10. Because there's an opportunity for YOU!

While this is a good summary of the benefits of volunteering, the findings of this pilot study suggest that quite a few of these impacts are extremely modest with perhaps only reasons 2, 3 and 9 being fully endorsed by respondents. This suggests scope for enhancing the remaining impacts.

The RFU's Value the Volunteer initiative urges clubs to '*recognise and thank volunteers formally and informally for the work that they do*' and offers incentives and rewards such as get-togethers at international matches, and the award of certificates, ties and scarves to '*extraordinary volunteers*'. However, singling some people out for recognition is not always welcomed, and attention needs to be paid to building in rewards for all volunteers.

Volunteer management

Findings indicate that volunteer management in clubs falls short of the ideal, and it is not always the case that 'volunteers need relatively little support and management because they know what to do'. It should be remembered that

the clubs in the research were accredited and/or commended by their governing bodies and may be at the higher end of the quality spectrum.

Relatively few differences were found in the management model used among the case studies. Clubs feel that there is a fairly clear model which is both historic (how it has always been done) and logical (certain tasks need to be completed at any club). However, differences in management style did emerge, and those clubs which had 'modernised' their volunteer arrangements in various ways – changing a '*traditionally autocratic*' set-up to a more egalitarian system, or attempting to establish '*a support system*' with greater recognition of volunteers' value – did get positive ratings from their stakeholders.

However, it is difficult to compare the influence of these changes on the scale and nature of impacts because these were the clubs that tended to participate more actively in the research, supplying more data from stakeholders. This in itself could be telling: the more 'progressive' clubs were more able and willing to engage with this kind of project – possibly with a degree of confidence in the impacts that would be uncovered.

While most volunteers in the case studies are reasonably satisfied with the way they are managed and supported, this is felt to be partly due to their expectations. Clubs feel that volunteer management could be better, but are generally reluctant to adopt formal systems. Some volunteers in the case studies felt that volunteer arrangements would be improved by the appointment of a designated Club Volunteer Co-ordinator. This would provide a focal point for volunteers, someone they could routinely go to with concerns.

The report for Sport England noted that the way in which 'professionalisation' is promoted needs to be varied, simple and sensitive to the different cultures in clubs and there is a need to acknowledge that clubs can be effective whilst still retaining an informal culture.

Australian Rugby, the governing body of the sport, states that '*the management of volunteers is critical in nurturing the club's most valuable asset – your volunteers!*' (www.aru.rugby.com.au accessed 28/01/2008). Noting that '*volunteers who are unsupported, unco-ordinated and not well managed are unlikely to feel positive about their volunteer experience*', it sets out seven key functions of volunteer management:

1. Planning
2. Recruitment
3. Selection and Screening
4. Orientation
5. Training and development
6. Recognition and performance appraisal
7. Retention and replacement.

While these are all sound principles of good volunteer management, it seems likely that this list, with its apparently prescriptive and jargonistic tone, would

not immediately strike a chord with many sports clubs in this country. And the Australian finding that volunteers placed most importance on the *'extent to which the club cared about their performance as a volunteer'* and *'opportunities to have fun'* (Cuskelly et al., 2006) rather than the exercise of more formal management functions suggests the vital importance of placing these aspects at the heart of volunteer arrangements.

A key point is that management jargon can be offputting and obscuring: *'Language many be critical in breaking down resistance to modest increases in formalisation.'* It is very important that such management practices are presented *'in a way that does not threaten the informality of clubs and is easy to take on board'* (Taylor et al., 2007). Terms such as *'volunteers, management and strategy'* are not as appropriate as *'members, help and improvement'*; the aim should be phrased as *'to help members improve the running of their clubs'* not *'to enable club committees to manage their volunteers more effectively'* (Taylor et al., 2007). Suggestions about *'volunteer management'* might be more acceptable if phrased as *'volunteer arrangements'*.

In developing its web-based Volunteer Support Strategy, the Royal Yachting Association found that: *'perceptions related to the terms "policy" and "procedure" were frequently tainted with suspicion and caution'*, perhaps due to *'lack of understanding'* of the terms themselves. Research supporting the initiative noted: *'It is really about cultural change... promoting change in a palatable way which does not alienate hard working volunteers who have given many hours to their sport'* (Anderson et al., 2005).

Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) also emphasises the need to develop a culture *'that reflects a greater "customer care" philosophy'* in the way volunteers are treated. Clubs need to *'identify a leadership style that will empower volunteers ... and create a feeling of partnership and dialogue with volunteers'* (SPARC, 2006). It notes:

'Historically, the organisation-volunteer relationship has been very one-sided, where an organisation seeks volunteers to benefit the organisation without consideration of any value that might be created for the volunteer. ... (Organisations) must improve the experience of volunteers whilst overcoming the barriers to sport volunteering.'
(SPARC, 2006).

SPARC suggests there are *'policies and processes representing good practice which could be implemented without overstepping the formality levels people are expecting'*. These include short written job descriptions, induction programmes, verbal feedback and access to mentors. For more *'senior'* volunteer roles, more structure and formality could be applied (SPARC, 2006).

Volunteer training

Both clubs and volunteers felt that training could be improved, although the situation is better in RDA groups. This could include more active identification of skills and training needs, possible in-house induction for volunteers and

greater access to training courses. Methods such as shadowing and mentoring, whereby new volunteers learn from established volunteers, could be more widely adopted.

Clubs provide access to coaching and umpiring courses through the sport's NGB and regional bodies, but not all volunteers want these qualifications. Possible weaknesses in volunteers' first aid skills are a concern. But as one club mentioned, the cost of sending people on first aid courses means that only limited numbers can attend. It is quite common for volunteers to find other routes to first aid qualifications – chiefly through their own employment – but, again, this isn't always possible.

Major barriers to expanding training opportunities for volunteers are volunteers' time availability, the availability of appropriate courses locally and, particularly, the cost to club and/or volunteer.

Support from the sport's infrastructure

Clubs and RDA groups generally welcomed and made use of the support provided by regional offices of their NGB, particularly in relation to training provision. It was said that *'regional people can have a big impact'*. However, clubs recognised that regional bodies operated by volunteers or with one or two paid development workers to cover the region were severely limited in the amount they could do. One sport's regional office was described as *'a very good outfit'* which, however, needed more money to expand its ability to help its member clubs and promote the sport generally. Weaknesses in communication and information exchange between regions and head office could be a problem.

Satisfaction with regional offices also depended on the *'quality'* of particular staff or volunteers and *'how proactive people are'*. Both can vary. Club and group officers commented that it is the bigger clubs and groups that tend to benefit most from regional support: *'do smaller ones have the same support? Do they know how to access it?'*

Views of the support provided by head offices of NGBs and national sport infrastructure bodies varied. Initiatives, frameworks and guidance could be valuable, but often ignored the capacity of clubs to implement them. Gaining accreditation, for example, was *'an enormous amount of work'* for volunteers, although its value was recognised. The relationship could feel too *'top-down'*, betraying a lack of understanding of grassroots sport and insufficient awareness of good practice in difficult circumstances.

Club volunteers could feel very remote from the *'people in offices in London'*. For example, a hockey volunteer commented that the NGB *'gives out rules and regulations and is consulting about competitions for every age group, but I ask "where do we get the volunteers from?"'*. This volunteer criticised the decision not to permit under-13s to play league hockey, saying clubs would lose opportunities to develop their skills for progression, and lose players to other sports. Some hockey volunteers felt that the NGB *'doesn't care about the grassroots, they're only interested in internationals and the national'*

league' and some rugby volunteers agreed that the emphasis was skewed towards elite sport. They did not approve of the Valuing the Volunteer award scheme, believing that it set a '*dangerous precedent*' by singling some people out for recognition and creating resentment among others.

Expanding volunteer numbers

This study has reviewed the reasons why clubs feel they have difficulty recruiting volunteers: work and family commitments, the increasing workload of volunteers, and a range of attitudes which deter involvement.

Noting the impact of working life on people's willingness to volunteer, the Rugby Football Union comments that businesses are '*much less likely*' to support employees for sport volunteering because it's seen as '*fun*'. The current push to encourage companies to adopt employer supported volunteering needs to include sport volunteering along with other types.

Despite a desire for more volunteers – and for new ways of recruiting volunteers - most sports clubs are sceptical of an open recruitment approach, such as advertising or using volunteer centres as recruitment and brokerage agencies. They are much more comfortable with the idea of getting to know people already involved at the club, as parents or partners of players, and drawing suitable people into voluntary roles.

Commenting on this process, a rugby club officer said '*you get a feel for it*' - who would be able to help and, most importantly, willing (ie persuadable). A hockey club officer described his recruitment approach: '*give them a small job at first – hook them in!*'.

