

HELPING VOLUNTEERS GROW | LEARN | SHARE | CELEBRATE

# Team Spirit

## End of Project Impact and Learning Report

An document for England Athletics and Spirit of 2012

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## Foreword from Chris Jones, Chief Executive, England Athletics

I am delighted to write a foreword for this end of project report and to thank all those partners without whom this project would not have been possible. This programme has seen us working closely with our partners at Spirit of 2012 and with our volunteer-organised member clubs to try and test a number of strategies as we aim to recruit, retain and importantly sustain a more diverse volunteer community from which our great sport can prosper in the coming years and decades.

We have learned a lot as an organisation during the period of this programme and arguably as much from what has not worked so well during the period of this programme as we have from the activities that have been successful. I hope that this report will be a resource to share some of these ideas and to learn from those people who are already tackling such challenges with success.

One thing is clear to me and that is that change takes time and that we need to continually adapt to changes in society, and recognise the pressures that people are under in balancing their working, family and leisure time. We as an organisation also need to listen to feedback and continually review our practice to ensure that we are making the lives of our volunteers easier and more enjoyable and that any barriers to progression and capacity are addressed. This is certainly in no way about reducing the quality or standards of delivery to the end participant, but we must recognise that we are operating in a society where disposable leisure time is at a premium for many people and we need to adapt to societal and technological changes accordingly in delivering volunteer-centric programmes.

Such challenges mean that we need to find more flexible and creative ways of integrating volunteers from all backgrounds into our sport who might only be able to commit a small piece of their disposable time for the good of others. What worked 20 years ago will not necessarily work these days. The days of the same few people being expected to commit a lifetime of goodwill and effort, to one club for example, are in many cases a thing of the past. We need to support people who are prepared to commit smaller chunks of free time to make things happen, and the onus is on all of us to find ways in which such efforts can be accommodated.

England Athletics are continually looking at ways in which we can develop our thinking to enhance the volunteer experience and volunteering is our number 1 strategic priority as an organisation. This funded programme has been a great opportunity to try and test approaches and to listen to, and learn from, a range of experiences of volunteers who are working tirelessly, and selflessly, for the good of others. It really is a defining aspect of our



***"Volunteers have always been integral to the delivery of grassroots athletics and running. Without their commitment, the sport would not be where it is today and without them, the future of the sport would be at risk."***

**Chris Jones**

great sport and without such efforts our sport would cease to exist as we realise it. We hope to take such learnings to shape the work of England Athletics for the future and that this report will prove invaluable as we look to embed the learnings across the organisation and throughout the sport.

We need to integrate such understanding into the next iteration of our strategy which we will begin work on in early 2020. With the next Commonwealth Games taking place in Birmingham in summer 2022 there is no doubt that the feats of those home country athletes competing at these games will inspire a future generation of participants to give our great sport a go, and we are mindful that this will only be possible with the efforts of hard working volunteers who have the time, capacity and know-how of being able to respond to such demand, particularly in our local clubs, schools and running groups.

I know from my own personal experience that each performance, by any athlete of any aspiration and aptitude, is underpinned by the efforts of many people. We also recognise the huge contribution made to the sport from coaches, officials, club volunteers and family. We know that for each athlete there will be many other people who have played an instrumental part in their athletic development and to them, we thank you all.



**Chris Jones**  
CEO, England Athletics

***"We need to find more flexible and creative ways of integrating volunteers from all backgrounds into our sport who might only be able to commit a small piece of their disposable time for the good of others. What worked 20 years ago will not necessarily work these days."***

**Chris Jones**



# Foreword from Ruth Hollis, Chief Executive, Spirit of 2012

*Team Spirit* originated from the Inspiration programme of the London 2017 World Athletics Championships. England Athletics' ambition was to create a volunteer force to meet the anticipated upsurge in demand at club level that having a home competition can bring, and to diversify and support the club volunteers who give so much back to their clubs. At Spirit we know that major events can act as a spark to light the imagination of those watching. And we also know that high quality, regular and inclusive engagement with any activity can increase personal wellbeing, perceptions of and attitudes to disability and impairment, and connect people and communities.

In the initial research phase of the grant, England Athletics were able to deepen their understanding of the motivations and feelings of volunteers who were already contributing to their sport. They then designed the programme to build on this research, in order to diversify their volunteering and increase capacity within their club structure.

This report focuses on a set of key principles. Most of these won't be new to volunteer managers, but it's important to see them brought to life through case studies, alongside practical advice for the entire athletics network – and sports volunteering teams beyond athletics – about how to put them into practice.

Testimony in the report points to the importance of face to face training that helped create lightbulb moments for those volunteer leads on the ground, like Chris (p14) who trialled new ways of rewarding and recognising his volunteers and working with younger volunteers. The *Game Changers* project provided clubs with a model for what youth engagement in volunteering could look like. 46 clubs took the opportunity to support almost 400 young people to make the move from participant to volunteer.

As the programme comes to a close, we appreciate England Athletics' open and collaborative approach to this report. Their frankness has helped inform practice and future strategy for them and us. It reminds us that volunteering adds value and has a positive impact on individuals and their communities, no matter the time or skills they're able to give.



***"We know that high quality, regular and inclusive engagement with any activity can increase personal wellbeing, perceptions of and attitudes to disability and impairment and connect people and communities."***

Ruth Hollis

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth Hollis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Ruth Hollis**  
CEO, Spirit of 2012

# Team Spirit Programme

## A Snapshot

England Athletics was awarded funding in November 2016 to harness the profile of the World Championships in Athletics in July 2017 London.

