



Rugby Football Union  
Spirit of Rugby  
Case Study  
Spirit of 2012

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction



The Spirit of Rugby is a two-year project that began in 2015 and seeks to inspire communities that were not previously engaged in Rugby. Funded by the Spirit of 2012, it is implemented by the Rugby Football Union (RFU) in 15 targeted communities, with a focus on 16-24 year olds. It seeks to use the inspiration of Rugby World Cup 2015, hosted by England, and the inclusion of Rugby Sevens in the 2016 Olympics and wheelchair rugby in the Paralympics to engage new communities in the sport of Rugby Union.

## Context

The Spirit of Rugby aims to increase involvement in rugby union through promoting and playing the game in hard to reach areas with hard to reach groups. Projects are designed and led by groups of 16-24 year olds, for 16-24 year olds. The volunteer groups design and lead projects within their communities, supported by RFU staff and project partners. The Spirit of Rugby works in the following locations: Birmingham, Bristol, Brighton, Cumbria, Croydon, Liverpool, Darlington, Exeter, Folkestone, Loughborough, Luton, Manchester, Northampton, Norfolk and Portsmouth.

## Mechanism

Each Spirit of Rugby project in the 15 locations is different, since they are led by different groups of volunteers, but all are expected to:

-  increase participation and volunteering in touch rugby, sevens, wheelchair rugby or the full contact game and
-  include other community focused projects with rugby at their heart, for example rugby inspired art installations or music activity.<sup>1</sup>

The programme also looks to provide learning opportunities for volunteers in the projects, for example work experience with RFU partners.

## Outcomes

Findings are presented against the four main Spirit of 2012 outcomes on which the Spirit of Rugby focuses. Additionally, all Spirit grantees aim to contribute to both participants and volunteers benefiting from a sense of increased well-being.

**Engaging volunteers:** Over the relatively short lifespan of the programme to date, 159 volunteers aged 16-24 have been recruited. The volunteering opportunities available at the Spirit of Rugby contain a high level of responsibility. Success factors include the projects' ability to recruit and motivate volunteers, set volunteer expectations and provide adequate support through lead volunteers, key stakeholders and Project Coordinators at the RFU.

**Empowering young people:** The Spirit of Rugby is succeeding in providing its volunteers with opportunities to develop skills, both on-the-job and through formal training. However, the Spirit

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<sup>1</sup> RFU Application for Funding, p4




of Rugby relies on its young volunteers to implement the programme, and retention rates can be a challenge.

**Social connectedness:** The 15 different projects have demonstrated mixed success in inspiring communities that were not previously engaged in Rugby. As of June 2016, the Spirit of Rugby volunteer groups have run a total of 70 activities with 2,681 participants. However, each project registers very different total numbers of project participants, from 0 to 800.

**Disability:** Three of the Spirit of Rugby projects include at least one disabled volunteer, but the impact of this participation on the disabled volunteers is unknown. Since only one Spirit of Rugby project focuses on the integration of disabled people in society through the use of rugby, it must be considered that the empowerment of disabled people is less of a prominent outcome for the programme.

## Recommendations

Based on the case study findings, three recommendations are presented:

-  In order to provide consistency and learning, it is recommended that the volunteer groups are tasked with documenting both processes and learnings from their projects. Further documentation of the programme could help with the challenge of high turnover rates and facilitate cross-group learning
-  The Spirit of Rugby could consider formalising the role of the lead volunteer to that of an intern, in order to standardise processes and potentially increase the consistency and direction of the projects
-  The Spirit of Rugby could consider charging some participants of the projects a small fee to be involved. This could improve the sustainability of the projects, increasing their chance of continuation after the Spirit of 2012 funding comes to an end.

# 1. Introduction

Spirit of 2012 (‘Spirit’) is a charitable Trust established in 2013 to build on the positive impact of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games. Spirit aims to use national and local events across the UK as catalysts to inspire social change by inspiring people to take part in sport, arts and cultural activities, with a particular focus on motivating young people.<sup>7</sup>

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This case study is part of Spirit’s External Evaluation. It aims to identify the main outcomes and impacts achieved by the Spirit-funded projects between the years of 2014 and 2017 and, where possible, determine a grantee’s individual contribution towards those goals. It also aims to identify lessons and draw recommendations for Spirit and other grantees on how to improve implementation, in order to increase impact.

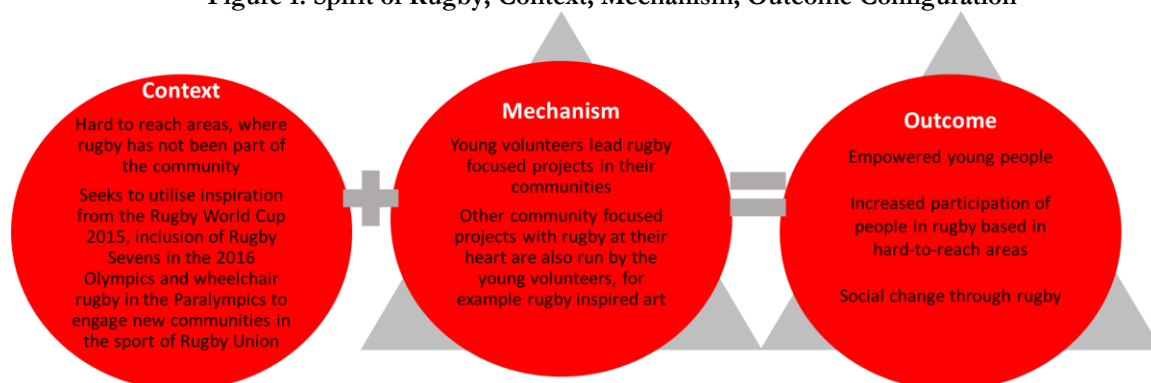
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The Spirit of Rugby is a two-year project that began in 2015 and seeks to inspire communities that were not previously engaged in Rugby. Funded by Spirit, it is implemented by the Rugby Football Union (RFU) in 15 targeted communities, with a focus on 16-24 year olds. It seeks to use the inspiration of Rugby World Cup 2015, hosted by England, and the inclusion of Rugby Sevens in the 2016 Olympics and wheelchair rugby in the Paralympics to engage new communities in the sport of Rugby Union.