Some volunteers feel that clubs do not do as much as they could to identify and involve potential volunteers among members and their families. This hockey club volunteer, who has been involved for several years as a parent and 'general helper', feels that '*the club could be more proactive in asking people to take on roles (and get qualified if necessary)*'. The New Zealand research comments '*asking is an important strategy*' and proposes that clubs identify and brief '*inviters*' to recruit more actively from their networks and personal contacts (SPARC, 2006).

The strong emphasis on sociability in clubs means that bonds of familiarity and friendship are very important in deciding who to work with in running the club. The dominant ethos of clubs can be a key sticking point in the need to recruit more volunteers. However, some pilot schemes linking clubs to volunteer centres and councils for voluntary service have been successful in both recruiting new volunteers and in providing support for volunteers (de Cruz, 2005; www.volunteering.org.uk/WhatWeDo/Projects+and+initiatives/volunteeringinsport/Working+together+case+studies) . Bringing together sport and voluntary sector infrastructure bodies at both NGB and local level will enable sport '*to tap into this enormous pool of people who would love to be involved in the world of sport*' (de Cruz, 2005).

The recruitment situation is different for RDA groups who tend not to find volunteers among members and their families, although word of mouth is widely used. Finding new volunteers for RDA groups is therefore more amenable to an open recruitment approach. The larger RDA group in the research publicises opportunities through the Volunteer Centre, local radio and newspapers, universities and schools. It also *'very successfully'* took volunteers on day release from prison until the funding for the scheme ran out. The Group Organiser comments on the difference between urban-based groups, the vast majority of whose volunteers are not *'horsey'*, and rural groups which can recruit more readily through local equestrian networks.

The RDA advises groups to ask themselves not just *'what will the RDA group get from the volunteer'* but *'what can the RDA group offer the volunteer?'* It suggests targeting recruitment to appeal to different groups: health benefits for older people and skills and experience for younger people to put on their CV (RDA, 2006).

In general, each sport and each NGB needs to address the situation within their sport: establishing whether and why declines and shortages in volunteers are occurring, and which population groups are under-represented or most needed. Noting that patterns vary among sports and across clubs, an Australian expert notes *'formulating strategies at a NGB level to address volunteer trends that have not been adequately researched or validated may prove counter-productive'* (Cuskelly, 2005).

Resources

Shortage of financial resources is a recurrent theme among grassroots sports clubs. Having more money would improve the situation for volunteers in a number of ways. Clubs could pay for or subsidise more training opportunities, in a range of courses, possibly providing more incentives for people to volunteer and definitely adding to the skills that people have which would benefit them and the running of the club.

Clubs could routinely reimburse volunteer expenses. In sport, the recognition by volunteers that clubs are generally strapped for resources leads to low expectations on this count. It does, however, remain a barrier to the potential involvement of people on low incomes or those who cannot readily absorb incidental expenditure in the course of their volunteering. This could include less well-off families and young people.

Clubs could put more resources into promoting themselves, into volunteer work in the community, and advertising for volunteers (though we have noted their reservations about open recruitment). They could subsidise social activities and events for volunteers and members, and provide small perks to reward volunteers.

Many clubs carry on with inadequate facilities because they cannot afford to upgrade them. The RFU notes that *'having appropriate, modern and pleasant facilities is a key requirement to grow participation and create sustainable clubs'* (RFU, 2005). Some people in the case studies felt that this was an

important element in encouraging people to volunteer: a club that appears to be run-down and struggling is less likely to attract people than one that is well-maintained and offers adequate facilities.

This point is made by a club officer, who contrasts the money in the upper levels of the sport with that at club level:

'I do wonder at times why the grassroots clubs do struggle on whilst the professional game continues to provide every increasing income. Clubs such as ours provide the foundation of future England players – but only if we survive! ... The answer isn't always money, but money does help to finance a reasonably desirable environment. At least our roof doesn't leak at present!' (honorary treasurer, rugby club).

The same point was made by a hockey club president, whose club had nurtured several international players, but which has no ground or facilities of its own and continually *'holds out the begging bowl'* to keep going.

Volunteer fundraising is an integral part of all the case studies, but amounts raised do not enable the kinds of improvements that many feel they need. Producing applications for capital grants from NGBs, sport infrastructure and other funding bodies can be a time-consuming and skilled task, and is often met with disappointment. Clubs feel that more money should be channelled to the grassroots from these sources and from government. The RFU agrees that it *'must maximise the availability of capital funding from Government sources and the Rugby Football Foundation to enable the development of quality facilities at all levels of the game'* (RFU, 2005).