The Inspiration programme, known as **Team Personal Best**, was designed to get people who were encouraged by London's role as host to the Championships to get involved in grassroots athletics and running, and to transform the experience of volunteering in the sport, post-Championships.

Using key findings from Spirit-funded research into the current volunteer experience, we had the vision to use the backdrop of the Championships to raise the quality of volunteering experience in athletics and running for existing volunteers, share the benefits with new, more diverse volunteers and embed a new volunteer journey and support network. The focus was on building the quality of the experience rather than recruitment of large numbers of new volunteers, recognising that improving volunteer experience by supporting clubs was a necessity.

England Athletics continued to develop the programme, responding to learning around what was working and what was not. In total the programme has supported and delivered:

**2497** **volunteers** engaged and involved across the whole programme.

**32** clubs and  
**351** volunteers



accessing quality training and resources delivered locally through the **Champions** project

**46** clubs and  
**397** volunteers



to participate in our **Game Changers** project, enabling young people and people from diverse groups to access volunteering opportunities

**2** enhanced  
**Volunteer Award**  
**campaigns**



in 2017 and 2018,  
delivering **18 events**  
across the country with  
over **1000 attendees**.

**2** National  
**engagement**  
**events**



bringing volunteers together; a **National Volunteer Conference** rated excellent by 100% of attendees and an **Exploration Day**, focussed on the challenge the sport faces around engaging volunteers from diverse backgrounds

A dedicated **online volunteer community**, engaging over

**1400**  
**volunteers**



within athletics  
and running

Development of an internal  
**Volunteering**  
**Operational Group**

and insight-led Volunteer Strategy, providing clarity of focus for the organisation moving forwards.



**Following development of England Athletics' Volunteer Strategy in 2018, all projects\* aimed to:**

- 1.** Prioritise creating positive experiences for new and existing volunteers
- 2.** Create supportive environments that make it easier for existing volunteers to stay involved, to feel happier and valued
- 3.** Develop a volunteering workforce that better reflects society, helping people who have a love of the sport to easily get, and stay, involved

\* For a description of all projects please see 'The Projects' section from Page 21 onwards.



Following an internal review, the decision was made by England Athletics to request an early close to the programme, originally due to close in October, instead closing in September. Some programmes and activities had already been committed and so, in agreement with Spirit of 2012, the **Game Changers** and delivery of the **Exploration Day** continued.

# Impact and Learning

## Positive Impact

The delivery of the Spirit-funded programmes has had a positive impact on volunteers in athletics and running, highlighted across these main themes:

### Engagement

In total, 2497 was the amount of the people engaged in the programme, resulting in an increase in capacity at 32 clubs.

### Satisfaction

Over the duration of the programme, volunteer satisfaction has improved significantly with organisational, individual and community aspects rated more positively (e.g. effective leadership, role understanding, social factors). From 2017 to 2018, volunteer satisfaction increased from 77% to 89%. More women are now involved in volunteering roles.

Each year England Athletics run an online volunteer survey. Results from our survey evidence that volunteer experience has improved. We see higher satisfaction levels; factors such as effective leadership, coordination, communication, training and recognition are rated more positively. The volunteering environment is more social, friendly and welcoming; with less expectation and less focus on athletic performance.

Increase in capacity at  
**32**  
clubs



Volunteer satisfaction increased from 77% to

**89%**





## Wellbeing

Those that have been involved in the volunteer programmes funded by Spirit report even higher levels of wellbeing. Most notably, 90% of this cohort report that their overall satisfaction with life is between 7-10 out of 10. This represents a 3-percentage point improvement since baseline. Improvement is not seen across all four indicators – however it is evident that athletics and running volunteers have higher levels of well-being than general sports volunteers and those that do not volunteer. The table below shows levels of well-being and changes between baseline and the end of the programme:

# 90%

Report overall satisfaction with life between 7-10



## England Athletics National Volunteer Survey – ONS Wellbeing Questions

Average Score out of 10 (% positive responses 7-10 or 0-3 for anxiety measure)

ONS Wellbeing Questions	All Volunteers <small>(Baseline - EA 2017)</small>	Not Volunteered <small>(Sport England 2018)</small>	Volunteered in Sport <small>(Sport England 2018)</small>	All England Athletics Volunteers <small>(EA 2018)</small>	Volunteers Engaged in Spirit Funded Activity <small>(EA 2018)</small>
<b>Overall, how satisfied are you with your life?</b> <small>(On a 0-10 scale, where 0 is not satisfied at all and 10 is completely satisfied)</small>	<b>8.1</b> <b>(87%)</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>8.2</b> <b>(89%)</b>	<b>8.3</b> <b>(90%)</b>
<b>Overall, how much do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?</b> <small>(On a 0-10 scale, where 0 is not at all worthwhile and 10 is completely worthwhile)</small>	<b>8.3</b> <b>(90%)</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>8.2</b> <b>(87%)</b>	<b>8.3</b> <b>(88%)</b>
<b>Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?</b> <small>(On a 0-10 scale, where 0 is not at all happy and 10 is completely happy)</small>	<b>8.0</b> <b>(85%)</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>7.9</b> <b>(82%)</b>	<b>7.9</b> <b>(82%)</b>
<b>Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?</b> <small>(On a 0-10 scale, 0 is not anxious and 10 is completely anxious)</small>	<b>3.2</b> <b>(61%)</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.1</b> <b>(63%)</b>	<b>3.0</b> <b>(64%)</b>

## Diversity

The programme did not engage as effectively with diverse groups of volunteers as hoped. A challenge linked to this was the need to define what we mean by diversity and targeting clubs and groups in these areas.