## 1.1 Evaluation design and methods

The case study methodology is founded in an evidence-based approach known as ‘Context, Mechanisms, Outcomes’ (CMO)<sup>2</sup>. The approach consists of identifying the context in which an intervention operates, the mechanisms (or different activities) used to implement the intervention and how that configuration (context and mechanisms) worked to contribute to the outcomes. The aim of this case study is to provide a qualitative description of the contexts, mechanisms and outcomes demonstrated by the Spirit of Rugby, a grantee of Spirit, with a particular focus on the Croydon project. The Spirit of Rugby CMO configuration is illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Spirit of Rugby, Context, Mechanism, Outcome Configuration**



The evidence collected for this case study is drawn from the following:

-  Document review of information shared by the Spirit of Rugby

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<sup>2</sup> See Pawson and Tilley (2004) accessed from: [http://www.communitymatters.com.au/RE\\_chapter.pdf](http://www.communitymatters.com.au/RE_chapter.pdf)

- 🌈 Review of online information on the Spirit of Rugby, including websites and Facebook pages
- 🌈 Interview with a Programme Manager of Spirit of 2012
- 🌈 Interview with a Spirit of Rugby Project Coordinator, Rugby Football Union
- 🌈 Participant observation and informal discussion with participants at a 'TryFit featuring Glam Rugby' session organised by the Spirit of Rugby Croydon volunteers
- 🌈 Informal discussion with the organisers present at the 'TryFit featuring Glam Rugby' session, including 2 Spirit of Rugby staff members, 3 Spirit of Rugby Croydon volunteers and the coach for the session.

A full list of interviewees can be found in Annex 1.

All interview transcripts and notes have been analysed and coded against a set of CMO codes. The data was then brought together, in order to discuss the context in which the Spirit of Rugby works, the mechanisms or projects it implements and how these contribute to the targeted outcomes.

## 1.2 Limitations

This case study should not be seen as an organisational evaluation of the Spirit of Rugby. Rather, it is an in-depth study of selected initiatives implemented by the Spirit of Rugby, with funding from Spirit. Views portrayed by respondents are not necessarily representative of the views of other volunteers and participants.

Time and opportunity limited the number of KIIs that it was possible to conduct, while also ensuring good-practice research methods. This case study collected primary data from the Croydon project. Unfortunately, this project does not focus on disability, so no primary data has been collected regarding the empowerment of disabled people. We acknowledge that value could have been added if additional Spirit of Rugby projects could have been visited.

Finally, it is unfortunate that this case study was unable to speak with the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) partner for Spirit of Rugby – the Sport Industry Research Centre (SIRC) at Sheffield Hallam University, due to their availability constraints. Instead, all M&E documents shared have been reviewed.



**Croydon Spirit of Rugby project banner**

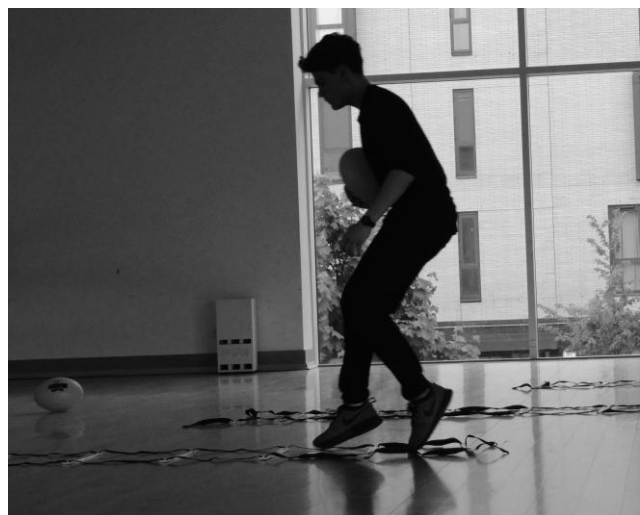
## 2. Context

### 2.1 Spirit of Rugby Background and Project Rationale

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) is the national governing body for grassroots and elite rugby in England<sup>3</sup>. The RFU designed and now implements the Spirit of Rugby project, which receives £750,000 from the Spirit of 2012. The total project budget is £1.2 million. The central project team is comprised of five senior staff and two Project Officers/ Interns. The Local Project Coordination Groups are comprised of Rugby Development Officers, Constituent Body Volunteers and personnel in Local Authorities of the host cities. The model for the programme is that the young volunteers within the Local Project Coordination Groups are supported through project development and implementation by the local RFU Rugby Development staff.