Two volunteers in rugby felt that clubs need to become more like businesses in their approach to finances and the handling of money:

'We need far more managers with commercial knowledge. It is a business not just a social pastime. Large sums of money need to be controlled efficiently' (volunteer officer, regional rugby association);

'(Clubs need) more business focussed processes and procedures' (volunteer, rugby club).

However, a more business-like approach, and more money, would not necessarily resolve the issues around volunteers. Some volunteers asked to comment on deficits in volunteer management do not think that resources are the sole problem. Attitudes, personalities, expectations and traditions are often seen as significant factors. Altogether, though, there was little doubt that more money would help the situation.

How money is targeted is important. Some clubs wanted more resources put into regional and county levels of their sport to enable greater levels of support with management, coaching etc. especially for juniors. Clubs also commented that grant initiatives are often so tied to particular policy objectives and agendas that they do not support core work. For example, high

levels of DfES, DCMS and Lottery investment in school sport have been made *'but the infrastructure relies on volunteers who have had little of the icing on this particular cake'* (Collins and Nichols, 2005).

In Australia a key element of the professionalisation of community sport has been the funding of paid administrators, but this has had negative effects on the ethos of clubs. The *'steady shift from a voluntary ethos'* to more government involvement and funding has created *'more demanding and complex volunteer roles'* and *'the influence of volunteers has waned'* (Cuskelly, 2005).

'Ironically, the volunteers who developed the community sport system to the point where it has the capacity to pay administrators as professionals are used increasingly by professional staff as human resources to develop community level sport in line with strategies and goals of NGBs and the government' (Cuskelly, 2005)..

5.3 Assessment of the piloting

The piloting of the assessment toolkit focused on questionnaires, supported by interviews with case study officers and informal chats or email exchanges with volunteers and players.

It is felt that the questionnaires worked, certainly in scoping the major impacts of sport volunteers. They combined straightforward tick boxes with some open-ended questions, where respondents were invited to add comments or suggestions. Many respondents made use of these to add details or explanations, as their quotes in the preceding sections show.

The feedback both before and after the distribution of questionnaires strongly indicated that the basic format was correct. Anything more complicated would not be likely to be completed by the majority of people.

However, a questionnaire format has limitations. One respondent, asked to elaborate on some of his assessments, said:

'Please bear in mind that my answers were restricted to the limitations of the questions and the available answers ie there was little ability to explain/expand on reasons, which is always a limitation to this type of exercise' (committee member, rugby club).

The sport impact assessment tools, available on-line at Volunteering England, includes these 'core' questionnaires together with 'supplementary' questionnaires in which more indicators of impact are captured by more detailed sets of questions. As with VIAT, this allows organisations to mix and match core and supplementary questions, using more detail in areas they wish to explore in greater depth. The toolkit also includes topic guides for group discussions of impacts.

5.4 The value of assessing impacts

It is fair to say that assessing impacts is not seen as a huge priority among grassroots sports clubs. For them, impacts appear self-evident – the club continues to function, training and matches take place, players enjoy themselves. Besides, many feel they don't have the time to take on the extra tasks required of an impact assessment; and it appears to be part of the increasing bureaucracy surrounding sport.

However, the time involved in distributing questionnaires (mostly by email) and looking at the results need not be great. Collating anonymised responses could be a one-off task for a student or young volunteer, or a retired volunteer.

The reasons for producing the toolkit are not to prescribe or impose demands on sports clubs and organisations. It is offered as a resource for them to use if they think it will be of benefit. VIAT has been widely used and research on its use shows that organisations find it straightforward to use, flexible and adaptable, and valuable in highlighting issues and areas for development.

Organisations which have used VIAT describe it as '*a really useful tool*' and '*a sound basis for making changes*'. One user said:

'It's enabled us to have some hard statistics to back up the things we've always said but it's also opened our eyes to things we didn't know.'

Case studies that took on board the impact assessment piloting and results commented that it had stimulated them to take a good look at the way things operate in the club. The President of Leicester Ladies Hockey Club said:

'Being involved in the research has allowed for two things at the club: time to reflect on our practice, listening to club colleagues on changes we might implement and, just as importantly, a chance to give ourselves some positive stroking; much of what we do is pretty good and we should be proud of that.'

The RDA commented:

'It gave us an insight into some impacts we already knew and others that we hadn't thought about measuring. We felt that we were aware of the impact on our services users but were less aware of the impact of volunteers on the outside community. ... The results of this research have allowed us to take stock of the impacts volunteers have in different parts of the organisation and then to consider how best we can support those volunteers, in particular through the development of succession planning and "career development" for some volunteers' roles.'