A key learning moving forward is how England Athletics defines diversity in volunteering as the volunteer base within a club being reflective of the community in which it is based.

## Key Insights

Research activity, delivered as part of the programme, has provided England Athletics with a deeper understanding of wants and needs of volunteers in the sport.

The following six learning themes will be taken forward, not only through volunteer development at England Athletics, but also to support member clubs and other volunteer-involving organisations within sport.

All principles are based on the CAR model (Competence, Autonomy and Relatedness). There is a positive association between the development of a volunteer-created climate based on the three key human psychological needs and key motivations of volunteers to keep active.

- Give volunteers the support and encouragement they need to feel confident – **provides competence**
- Provide volunteers with choice and flexibility to work around their lives – **provides autonomy**
- Develop a supportive environment/community where volunteers are valued – **provides relatedness/belonging**

### KEY PRINCIPLE:

## Volunteering for me

Volunteers who are most engaged and satisfied cite having a sense of pride, reward, social benefits/ making friends and feeling appreciated. Reminding them to make sure they are enjoying themselves and what they are gaining from being involved is important.

See also case study in *Insights in Action* (p13).

### Principle in action

Volunteering is often thought of as giving something back, from a sense of duty or to help others, but without developing a love of volunteering or real purpose for doing it, volunteering can quickly become a drain, unappealing and tedious.

#### What can clubs do?

- **Welcome and support effectively** – a goal for clubs is to facilitate a supportive community, where everyone feels welcome, aware of their roles, with a fair distribution of the workload to effectively run a club.
- **Thank and check-in regularly** – it is important for volunteers to be thanked regularly and for someone to check they are enjoying what they are doing. This enables volunteers to feel like they are doing it because they want to rather than because they must; this will develop a love of volunteering.

### KEY PRINCIPLE:

## Let me know if I'm doing a good job

It is important to give feedback, encouragement and appreciation. 52% cite lack of support and teamwork as impacting negatively on satisfaction. 41% feel undervalued leading to a sense of disgruntlement.

See also case study in *Insights in Action* (p14).

### Principle in action

Volunteers who feel greater levels of appreciation and belonging enjoy their roles and volunteering. One of the main reasons for disgruntlement is feeling undervalued and recognition is lowest rated.

#### What can clubs do?

- **Recognition and appreciation** – there is a need for greater appreciation of volunteers in clubs. This can be through simple 'thank yous' or offering incentives (e.g. free race entries, merchandise, credits, refreshments). This gratitude goes a long way and the importance should never be forgotten.
- **Learn through failure AND success** – avoid criticism and work with volunteers to help them understand how problems or challenges can be resolved.

## KEY PRINCIPLE:

### Communicate with me

Only 61% of volunteers are satisfied with the current communications they receive as volunteers from their own clubs.

#### Principle in action

The majority of volunteers appreciate it's easy to start and there is a lack of pressure or expectation but do enough people know about the opportunities available? Through raising awareness of the benefits, larger numbers of athletes and parents will want to give up their time to help. There are concerns currently about the number of volunteers in the future, but volunteers continue volunteering because they enjoy it, find it rewarding and it makes them happy.

#### What can clubs do?

- **Talk about volunteering as much as possible**, highlighting opportunities and easy ways for people to get involved.
- **Hold taster sessions** that support people to 'give it a go'.
- **Train and support** - encourage shadowing opportunities for people to learn directly about key roles.
- **Expectations and opportunities** - be clear that volunteering is optional but spelling out the many benefits will promote taking part.

## KEY PRINCIPLE:

### Be clear with what's expected and accept volunteering needs to be flexible

Over one third of volunteers who had stopped felt that either 'too much was expected of me' or 'their skills were not utilised'.

See also case study in *Insights in Action* (p15).

#### Principle in action

Cultural dynamics in clubs can result in some volunteers being made to feel they are not giving enough time, or that they are not skilled enough for certain roles. This must be challenged.

#### What can clubs do?

- **Support network** - ensure all volunteers feel welcome and that there are mechanisms for them to share their views.
- **Offer diversity and variety** - communicate the diversity of roles available, that no role is more superior than another and that anytime given is appreciated.
- **Remove barriers** - recognise if there are cliques forming that make others feel uncomfortable - chat with these groups to make aware and look for ways to encourage more collaborative and diverse groups volunteering together.

KEY PRINCIPLE:

**Provide me with access to the training and development I need**

Only 49% of volunteers are happy with training/preparation for new volunteer roles

**Principle in action**

Nearly half of volunteers would like further training, this may help volunteers better coordinate and manage workloads.

**What can clubs do?**

- **Train and develop** - Ensure training is accessible and cover payment wherever possible
- **Go further** - and speak with England Athletics' Education Coordinators to arrange additional training opportunities
- **Co-lead with volunteers** - Encourage volunteers to speak about what development opportunities they might like to take up.

KEY PRINCIPLE:

**I want Volunteering to be fun**

95% of volunteers enjoy their volunteering experience. 89% continue because volunteering makes them happy

**Principle in action**

Poor organisation and lack of appreciation are key reasons for volunteers leaving their roles and the club.

The main goal hoped to achieve from volunteering is to do something rewarding and that you are enjoying how you are spending your leisure time.

**What can clubs do?**

- **Get more social** - organise social activities that bring volunteers together; this can be as simple as a visit to the local pub, annual Christmas get-together or organising a fundraising quiz night.
- **Take time out** - allow volunteers to enjoy the events and activities they are supporting, allowing free time to watch athletics and running if this is something they get real enjoyment from.