### 2.2 Key Project Details

The Spirit of Rugby is a two-year project that began in 2015 and seeks to inspire communities that were not previously engaged in Rugby. Funded by the Spirit of 2012, it is implemented by the Rugby Football Union (RFU) in 15 targeted communities, with a focus on 16-24 year olds. It seeks to use the inspiration of Rugby World Cup 2015, hosted by England, and the inclusion of Rugby Sevens in the 2016 Olympics and wheelchair rugby in the Paralympics to engage new communities in the sport of Rugby Union.



**TryFit featuring Glam Rugby session in Croydon,  
Waddon Leisure Centre**

The Spirit of Rugby aims to increase involvement in rugby union through promoting and playing the game in hard to reach areas with hard to reach groups<sup>4</sup>. Projects are designed and led by groups of 16-24 year olds, for 16-24 year olds in their local communities. The experience of the RFU's National Youth Council (a group of twelve 16-24 year olds) and its national network of 1,000 Young Rugby Ambassadors is being drawn upon to provide insights into the challenges that this group faces in getting involved in rugby<sup>5</sup>. The young volunteer groups seek to devise new and innovative solutions in order to engage groups who aren't traditionally engaged in rugby. The young volunteer groups then implement the projects within their communities, supported by RFU Rugby Development staff.

The Spirit of Rugby works with local partners, which provide insight into the 15 communities in order to understand the local context and specific challenges faced. The local partners include community groups, country sports partnerships, universities and local rugby clubs, who support the volunteers with their projects.




The Spirit of Rugby is working in the following geographical areas:

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.englandrugby.com/about-the-rfu/>

<sup>4</sup> Please see: <http://www.englandrugby.com/my-rugby/volunteers/spiritofrugby/>, accessed on 18.07.2016





<sup>5</sup> RFU Application for Funding, p1

-  Five projects in Rugby World Cup host cities: Manchester, Birmingham, Brighton, Exeter and Croydon
-  Five projects in Rugby World Cup Team Base locations (that aren't also Host Cities): Darlington, Loughborough, Northampton, Bristol, Portsmouth
-  Five Communities geographically isolated from Rugby World Cup Host Cities: Cumbria, Folkstone, Liverpool, Luton, Norfolk.

The locations were selected using population numbers for the 16-25 age group, pre-existing relationships with key stakeholders, a readiness to work in a new area and other factors<sup>6</sup>.

## 2.3 Spirit of Rugby Programme Outcomes

In the initial application to the Spirit of 2012, RFU envisaged that the Spirit of Rugby would contribute to all eight Spirit of 2012 outcomes. Since then however, it has been realised that some of the outcomes are more relevant than others (Spirit interviewee). Therefore, the main outcomes that the Spirit of Rugby contributes to are:

-  Engaging volunteers: More people volunteer and engage in their community
-  Empowering young people: The potential of young people to be agents for change is unlocked and demonstrated
-  Social connectedness: People feel more engaged in their local community and have a true sense of pride in the contribution they make to it
-  Disability: Positive change in the perception of disabled people in communities

Additionally, all Spirit grantees aim to contribute to both participants and volunteers benefiting from increased well-being.



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<sup>6</sup> Spirit of Rugby Quarterly Monitoring Report October 2015-December 2015



### 3. Mechanism

Each Spirit of Rugby project in the 15 locations is different, since they are led by different groups of volunteers, but all are expected to:

-  increase participation and volunteering in touch rugby, sevens, wheelchair rugby or the full contact game and
-  include other community focused projects with rugby at their heart, for example rugby inspired art installations or music activity<sup>7</sup>.

An important mechanism of the programme is that it facilitates young people to take on leadership positions and get involved in running projects. Each volunteer group running the project is set a budget, towards which it is expected to secure local partnership funding. As stated in the RFU Application for funding, page 9:

*“We strongly believe that by allowing young people to take on leadership roles within rugby which can showcase their ability and talent we will start a shift in perception of the place of young people within our sport”.*

Therefore, the programme also looks to provide learning opportunities for volunteers in the projects, for example work experience with RFU partners. This allows the young people to develop skills and use what they have learnt within the project they lead. Through this method of working with young people, the Spirit of Rugby also aims to improve perceptions of young people within communities.

The 15 Spirit of Rugby projects are summarised in annex 2.

#### 3.1 The Spirit of Rugby in Croydon

The programme in Croydon is designed and run by five volunteers in the target population group of 16-24 year olds, working in their local community.

The Spirit of Rugby initially did some research into whether women and girls may be interested in trying rugby and their research found that this group was put off because of the perception that it was rough, dirty and had to be played outdoors in the cold. Therefore, the idea of this project is to take rugby inside and make it about fitness and fun. The ultimate aim is to increase participation in rugby union, particularly for hard-to-reach groups such as young women. As stated in a one-page description of the project,

*“The focus is on increasing participation in rugby and general physical activity for 16-24 year women and girls in Croydon”.*

#### **TryFit featuring Glam Rugby**

One of the Spirit of Rugby Croydon volunteers came up with the idea of a pop-up gym and the name given to the sessions was ‘TryFit featuring Glam Rugby’. The volunteer group decided to run four pilot sessions in April/ May, to test what works, then roll out the training programme in the summer holidays of 2016. The pilot sessions took place at Waddon leisure centre in Croydon. To date, the sessions have all been free to attend and each session runs for one hour. The group

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p4

has hired a paid fitness instructor within the target age range of 16-24, who leads fitness sessions based on the skills required for rugby. The sessions aim to spark an interest in rugby through teaching the skills needed for the sport.