As a result of the impact assessment, a hockey club, which has previously seen all the committee volunteers as having a 'volunteer co-ordinator' function, is planning to make this a distinct area of responsibility for one volunteer. Other clubs which once designated a volunteer as volunteer co-ordinator but had seen this lapse when the volunteer left or changed role have resolved to make this a more permanent aspect of the club's organisation.

A hockey club plans to develop a pool of volunteer 'helpers' to call on people when needed, without overburdening them. Some clubs and the RDA have taken notice of responses on the issue of succession planning and intend to take a more systematic approach to replacing leaders. The RDA is also looking into the possibility of holding evening and weekend sessions to enable people who work during the day to volunteer or to volunteer more.

The results reported here suggest the value of conducting an assessment of the impacts of sport volunteers. Some major impacts are confirmed, less obvious impacts are investigated, and there are some unexpected findings. Assessing volunteer impacts can produce benefits, both internally in a club or RDA group and externally in its relationships with outside organisations and the community.

Internally

- Ensuring everyone feels they have an input into the club/group and are able to contribute their views and ideas
- Highlighting the impacts and value of volunteers' contribution and giving them feedback on the benefits they bring to the club/group
- Identifying the full range of positive benefits and assessing the relative strength of different impacts
- Identifying areas of weakness or imbalance
- A greater understanding of the way volunteering operates in the organisation
- A sound evidence base for developing the way the club/group supports and manages its volunteers
- Developing strategies for recruiting and retaining volunteers.

Externally

- Involving outside organisations in giving feedback on their relationship with the club/group
- Highlighting the qualities and benefits of the club/group to potential partners and the public, including potential members and volunteers
- Promoting the club/group and raising its profile, getting media coverage
- Attracting new people as members, players/riders and volunteers
- Providing evidence of impacts and effectiveness to funding bodies, sports infrastructure and policy makers
- Providing information to NGBs and regional offices about support or services they provide, and helping identify possible gaps in these
- On a larger scale – regional and national - producing hard evidence of the real impacts of sport volunteering.

Three comments from a young hockey player, an RDA volunteer and a rugby club officer illustrate some of the major impacts of volunteers in sport – and the value of measuring them. Surely any sport organisation would welcome such positive assessments!

'I enjoy being part of the team and it helps me get to know new people. It helps me get better at the sport I enjoy. I also enjoy the challenge that it gives me' (young hockey player, county hockey association).

'I feel without the help, guidance and excellent training given to myself by the management and all associated with the group, my ability to volunteer would have been impossible. It has completely changed my life in so many ways. I now look forward to a much brighter future' (volunteer, RDA group).

'Do I feel there would be a void if we weren't there? Definitely. The estate close to the club is pretty deprived and there are a lot of kids who benefit from the camaraderie instilled by rugby' (honorary treasurer, rugby club).

5.5 Recommendations

General recommendations can be made on the basis of research and this pilot. All those with a stake in sport volunteering – clubs, NGBs, sport infrastructure, volunteering bodies, researchers, policy makers and funders – can play a role.

Volunteer management

- more investigation and dissemination of good practice which blends an informal ethos with effective volunteer arrangements
- support by NGBs and regional offices that is appropriate and sensitive to clubs' priorities, and phrased in acceptable language
- encouraging clubs to create a Volunteer Co-ordinator position with, ideally, a small budget
- more promotion of 'softer' management practices such as mentoring and buddying
- further research on the range of clubs' management practices, capacity and potential, especially in weaker or less successful clubs

Volunteer training

- development of training strategies that address the breadth of training available, cost, location and time factors
- enhancing organisations' in-house capacity to provide training and development for volunteers
- encouraging clubs to adopt induction or orientation sessions or packs

Recruitment

- encouraging and making accessible more open recruitment methods

- developing links between sport organisations and volunteering infrastructure bodies, both individual club-volunteer centre links and at area or regional levels
- more proactive recruitment within clubs' existing users and their families
- strategies for targeting particular groups under-represented or needed by the organisation
- if open recruitment is practised, developing recruitment and screening procedures

Retention

- more attention paid to volunteer satisfaction and rewards
- better support and recognition, including expenses reimbursement
- better monitoring of workloads, delegation and division of tasks
- more cultivation and recognition of 'general helpers' and support volunteers
- developing volunteer exit and succession strategies