## Volunteering for me

Our Team Spirit conference was open to all volunteers in the sport and focussed on individual volunteer wellbeing, ensuring volunteers took time to focus on themselves and what they get from volunteering. One of the attendees on the day, Margaret shares her story...:

"A tweet from England Athletics caught my eye. They were putting on a conference in Birmingham to celebrate volunteers, and for volunteers to share experiences with, and learn from, each other. It sounded fun!

I was slightly nervous, wondering what it might be like. It was going to be a long day, would I be stood around not talking to anyone, would it be really crowded, would I be overcome with nerves or start wittering on when I tried to talk to someone?

I thought the whole conference was powerful and emotional. It was an amazing opportunity, something that doesn't come along very often. It was great to be listened to, to be able to talk about what matters to us, to have fun, to meet people, to be around 200 positive, happy people. My one regret was that I didn't talk to more people, but that is something to learn for the future. It was an energising and inspiring day and I was honoured to be part of it. Probably the last time I felt so inspired was about four years ago when I did my first parkrun.

On a personal level, I think this highlights that being in the right environment and with the right encouragement, anything is possible. I loved that the conference was open to all sports volunteers, there was no hierarchy of whether one type of volunteer was better or more worthy than the other. Volunteering is the perfect way of using one's passion for sport, of equipping people with the power to make better things happen and to change lives."



**"Volunteering is the perfect way of using one's passion for sport, of equipping people with the power to make better things happen and to change lives. "**

## Feedback and appreciation

Chris is Chair and Head Coach of North Somerset Athletics Club, a club he started in 2004 with only four athletes. Chris was one of our first Team Spirit Champions who came along to a session in Yate in January 2018 and here is the story of the impact this has had on him and his club.

"I have often found it easy to forget that unlike me, most of my committee and club volunteers do not live, breathe and sweat athletics! I felt that I have always shown appreciation to volunteers that support the club, although I sometimes find myself wishing I received faster responses from them. And so, I came along to the session expecting to hear what I already knew, to help others yet gain nothing myself from the session. I was completely wrong.

### What Chris learnt from the course:

- To step back and consider volunteers from the perspective shown to me at the session reminded me that I can't expect immediate responses from my volunteers and gave me some ideas for additional ways I could reward them. We have gifted our qualified officials with polo shirts to wear while they carry out their duties, leading to several parents complimenting these polo shirts and offering to gain an officiating qualification themselves. We negotiated a price with the food van that serves our events to give vouchers to all our volunteers for a hot drink and a cake. This means our volunteers do not need to pay for a refreshment and this was given to all volunteers, whether they volunteered for the whole event or just 20 minutes on registration.
- On this event day, we also trialled having a volunteer co-ordinator who ensured all volunteers were in position and comfortable in their role. We have never had such positive feedback from our volunteers, with some already offering to take on larger roles next time around.
- The Champions session was a catalyst to expanding this provision to mentor our young athletes into Assistant Coach qualifications, and we sought Game Changers funding to support this. Now our volunteers virtually run our Saturday morning sessions, usually 8-10 Game Changers, three qualified coaches and around 50 athletes. This is benefitting both the Game Changers themselves and the athletes and allows our coaches to take a step back and evaluate the sessions being delivered to the junior athletes.
- The positive impact of this programme on our club and the quality that we can deliver appears to know no bounds."



**"We have never had such positive feedback from our volunteers, with some already offering to take on larger roles next time around."**

## Flexibility and being clear with expectations

Bedford and County Athletics Club Chair Rob shares the impact getting involved with Game Changers has had at his club and how getting involved exceeded expectations...

"We aimed to better reflect the Bedford community and remove barriers for people to get involved. We currently have 11 Game Changer volunteers who have qualified as assistant coaches. There are six female and five male volunteers, three of whom are BAME volunteers and one has a disability. This has resulted in a more ethnically, gender and age diverse presence amongst coaches, which more accurately reflects the make-up of the club membership.

These volunteers all regularly coach at the now highly successful Beagles Programme. At the end of each Beagles Term, all these young volunteer coaches get together as a Young Coaches Group (YCG) as supported by the two senior club coaches who run Beagles. At this YCG the previous term is discussed, and the positives taken forwards.

In addition, four of these volunteers now regularly coach in the new BeaglesPlus Programme that was started in April 2019. We also have one senior male volunteer who has qualified as an assistant coach and coaches for BeaglesPlus.

Frankie Johnson, an outstanding and inspiring young athlete (U20 Pole vault), is the club Youth Ambassador. Frankie has to date given a motivational talk at two local schools, talking about the impact of Game Changers, with more talks planned.

The project has been fundamental in changing the success and dynamics of Beagles. We now have 60 young athletes attending Beagles and a waiting list. This would not have been possible without the 11 Game Changer young coaching assistant volunteers whose enthusiasm inspires the Beagles athletes."



**"The project has been fundamental in changing the success and dynamics."**

# Key Learnings for England Athletics

Evaluation and learning, delivered as part of the programme has enabled England Athletics to learn about processes and design of projects in the future that it would be beneficial for the organisation to reflect on and consider:

## Design of programme

- A key lesson learnt has been the necessity of identifying core beneficiaries/target groups and establishing plans to engage and support them through projects. The programme suffered from not clearly defining target population from the outset, alongside not identifying the key necessary inputs needed for delivery.
- Although this programme was designed with an insight-led approach, the strategic targeting of clubs could have been improved. In the future, we will adapt our product development process to incorporate the EAST framework\* championed by the Behavioural Insights Team. The organisation have invested in mapping software and have an improved database to help targeting in the future. A Theory of Change will also be developed for all future projects of this scale.