**TryFit featuring Glam Rugby session in Croydon, Waddon Leisure Centre**

The Spirit of Rugby recognises that there was not much focus on marketing and advertising the pilot sessions. These sessions were seen as a test, to try out what works and who may attend. The promotion that was done may be described as traditional marketing, putting up posters and handing out leaflets. The event was advertised at the leisure centre and, in the entrance of the centre, a clear stand could be seen advertising the sessions. Some posters were put up in local shops such as Morrisons. There was also some advertising of the sessions on social media, although the Spirit of Rugby did not use this medium to advertise as much as other groups funded by Spirit.

### **Arts inspired by rugby**

The second component of the Spirit of Rugby in Croydon is about using arts inspired by rugby to increase awareness of the sport and specific big events<sup>8</sup>. This component is separate and has not yet begun, but the aim is to kick it off around the Rio Olympics in August 2016. Ideas to date have included a graffiti wall competition and poetry competition.

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<sup>8</sup> Spirit of Rugby Croydon document

## 4. Outcomes

In the initial application to the Spirit of 2012, RFU envisaged that the Spirit of Rugby would contribute to all eight Spirit of 2012 outcomes. However, according to a Spirit interviewee, it has since then been realised that some of the outcomes are more relevant than others. Therefore, the main outcomes that the Spirit of Rugby contributes to are:

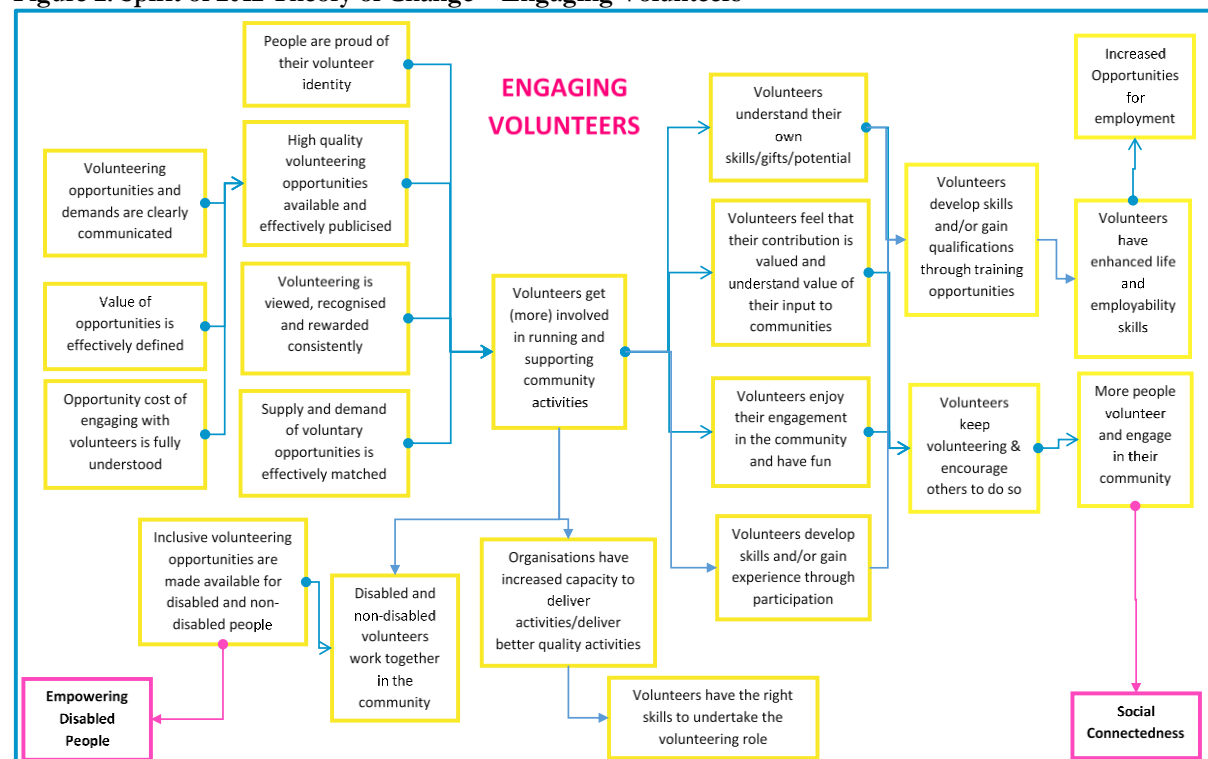
- 🌈 **Engaging volunteers:** More people volunteer and engage in their community
- 🌈 **Empowering young people:** The potential of young people to be agents for change is unlocked and demonstrated
- 🌈 **Social connectedness:** People feel more engaged in their local community and have a **true sense of pride in the contribution they make to it.**
- 🌈 **Disability:** Positive change in the perception of disabled people in communities

Additionally, all Spirit grantees aim to contribute to both participants and volunteers benefiting from increased well-being.

### 4.1 Engaging volunteers

A key mechanism of the Spirit of Rugby is that projects are designed and led by volunteers. Figure 2 shows the outcomes pathway for this specific thematic area.

Figure 2: Spirit of 2012 Theory of Change – Engaging Volunteers



The numbers of volunteers engaged to date can be viewed in table 1, and information on volunteer turnover and training can be found in table 2.