Infrastructure support

- more resources and people at regional and county levels to provide support to clubs
- establishing good two-way communication between NGBs and grassroots sport
- ensuring support does not appear top-down, bureaucratic and insensitive to clubs' ethos, needs and capacity
- more research into volunteer characteristics and under-representation in a particular sport
- more information exchange and co-working between sport and volunteering infrastructures
- dissemination and use of impact assessment

Resources

- channelling more money into grassroots sport to achieve benefits of participation, particularly on young people
- more investment in regional sport infrastructures
- more resources for volunteer recruitment, increasing diversity, and volunteer management, training and recognition
- resources to clubs to increase community outreach and development
- increased capital funding to improve club facilities.

Notes

¹ IVR (2004) *Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit* London: Institute for Volunteering Research

² The ways such developments in legislation and regulations affect volunteering in community-based organisations are analysed in Hutchison, R. and Ockenden, N. (2008) *The impact of public policy on volunteering in community-based organisations* London: Institute for Volunteering Research

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Appendix: The case studies

Aylestone St James Rugby Club is a 'down to earth city club', founded in 1902, currently with about 400 members. It has three senior teams, colts, and a large junior section of boys from under-7s to 16 years. In 2002 the club started a women's rugby section and now has under-15s and under-18s girls teams. ASJ has a management team of 20 roles, and a women's committee and youth committee, 25-30 volunteer coaches (including one for each year group from under-7s to under-16s), and one paid senior team coach. It has 82 'formal' volunteers in named roles and around 30 'ad hoc' volunteers who help out as needed.

The club has changed its volunteer arrangements, from a '*traditionally autocratic*' and more hierarchical set-up – in which, for example, the junior club had no voting rights - to a '*more egalitarian system*' with a '*more fluent, equalised status*' and open channels of communication for all volunteers. It aims to provide job descriptions for every volunteer role and '*identify pathways*' for volunteer development. A major one is the coaching pathway, and the club pays for volunteers to obtain Level 1 qualifications. The club created awards for Clubman and Coach of the Year, and has adopted an apprenticeship system to mentor new volunteers.

ASJ prides itself on its family-friendly ethos and community contacts. It has strong links with three local secondary schools and 14 primary schools, providing coaches for in school and out of school clubs. It established links with the local parish council and works actively to get local media coverage. It has participated in initiatives such as the Junior Community Leaders Scheme (with schools) and the RFU's Value the Volunteer initiative. ASJ has its own ground and clubhouse, which it rents to football clubs and some community groups, and for social events. The management team has been active in seeking and obtaining funding to upgrade facilities, and in formulating development plans. It was the first rugby club in the city of Leicester to achieve the Active Sport Seal of Approval from the RFU and also is accredited through Clubs First.

Clifton Rugby Club has more than 500 players and 19 teams including four senior teams, two ladies teams and juniors down to under-7s. It has more than 100 volunteers and three executive committees – for men, women and juniors. The club has one paid head coach, five senior team coaches and 43 junior team coaches, who are all volunteers trained at least to Level 1. It pays a small number of other staff: a bar steward and assistant steward, part-time administrator and a full-time groundstaff; and contracts out its catering.

Clifton owns its own ground which it rents out to other clubs, along with the clubhouse function room and meeting rooms for events. It has some sponsorship from local companies. It has a club development plan and '*philosophies*' rather than a policy on volunteer involvement, stressing 'a

degree of ownership'. It has gained the RFU Seal of Approval and Clubs First accreditation for its youth section.

De Montfort University Rugby Club is one of 27 sports clubs at the university. Rugby has two men's teams and involves more than 50 players. They are selected from around 100 players at the beginning of the academic year who are recruited through freshers' fair and flyers. There is also a women's rugby club. Both men's and women's have an annually elected committee of four volunteers - Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and Safety Officer - as a university requirement - but involve up to twelve volunteers on their internal committees which include a Social Secretary and Team Captains. Each has a paid coach, with some voluntary coaching support.

The Student Union organises the sports clubs, through a paid Sports and Recreation Manager, who liaises on training and other issues and cascades RFU funding to the clubs. The clubs are partially self-funding through income from kit and ticket sales. They train and play at other grounds in the city.