## Delivery of programme

- All volunteer projects are now embedded into the work-programmes of the Club Support Team and England Athletics has adopted a new Objectives & Key Results (OKR) approach to project planning across the business with resource management and support requirements scoped at the start of the process.
- A programme of this size and scale needed additional local delivery support to enable a more hands-on, supportive approach with clubs. All clubs and groups involved in the programme are run by volunteers and therefore the lack of time and expertise, for example, in providing monitoring and evaluation requirements, was an ongoing challenge that would have benefited from more focussed, local support that was not always possible due to capacity.
- With only having one national Project Manager at the start of the programme it was a challenge to balance delivery of the programme with comprehensive evaluation and time to reflect on what was and was not working to allow for ongoing developments to meet programme ambitions.

## Timing

- The Project Manager for the programme was recruited and began their role in late January 2017, leaving only 6 months before the start of the Championships. In addition, February 2017 saw an organisation-wide restructure take place at England Athletics which understandably caused significant disruption, specifically within the Club Support Team, a key internal stakeholder group to support delivery of the programme.
- Furthermore, and reflecting on the volunteering strategy work that was identified as being required post-Championships, with hindsight it would have been better to build in more time to the project timeline to set up the programmes and to build the relationships with clubs and partners. A test and scale approach to the programme was used, but arguably needed more time to assess what approaches were having the impact needed. The timescale was too narrow to establish new and complex projects to meet the Championships deadline. If the organisation does want to capitalise on future events to engage new volunteers (the Commonwealth Games in 2022 for example) significantly more lead in time is required and recognition that resourcing to support with direct delivery as well as ongoing evaluation and time to reflect is essential.

\* For more information on this framework, please visit:

[https://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/BIT-Publication-EAST\\_FA\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/BIT-Publication-EAST_FA_WEB.pdf)



## Sustainability and being future-focussed

- Created to capitalise on the London 2017 Championships, the design of the programme did not comprehensively plan for sustainability of the projects in the longer term, after funding had ceased. This has resulted in challenges around next steps for clubs and groups who have engaged with the programme and how this will be managed moving forwards. It is recommended that all future projects involving clubs include an action plan of how the work can be mainstreamed once funding is no longer available.

## Continue to prioritise volunteer experience

- Through development of an insight-led Volunteer Strategy, the significance of volunteer experience to the success of volunteering in the sport came to the fore. Whilst supporting clubs to recruit new volunteers into roles, specifically those we know have a shortage, is important, we know that if volunteer experience in clubs does not improve, volunteers will not stay volunteering.
- Key projects within the programme have focussed on improving volunteer experience, but it is important that work continues, particularly looking at the impact of culture within the club and how this can be improved through better club leadership. The three-year timescale of the programme was not long enough to see a real shift in culture within clubs.
- As a result of this, England Athletics has launched a Club Leaders programme, a development programme for committee members within clubs. This programme upskills club leaders over the course of a 12-month training programme around effective leadership in clubs, with a focus around building a positive culture that effectively supports volunteers.

## The importance of club engagement and trust

- It has been recognised at England Athletics that more work needs to be done around building trust and positive sentiment between our members and the organisation; this is a priority area for the business and a focus for England Athletics' Marketing and Communications strategy moving forwards. The challenge of engaging with clubs to join the programme was significant; building in more lead time would have enabled greater club engagement and trust. As a result of this learning, England Athletics have developed a 'Marketing Hub' for clubs to access materials to more effectively engage with clubs.



## Key Learnings for England Athletics and Spirit of 2012

Throughout the programme, England Athletics and Spirit of 2012 have acknowledged that there have been challenges on both sides that have ultimately had an impact on the delivery of the programme. This section will hopefully help both organisations to reflect on practises and make improvements for future work with funders and funded projects.

### Clear project scope

- At times, lines became blurred between the delivery of the programme versus the wider ambitions of the organisation around Volunteering. England Athletics wanted to use the project as a catalyst to embed a new volunteering strategy. Whilst the funder acknowledged the merits of having Volunteering so central to the organisation's strategy, it is evident that England Athletics over emphasised this through the reporting which created a lack of distinction between the specific project outputs versus the wider impact of the investment on the sport and volunteering in general. More support, advice and guidance developing the monitoring and evaluation framework would have been beneficial from the outset. This would have allowed the most appropriate tracking mechanisms to be established at the beginning of the programme. The scope changed throughout the project which ultimately affected the overall programme. A clearer plan for how to monitor impact would have been beneficial.

### Funding applications and strategic alignment

- It is important that England Athletics only enters a funding application process where the outputs and outcomes of the funding application directly align to the Strategic Plan of the organisation. The original funding application was completed prior to the finalisation of the England Athletics strategic plan. Although growing the number of volunteers and retaining them within the sport is at the heart of our strategy, the agreed outcomes around health and wellbeing, at the outset of the programme, introduced potentially unnecessary complexity to the project. Many of our existing programmes aim to improve the health and wellbeing of participants as a 'wider outcome' of investment and we understand the value of our work in changing people's lives in a positive way.
- After establishing a baseline and demonstrating that, despite some low levels of general satisfaction in volunteering the wellbeing levels of volunteers in Athletics and Running are already high (as measured by ONS metrics), it was possibly unrealistic to demonstrate increases through this project (and not the best outcome to focus on). At this point an agreement to focus more on diversity for example may have been a better use of resources.