**Table 1: Cumulative Numbers of Volunteers Engaged in the Spirit of Rugby**

Date	As of 22 Oct 2015	As of 2 Feb 2016	As of Apr 2016	As of June 2016	Currently active
Number of Volunteers	93	105	144	159	100

**Table 2: Information on Volunteer Turnover and Training**

	Joined in the last 3 months	Left in the last 3 months	In receipt of training	Trained and deployed
Number of Volunteers	21	11	26	13

The total number of volunteers who have been engaged in the programme has increased since October 2015, as shown in table 1. As of June 2016, there are 159 volunteers within the programme (SIRC Spirit of Rugby Quarterly Report, June 2016). Since there are 15 Spirit of Rugby projects in different locations, the average number of volunteers per location who implement the projects is almost 11. Therefore, the programme has certainly recruited a high number of volunteers over its relatively short lifetime to date.

Volunteers for the Croydon project were recruited at the beginning of 2015. Rather than being from the local area, it was actually an existing volunteer in Manchester who became the first committed young person volunteer, who then moved down to Croydon in September 2015. In order to find other volunteers, adverts were put out through housing associations, plus a recruitment agency was used that had better access to the college. Four new volunteers began working on the project in January 2016; 2 were recruited from Croydon college, two were recruited through housing associations. Therefore, there are now five volunteers implementing the Croydon project in total.

Within the Spirit of 2012 outcome pathway, the following outcome can be found:

**High quality volunteering opportunities available and effectively publicised and volunteers get (more) involved in running and supporting community activities.**

The volunteering opportunities available at the Spirit of Rugby contain a high level of responsibility. The young person volunteer groups are tasked with designing and marketing their own projects, sourcing the required resources, implementing the projects within their communities and managing the budget. In the last quarterly monitoring report of the M&E partner of the Spirit of Rugby, SIRC, the following quote from a lead volunteer is included:

*“Some of the volunteers who have been involved have had high expectations in terms of being told what to do. They seem to think that they'll just be asked to turn up, do a simple job and go home, but we're asking them to plan things and they don't necessarily know how to do that. Then when we didn't get as many participants as we'd hoped for, they were demotivated by that”.*

- SIRC Spirit of Rugby Quarterly Report June 2016, p32



The view of this lead volunteer underlines the slow start that was seen for some of the Spirit of Rugby projects, and demonstrates the importance of setting expectations for new volunteers and providing adequate support from the outset. The lead volunteers play a key role in this expectation setting and support. An anecdotally reported success factor for engagement of the volunteers is the participation of a mentor or key stakeholder in the same age demographic as the volunteers, who can dedicate time in their working week to focus on understanding and supporting the project (Spirit of Rugby Quarterly Report, October-December 2015). Finally, two Spirit of Rugby Project Coordinators were recruited in 2015 and the programme's last quarterly monitoring report notes the unexpected finding that having dedicated Project Coordinators who get to know the volunteers on a more personal level has been invaluable. It was found that these project coordinators are able to collect and feedback information and understanding from and to the volunteers; information that it is not possible to collect through more formal monitoring and evaluation tools.

The Spirit of Rugby projects with a greater chance of success are those that are able to recruit and motivate volunteers, set volunteer expectations and provide adequate support through lead volunteers, key stakeholders and Project Coordinators at the RFU. When these elements are in place, the volunteers should be able to make the most of the responsibility that has been afforded to them, gaining experience in areas that interest them and working with commercial organisations such as branding agencies or sports organisations to implement the projects.

Leading on from the previously discussed outcome, the next Spirit of 2012 outcome in the pathway is:

**Volunteers enjoy their engagement in the community and have fun, feeling that their contribution is valued and understanding the importance of their input to communities leading to more people volunteering and engaging in their community.**

The baseline report for SIRC has recently been produced, compiled from a survey that was completed by 100 Spirit of Rugby volunteers. Questions covered the Spirit outcome areas and included:

-  Please rate how engaged you generally feel with your local community
-  Please rate how proud you feel of your contribution to your community

It is reported that nearly three quarters of volunteers feel engaged with their community and 71 per cent feel a sense of pride at their contribution to the community (SIRC Spirit of Rugby Quarterly Report June 2016, p4). Therefore, the majority (71 per cent) of volunteers feel that their contribution to society is valued, and it will be interesting to note whether or not this percentage increases at the endline survey.

The impression of the evaluator from visiting a TryFit session in Croydon and speaking with the volunteers is that they very much enjoy running the fitness sessions and as well as planning the sessions, they also make an effort to attend them. At the last pilot TryFit session that was visited, three out of the five volunteers were present, plus the young person coach. The volunteers got involved in the exercise class in order to make up numbers, and stated that they enjoy volunteering



TryFit featuring Glam Rugby session, Waddon Leisure Centre, Croydon

for the Spirit of Rugby. One of the volunteers in Croydon was recently persuaded to get involved by his friend, who was an existing Spirit of Rugby volunteer. Therefore, there is also evidence that the volunteers in Croydon are promoting the benefits of volunteering to other young people within their networks, which is encouraging others to volunteer.

Finally, the Spirit of 2012 outcome pathway specifies the following higher level outcome for volunteers:

#### Increased opportunities for employment

The Spirit of Rugby deliberately aims to provide its volunteers with increased opportunities for employment. According to a Time Bank survey of 700 UK volunteers aged 16-24, over two thirds see volunteering as a way to enhance their career prospects<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, over half those surveyed claimed that volunteering helped them to secure a job. However, the Spirit of Rugby programme relies on its young volunteers to implement the programme. Therefore, if volunteer retention is an issue, the sustainability of the programme mechanism could be called into question.