East Midlands Rugby Union is the regional tier of the RFU, covering three counties. Apart from paying office staff (1.75 f/t equivalent) and a small honorarium to the Treasurer, it is entirely voluntary. EMRU has an executive committee of President, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer and Immediate Past President, and four sub-committees: Playing; Marketing and Communications; Rugby Development Partnership; Governance and Administration. More than 100 volunteers are involved at the regional level, many of whom also volunteer at club level. EMRU oversees 61 affiliated clubs in its region and estimates that each club has around 30 volunteers, though most rely on a nucleus of volunteers. This amounts to around 2,000 rugby club volunteers in EMRU's region.

The EMRU is funded by the RFU and by clubs' affiliation fees. Its office is at Wellingborough School. It puts on training courses in coaching, welfare and first aid, and runs clinics for playing positions. It provides financial, technical and administrative assistance to clubs, including administering a charity fund set up as a memorial to a former player, which gives small grants to mini-juniors. It runs a fixture pool, organises an annual knockout tournament, and adjudicates punishments through its disciplinary sub-committee. Clubs can seek advice and help on problems and have their accounts checked by the Honorary Treasurer. If a club is struggling, EMRU can send in troubleshooters to help. EMRU also has volunteer representatives on external sports bodies including County Sports Partnerships and regional associations and leagues.

Leicester Ladies Hockey Club has five teams and a large junior section of around 180 players (known as 'the Banana Bunch' because of previous sponsorship by Fyffes). Its under-11s squad includes boys as well as girls. The Club is run by a volunteer committee and has 13 core volunteers holding specific roles and a number of 'helpers' who are generally parents of players.

It pays a first team coach and a small honorarium (£500 pa) to the second team coach, mainly to cover the costs of travel to matches all around the Midlands. The club's First Officer organises volunteers and has a Volunteer Policy which the President characterises as more of a *'wishlist'*. The club's approach to volunteers is to *'show them there is a support structure around them, and provide clear boundaries. Show them they are valued. Satisfaction increases motivation'*.

The club does not have its own ground but trains and plays on council pitches. It has recently sealed a deal to relocate senior teams to a local grammar school. It *'survives on handouts'*, including player subscriptions and match fees (£22,000 per year), donations and some business sponsorship, for example of kit. It estimates basic costs at £35,000 per year with an additional £125,000 needed to run the club, paying for coaches, umpires, refreshments etc. It holds fundraising events such as quizzes, bingo, raffles and race nights. It engages in *'marketing'*, securing photo shoots for elite players, giving *'inspirational talks'* and compering external events like awards evenings.

The club organises an annual overseas tour or visit by an overseas club; its squad has, for example, visited Germany and Trinidad and Tobago. It participates in PESSCL and Leadership Coaching, which provides a route into coaching and umpiring qualifications for young people. It is involved with the Local Sports Alliance and the Area Youth Games, and takes part in local fundraising campaigns such as the Lord Mayor's Appeal.

Clifton Ladies Hockey Club has five senior teams and teams of under-18s, under-15s, under-13s and under-11s; plus a Juniors/Minis Section. It has about 150 players in total. It has a Committee of eleven volunteers - Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Fixture Secretary, two Club Captains and five Team Captains – and six volunteer coaches, who are paid travel expenses. A further three volunteers are umpires and six parents help out, for example collecting match fees.

Volunteers are not 'managed' but operate on a co-operative and mutual support basis: *'if you need help, you just shout!'*. New volunteers who need help are given mentoring by previous post holders. The club is *'happy to pay'* for volunteers to gain coaching or umpiring qualifications, although some meet the cost themselves.

Clifton has no ground but hires pitches for training and matches. Its income comes from match fees and subscriptions. The club says it wants to do more fundraising, and needs sponsors especially for the first team, which has high travel costs. It is trying to develop links with schools, partly to promote the sport and partly to attract grants. The club recently achieved Clubs First accreditation.

Leicestershire Schoolgirls Hockey Association runs county hockey under-13, under-14, under-15 and under-17 schoolgirl teams. Including minis

(under-11s), trials and schools, it has 1,200 players. The Association has a committee of six volunteers – a Chair/Secretary, Leagues Organiser, Tournaments Organiser, Cups Organiser, Treasurer and a Midlands Hockey representative – and 12-15 other volunteers, including team managers and coaches. It also has parent helpers who, for example, make refreshments.

The Committee requires very little management because members have been involved for many years and *'know what to do'*. Nominal expenses are paid, for example for printing certificates and mileage to other counties. Training is *'on the job'*; all but one of the committee are teachers so are used to organising school activities. Volunteers take Child Welfare and First Aid training if needed, and the Association helps volunteers who take coaching badges, for example paying half of the cost. Its income comes from match fees, subs and entrance fees, and a small grant from the county council; it receives no money from England Hockey, and pays EH to affiliate. The LSHA is based at a local grammar school where the Chair teaches and pays to use local authority pitches.