### Funding partner relationship management

- An area that could have been improved from the outset is around establishing a more structured approach to communication between both organisations. Putting in place regular, closer and more structured communication at earlier stages of the grant between Spirit and England Athletics would have supported clarity of the programme overall. By engaging at executive level and as a working group would have deepened both our relationship, communication and understanding.
- In the future, we will establish an overall project group involving funders throughout to improve communication. Having the expertise of Spirit in the room would have supported a more collaborative approach from the outset.

# Background

England Athletics placed Volunteering at the heart of its five-year strategy in 2016, and this programme enabled the organisation to recruit a dedicated Volunteer Manager for the first time to help achieve core strategic objectives as reflected in the Team Spirit programme.

Having established initial outcomes in 2016, these evolved in 2018 to the following agreed outcomes:

## Increasing Wellbeing

1. Personal wellbeing is increased or maintained through getting involved in the programme
2. 80% of volunteers' satisfaction with their volunteering increases through getting involved in the programme
3. Volunteers report high levels of satisfaction around their volunteering experience (feel they are in the right role, supported, celebrated)



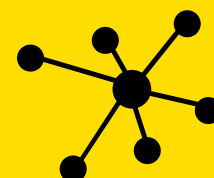
## Challenge Disability Perceptions

4. 60% of volunteers involved report a positive change in perception of disabled people in communities
5. Non-disabled volunteers report an increased understanding in the barriers that disabled people face
6. Disabled people are better able to become involved in volunteering in the sport



## Connecting Communities

7. More people volunteer and engage in their community
8. Connecting communities: volunteers are brought together through a shared love for athletics and running



## Engaging and Diversifying Volunteers

9. A more diverse volunteer base in programme clubs
10. 300 volunteers remain involved 12 months after initial involvement
11. 350 volunteers report that skills and experience has helped to prepare them for the workplace
12. Inclusive national and regional events enable groups to connect and have fun



The development of these outcomes was in recognition of England Athletics' role and the impact we can realistically have given the resources we have and how we work with athletics and running clubs and groups. In agreement with Spirit of 2012 in the summer of 2018, we reviewed the programme, highlighting the challenges we faced (and continue to face) because most volunteers within our sport are volunteering with one of our member clubs, and are not directly recruited, supported and managed by us.

This means we do not have direct control over the volunteering journey. Instead our role is to educate and upskill clubs, empowering them to create positive and lasting volunteer experiences in their club community.

# Evaluation and Learning

The Team Spirit Programme core aims were to create a better experience for volunteers, recruit new and diverse volunteers, improve satisfaction and wellbeing for volunteers – ultimately increasing capacity in clubs. In the following pages we will explore each of these areas linked to core projects within the programme, the key outputs, outcomes and main lessons learnt.

Significant time was spent on reflection around what was working and what was not and making in-flight changes where needed. Clubs and groups, all volunteer-run, had no expertise or real capacity to build in comprehensive monitoring and evaluation. We developed methods to make this process as easy as possible, however it still became a challenge for all clubs to comprehend the necessity and engage fully with the process. There were also criticisms from participant clubs around evaluation questions being asked of them, for example, around wellbeing.

Our overall aim focussed around improving the volunteer experience in athletics and running. To effectively measure impact on this aim and our wider objectives, we used a tiered approach separated into three sections.

## For Level 1,

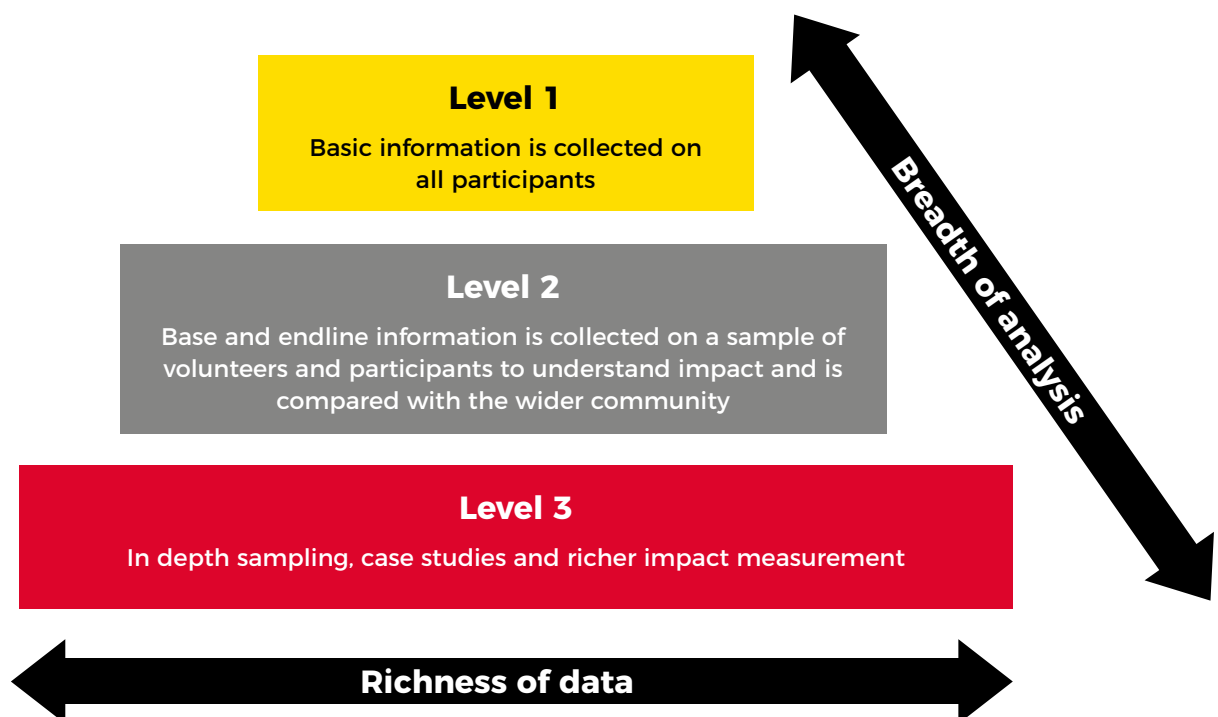
we captured information to demonstrate the full breadth of the programme, but the level of information recorded was low, focussed around capturing basic information on number of participant volunteers involved, number of events held, number of attendees at events, profile of groups etc.