As of April 2016, the programme's volunteer retention rate was 68 per cent (Dashboard Summary, April 2016). A turnover rate of 32 per cent is considered relatively high, although to be expected for a volunteer programme working with young people. The latest SIRC quarterly monitoring report states the following:

*"Generally, there is evidence of continued turnover among the volunteers, though this has stabilised significantly since January with the recruitment of new teams in Luton and Folkestone".*

- SIRC Spirit of Rugby Quarterly Monitoring Report, June 2016, p5

High turnover rates are not preferable because it means that RFU must heavily invest in recruitment, and the knowledge and experience gained by the volunteers who then go on to secure paid employment is lost. In Croydon, for example, there is a challenge of volunteer retention (RFU interviewee). As the SIRC June quarterly monitoring report states, "Croydon's progress to date has been hindered by a continual need to recruit new volunteers as members found paid employment or lost interest in the work of the group" (SIRC Spirit of Rugby Quarterly Monitoring

<sup>9</sup> <http://timebank.org.uk/key-facts>, accessed on 19/07/2016

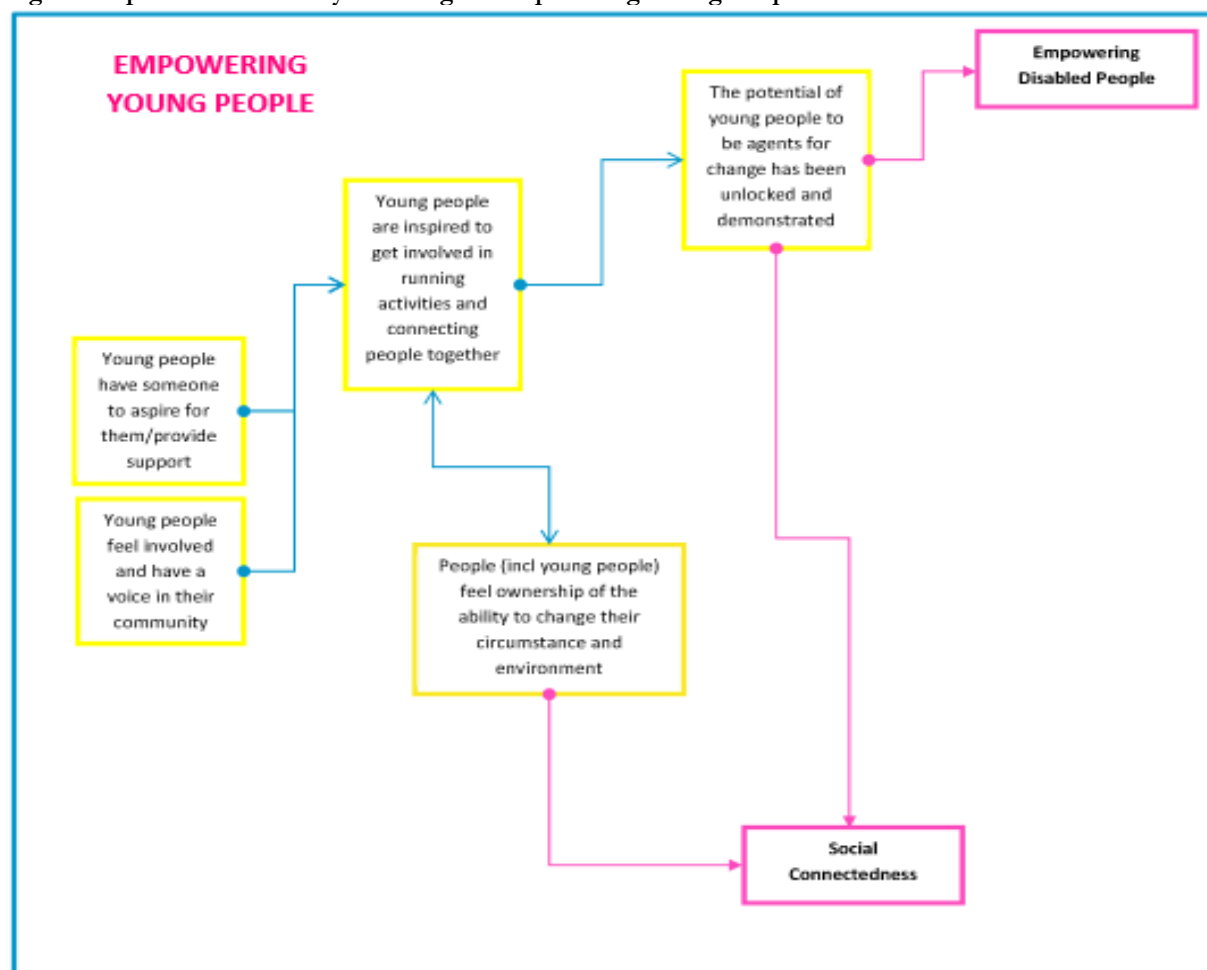
Report, June 2016, p10). Therefore, the Croydon project anticipates needing to find new volunteers again in due course.