The Association has 36 affiliated schools, each of which can nominate up to six players for trials. It says leagues and tournaments *'don't quite break even'* but are seen as a tool to develop school hockey and keep the sport on the agenda *'as it is disappearing fast with the competition from girls' football'*. It has coached girls successfully to play at regional level, with several players representing the Midlands.

England Hockey Midlands Office (EHMO) is the regional tier of England Hockey, serving eight counties, Birmingham and the Black Country. Its paid full-time staff are the Regional Manager, Regional Administrator and three Hockey Development Officers. It *'cannot survive without the volunteer force'* of the Midlands Regional Hockey Association (MRHA), which has a volunteer Executive Committee and runs all the leagues. The County Hockey Associations are also volunteer-run and each sends a representative to Council meetings. EHMO has a number of sub-groups including the Midlands Regional Performance Group and the Midlands Hockey Youth Panel which organised the Midlands Regional Hockey Youth Festival. EHMO oversees approximately 160 hockey clubs and makes a rough estimate of around ten volunteers per club, probably 2,500 – 3,000 club volunteers in the region.

The EHMO works to promote the game through development schemes and initiatives such as the Young Umpire Action Group and the national PE, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) initiative. It co-operates with School Sports Partnerships to provide Leadership Courses for young people. Its Development Officers co-ordinate child protection, coach and umpire training for clubs.

The Springbridge Carriage Driving Centre Group is entirely volunteer-run. It has around 30 volunteers including the Chair, Treasurer and four Trustees, Physiotherapist, Health and Safety Officer, and CRB Checks Officer. The

remainder act as Whips (instructors/drivers) and Escorts, as Stable and Saddlery Assistants or in general maintenance and support. Whips are trained by the Chair and certified by the RDA. Other volunteers are given training, as needed, in horse management. All are trained in first aid, through external organisations (organisations they work for or the British Carriage Driving Society of which some are members). In 2007, Springbridge had 35 carriage drivers, most of whom were over 19 years old, and provided 281 drives. It receives clients from 15 care centres as well as private homes within a 50 mile radius.

The joint Group Organisers own the stables, which was built with a grant from the SITA Landfill Credit Scheme (and opened by Princess Anne). They own one horse and six others are lent for driving sessions. The group's annual running costs are low – around £6,000 – and this is mostly raised through fundraising collections, Christmas parties, dog shows and barbecues. Horse pictures and cards, given free by a local artist, are sold at the centre. The group is trying to get business sponsorship, for example as a Christmas charity of the Rotary Club. The group does some promotion, through libraries and at public events.

The Avon Riding Centre is a purpose-built centre run by volunteers – ten Trustees who have overall governance, one of whom is the volunteer Group Organiser – who employ a small paid staff to maintain the stables, a caretaker, full-time receptionist and part-time admin manager. The Centre has more than 160 volunteers, consisting of 15 qualified Instructors and about 150 helpers. Volunteer roles are mainly concentrated on the arena, assisting as Side Helper or Leader with rides, and also include Gardener, Reception Assistant, Maintenance Assistant and Events Organiser. Avon is open six days a week, owns 25 horses and, in 2007, provided 8,053 rides for 251 clients, 70 per cent of whom were under 19 years old. Seven schools and five care centres use the Centre.

To recruit volunteers, the Centre uses the local volunteer centre, features on local radio and articles in newspapers, and university freshers fairs. It has some equine students on day release work experience and school pupils doing the Duke of Edinburgh Award. It has quite a formal recruitment process, with an application form, the taking up of two references, a personal interview and CRB check. Interviews are done by an Instructor who assumes some of the role of a Volunteer Co-ordinator. Avon runs New Volunteer Training Courses six times a year and aims to encourage volunteer progression to RDA accredited instructor level, which the RDA pays for.

The Centre is self-funding, although it '*struggles to make ends meet*' and the now 25-year-old facilities need upgrading. The current Group Organiser feels the Centre would benefit from employing someone in her role '*for overall control and planning of events*', but it cannot afford to. Two-thirds of its running costs are provided by fees for able-bodied riding tuition and hiring out arenas and conference facilities. It holds a Spring Fair and Autumn Gala and

other fundraising activities and events. Several local companies provide sponsorship, but more is needed.