## For Level 2,

we looked at a sizeable sample across the different projects to ascertain more detail around the impact the programme had on them, if involvement is sustained longer term and any differences that can be seen between different beneficiary groups.

## For Level 3,

we looked at a small sample to gather the richest data to be able to demonstrate if the programme had been successful in delivering the overall aim and objectives. We wanted to drill down into what specifically the interventions have impacted, how this was achieved and what detailed lessons we can learn from it.



# The projects

The following tables outline the five core projects of the Team Spirit Programme, the key outputs of those projects, the outcomes and key lessons learnt from them.

## Game Changers

**A funding and support package available to clubs and groups to improve diversity amongst their volunteer base, primarily removing barriers to enable young people to volunteer.**

Outputs	Outcomes	Lessons learnt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>46 clubs awarded grants over two years</b></li> <li>• <b>397 volunteers, all aged under 25 recruited, trained and accessing significant volunteering opportunities</b></li> <li>• <b>Game Changers has resulted in 95 qualifications being reported by volunteers, including officiating and coaching qualifications.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Increase wellbeing</b></p> <p>Average life satisfaction increased slightly from 7.8 at the start of the programme to 7.9 at the end. 93% of Game Changers stated they were proud to have been a part of the programme. This is 10 points higher than the reporting of pride at the mid-point.</p> <p><b>Preparing for the workplace</b></p> <p>91% believe their volunteering has prepared them for the workplace. There has been a 1-point increase between mid-point and end-point surveys.</p> <p><b>Increase skills level</b></p> <p>100% of Game Changers report the programme has increased skill level including Problem Solving, Self-Management, Working with Others and Decision Making. This has remained constant at all stages of reporting during and after the programme.</p> <p>Through our calls with Game Changers, many reported the benefits linked to personal growth, with comments including: "I feel like I've got a new purpose now", "Seeing the athletes I coach improving gives me a real buzz...and a determination to get fit again so I can be where they are!" and "I never thought anyone would see me as a role model, but now I have kids I coach saying they want to be just like me".</p>	<p><b>1. Improving social cohesion and helping people feel appreciated</b></p> <p>Feedback from project clubs has clearly demonstrated an improvement in social cohesion within the club environment. By recruiting athletes as volunteers, athletes have gained experience and increased knowledge and appreciation for the support of volunteers at the club; and club volunteers have appreciated the support from the young volunteers, challenging previous perceptions and unconscious bias.</p> <p><b>2. Diversifying volunteer community</b></p> <p>Game Changers was the project within the programme designed to diversify the sport. The focus on young people as a target population did not reach wider target diverse groups, and therefore outcomes needed to be more closely monitored and acted on.</p> <p><b>3. Reward is key</b></p> <p>The significance of reward and recognition for young people, demonstrated through positive feedback and engagement with Reward and Recognition scheme. Furthermore, removing barriers for volunteers is key, specifically paying expenses and training fees makes opportunities more accessible.</p> <p><b>3. Reward is key</b></p> <p>Projects should be inclusive and address the barriers, attitudes and perceptions which prevent people from having equal opportunities to participate. They should consider using the Activity Alliance's Talk To Me principles to support their inclusive provision. They could also consider having an access budget available to support the participation of those with additional needs.</p>

**"98.5% of Champions have said we met or exceeded their expectations"**

## Champions

A series of short, free and accessible sessions available for clubs across the country, focused on improving volunteer experience.

Outputs	Outcomes	Lessons learnt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and support programme developed, utilising an innovative approach for delivery</li> <li>• 32 clubs took part in the programme, delivered through Club Support Team</li> <li>• 351 volunteers trained</li> </ul>	<p><b>Confidence improvement and knowledge increase</b></p> <p>98.5% of Champions have said we met or exceeded their expectations with the session, 98.1% said that as a result of the session, they 'had a better understanding of their role as a champion', they were 'equipped with ideas and actions to take away', they had a 'better understanding of the volunteer journey and how to create a quality experience', and they would 'start to think about how they can expand volunteer support in their club'.</p> <p>Their confidence in involving and managing volunteers had increased to 8.13/10 compared to 6.65/10 before the session, with 86% of volunteers saying they felt their confidence had increased (14% stayed the same).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Resources support application of key principles to support clubs</b> Providing a training resource for Club Support Managers to utilise to support clubs around volunteer experience has been positive, with staff upskilled to deliver.</li> <li><b>2. Local delivery is beneficial</b> Being able to deliver locally is a huge benefit to clubs and can be tailored to meet the needs of the club or volunteers present</li> <li><b>3. Monitoring and continued development is important</b> It is important to monitor the impact the training has post session, with follow-up within 3-6 weeks and would recommend this is done with all EA courses. This supports developments and ensures training is being utilised post course. Longitudinal research should be considered where resources allow.</li> </ol>



**"Of all Award attendees, 90% said they were likely or very likely to get involved in future initiatives."**

## Conferences, Campaigns and events

Including 2 National Engagement events, Volunteer Conference and Exploration Day, 18 Regional Volunteer Award events