However, some volunteer groups have started to notice this challenge and come up with some mitigation measures. The SIRC report provides the example of the volunteer group in Bedfordshire that has given thought not only to how they will recruit their replacements, but also how they will manage the process of handing over their responsibilities. This measure is a positive example of a way to deal with high turnover rates, although it will not itself reduce the turnover rate. The Spirit of Rugby could consider ways to reduce turnover rates or the impact of high turnover rates, for example paying the lead volunteer a salary to encourage commitment or specifying that volunteer groups must document processes, in order to avoid the total loss of programme memory.

## 4.2 Empowering young people

Figure 3 shows the outcomes pathway for this specific thematic area.

Figure 3: Spirit of 2012 Theory of Change – Empowering Young People



The main outcome that the Spirit of 2012 outcome pathway includes under ‘empowering young people’ is as follows:

**Young people feel ownership of the ability to change their circumstance and environment, feel involved and have a voice in their community inspiring them to get involved in running activities and connecting people together.**



As section 4.1 demonstrates, the Spirit of Rugby is succeeding in involving young people in projects as volunteers. In turn, the young people are provided with opportunities to develop skills, both on-the-job and through formal training. Of the total 159 volunteers in the programme (of which 100 are currently active), 13 young people have been trained and deployed and 26 are in receipt of training (please refer to table 2). Therefore, around 40 per cent of the currently active volunteers have received some form of professional training.

Many volunteers feel empowered from the volunteering and that their contribution to society is valued. Nevertheless, only 40 per cent of the baseline survey respondents felt that their views are heard by members of the community (SIRC Spirit of Rugby Quarterly Report June 2016, p4). It will be interesting to see whether this percentage changes at the endline, as this could give an indication as to whether the programme is empowering the volunteers and influencing their relations with community members.

There appear to be some success factors that affect the empowerment of young people in the programme. Firstly, it has been noted in quarterly monitoring reports that the young volunteers are keen to learn from each other. Volunteers attending a recent programme event in Birmingham stated that one of their primary reasons for getting involved in the project was to learn from other projects (SIRC Spirit of Rugby Quarterly Report June 2016, p34). It has been learnt that connecting volunteers nationally has required a high level of support from RFU and taken longer than expected. However, after the second national learning event, more connections have been made on the closed Facebook group and a handful of volunteer groups have connected to support each other's projects on their own initiative (Spirit of Rugby Quarterly Monitoring Report, April - July 2016).

Secondly, it has been learnt that role models can have a large impact on the motivation of volunteers, as the latest quarterly monitoring report states, "we found that bringing in athletes with direct experience and links to Rio 2016 is a positive way to engage the volunteers" Spirit of Rugby Quarterly Report, April – July 2016 (p8). It was found that the use of role models creates a tangible connection to the Olympic games.

Finally, it is reported that the volunteer groups that have created a brand demonstrate increased levels of both motivation and success. It is stated that:

*"We have seen an increase in levels of motivation from groups that have created a brand. We believe this is due to the group seeing a tangible result from their work that they have had complete control over".*  
- Spirit of Rugby Quarterly Monitoring Report, October – December 2015, p8

Interestingly, it is reported that four projects have spent in excess of £1,000 on branding and marketing and these projects have, on average, attracted 31 people per event, which is more than double the portfolio average (Dashboard Summary, April 2016). Therefore, higher levels of branding and marketing spend appears to have been a catalyst for the success of these four projects so far, compared with those projects that have spent less on marketing and branding.

In Croydon, the volunteer group found that they were not reaching their target audience with TryFit featuring glam rugby. The group felt that they had the enthusiasm to promote the exercise session but lacked marketing skills. Therefore, they decided to work with a branding agency, with