Outputs	Outcomes	Lessons learnt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1 Team Spirit Conference focussed around improving individual volunteer experience. Held to coincide with Birmingham 2018 Championships: 148 attendees</b></li> <li>• <b>1 Exploration Day focussed on increasing diversity in volunteering.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>41 volunteers attended and inputted to discussions</b></p> <p><b>Recommendations report produced and included as Appendix I.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increase of over 100% in nominations received in 2017 and 2018 Volunteer Awards. 18 events held across regions in England with 1119 attendees. 82% rating experience as excellent.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Conference</b></p> <p>100% said they enjoyed the conference with 99% stating they wanted to attend a future conference.</p> <p>After one month, 64% felt better equipped to improve/enhance the experience for themselves and/or others.</p> <p><b>Exploration Day</b></p> <p>A better understanding and a series of key recommendations to move forward the inclusivity of volunteering within the sport. These are included in Appendix I.</p> <p><b>Volunteer Awards</b></p> <p>94% of Award attendees stated they enjoyed the awards event they attended with 82% rating their experience as excellent.</p> <p>Of all Award attendees, 90% said they were likely or very likely to get involved in future initiatives.</p>	<p><b>Conference</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1.</b> The importance of focussing on the individual and their personal development outside of technical skills.</li> <li><b>2.</b> Innovative approach to conference delivery, specifically making it fun and helping volunteers feel appreciated, resulting in universally positive feedback.</li> <li><b>3.</b> The need to invest in future events like these to bring volunteers together, delivered locally.</li> </ol> <p><b>Exploration Day</b></p> <p>Key recommendations following the day have been recorded in a separate report, attached as Appendix I.</p> <p><b>Volunteer Awards</b></p> <p>Importance of allocating proper resource (people/financial) to deliver awards. Investment is important to continue level of events delivered and ensure positive sentiment towards programme continues.</p>



"Almost every attendee indicated that some of the challenges around volunteers were recruitment, retention/support and recognition."

## Ambassadors

A comprehensive training and support programme for volunteering leaders based in clubs and groups. This was put on hold after pilot stage.

Outputs	Outcomes	Lessons learnt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 pilot training programme developed and delivered with 6 volunteers</li> <li>• Programme put on hold and subsequently cancelled following programme review</li> </ul>	<p>In September 2018 we did a pilot for the Ambassador programme. Although feedback was incredibly positive from attendees, it was decided to postpone the programme due to necessity to focus on other programme areas.</p> <p>The findings will be used for future developments in this space.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Volunteer management needs resource</b>            Almost every attendee indicated that some of the challenges around volunteers were recruitment, retention/support and recognition, which is reflected in our survey findings. Attendees also indicated that what was stopping them from creating a great volunteer experience was 'time to do it' and 'enough resources'.</li> <li><b>2. Clarity needed around programmes</b>            There was confusion with staff and volunteers around the differences between Champions and Ambassadors. It was felt that Ambassadors had come too soon, prior to Champions being fully established.</li> </ol>





"...an opportunity to build a community to engage with one another and seek advice from peers."

## Online Community and Support

An online volunteer community bringing volunteers from across the country and in varying roles together to grow, learn, share and celebrate with one another.

Outputs	Outcomes	Lessons learnt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online community and identity created via Facebook platform</li> </ul>	<p><b>Engagement</b></p> <p>Direct access and engagement with over 1400 known volunteers within the sport.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Having a focussed community is positive</b></li> <p>Having a platform specifically for volunteers within the sport enables not only targeted messaging from the organisation, but more importantly an opportunity to build a community to engage with one another and seek advice from peers.</p> <li><b>2. Ensuring platform fits into the wider England Athletics strategy</b></li> <p>The need for the platform and brand to be integrated into the wider EA social strategy. This is currently being reviewed.</p> </ol>



# What's next for volunteering in athletics and running?

## Short and medium term

Several of the clubs and groups involved with the programme are planning to continue to involve and support people to volunteer. This might require more funding for some, which will be discussed and supported by their Regional Club Support Manager where possible.

For England Athletics, strategic planning for the next funding cycle (2021-2026) began in July 2019. The end of this programme has therefore come at a significant time when England Athletics looks to the future and where to focus resources around volunteering.

## Specifically, the following volunteer programmes and activities are continuing;

- **Volunteering Operational Group:** This will continue within the organisation, led by the Head of Club Support and Participation. This group will be instrumental in helping shape the future strategy for volunteering and in implementing short and medium plans linked to volunteering, such as recommendations following the Exploration Day.
- **Club Support projects:** There are several projects that will be delivered by the Club Support Team moving forwards that will directly impact on volunteering and culture change, especially the Club leadership programme and Club 360 project.
- **Marketing and communications plans:** Central to a new Marketing and Communications strategy is providing clubs with the resources and tools to equip them to provide a positive volunteering journey.

## Further recommendations for England Athletics

- From July 2019 there has not been a Volunteering lead within the organisation. We have and will continue embed the learnings across the whole organisation, especially within the club support work, programmes and services. We have integrating good practice and lessons learnt into programmes and activities at source. We consider this to be a pan organisation responsibility.
- Share, promote and live-out the Key Insights and principles with clubs and other volunteer-involving organisations. Ensure these are reflected across all areas of volunteer involvement, including coaching and officials work.
- Develop a suite of resources that support the principles, making them available via the Marketing portal and for Club Support Managers in their local delivery work.

# Thank you

England Athletics would like to thank everyone who has participated in and supported this programme.



**ATHLETICS AND RUNNING, FOR EVERYONE, FOREVER.**

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