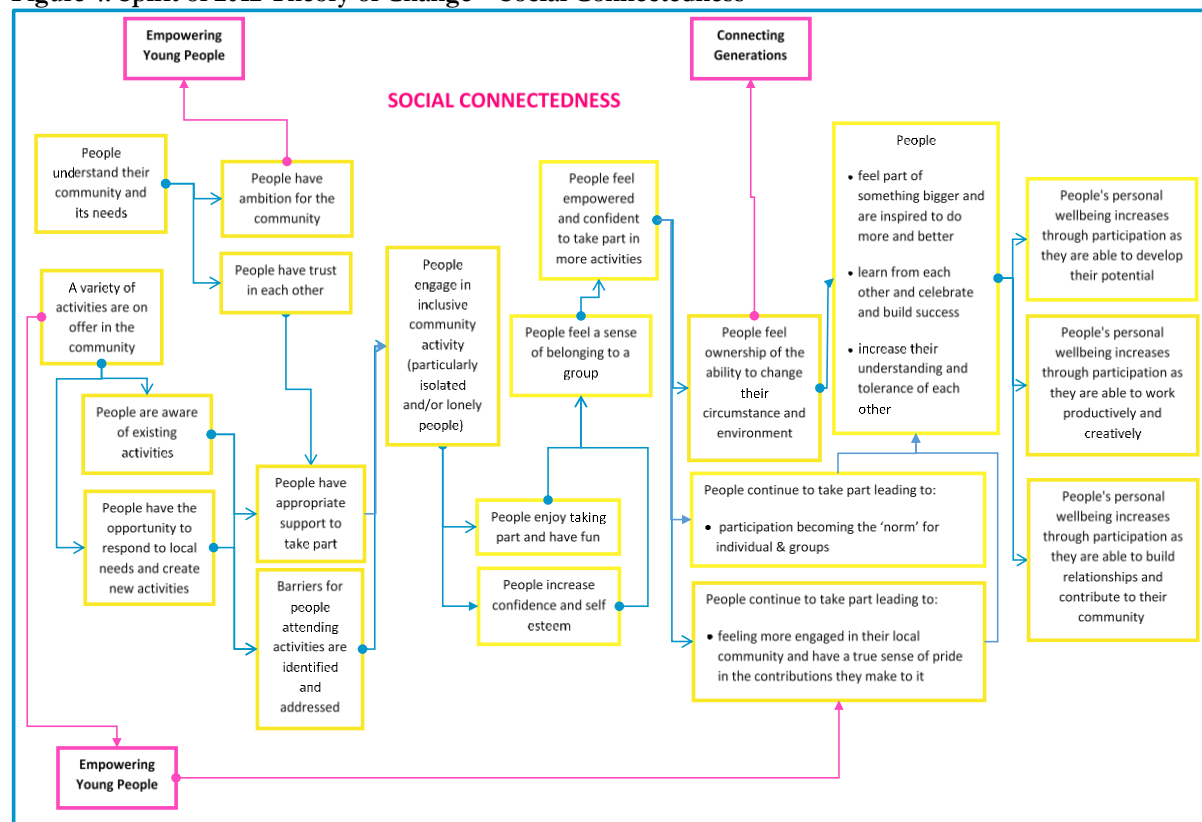


the idea that if they contracted out the branding initially and learnt in the process then perhaps, in the future, they would be able to take on more of the marketing themselves. The volunteers came up with a branding brief and employed Crayon Creative to come up with some designs. The volunteers jointly decided on the logo featured opposite, and all promotional material and products now clearly show this logo. The group is now focussing on marketing and promotion, and have employed a firm to work with on this. Now that the Croydon volunteer group has spent a larger amount on marketing and branding, it will be interesting to monitor whether they see a higher participation rate, as has been found with the four other Spirit of Rugby projects.

### 4.3 Social connectedness

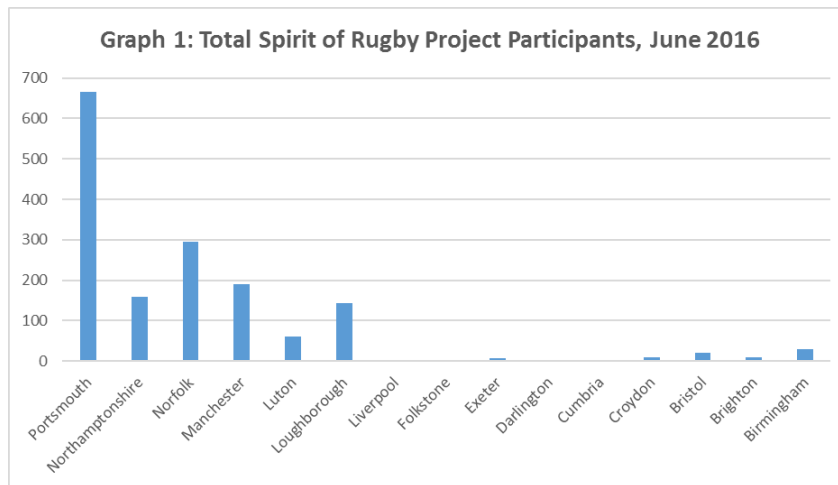
The Spirit of 2012 outcome pathway for social connectedness relates both to empowering young people and to connecting young people with community members. Figure 4 shows the outcomes pathway for this specific thematic area.

Figure 4: Spirit of 2012 Theory of Change – Social Connectedness



Since section 4.2 of this case study focuses on empowering young people, this section concentrates on the following outcome within the pathway:

**Isolated or lonely people take part in activities and have fun, increasing their confidence and self-esteem, and their feelings of empowerment and confidence to take part in more activities.**



As explained in section 2.1, the Spirit of Rugby is implemented by groups of 16-24 year olds, for 16-24 year olds in their local communities. The project locations were chosen because they are hard to reach areas; the projects aim to engage groups who are not traditionally engaged in rugby.

The participation rates for the Spirit of Rugby may be seen as proxy indicators for their levels of social connectedness. As of June 2016, the Spirit of Rugby volunteer groups have run a total of 70 activities with 1,594 participants (please see graph 1), which equates to an average of 23 per event (information shared by the Spirit of 2012). However, each project registers very different total numbers of project participants. Five out of the fifteen report 100 or more participants in total to date, with Portsmouth reporting an impressive total of 665 participants. The ten other Spirit of Rugby projects report less than 100 participants (although the reported participation in Cumbria was much higher, it was not possible to verify the figure, so it has been set to none). Folkestone and Darlington have not been able to involve any participants to date.

The Croydon project registers 10 participants in the activities to date. This is in line with the information collected during the site visit to a TryFit featuring Glam Rugby session on 18th May. At this session, there were four participants present. Despite the target age-range of 16-25, three of the four participants fell into the age category of 40-60 years' old. Therefore, the pilot session in Croydon did not reach its target population of hard-to-reach groups of young people, and the total participants recorded to date has been low.

The Spirit of Rugby aim to engage groups who are not traditionally engaged in rugby. At the pilot session of TryFit featuring Glam Rugby in Croydon, all four participants had never previously attended a session. When asked why they came, one participant stated that it was at a convenient time and in a good location, two others stated that they thought they would try the session before taking part in another aerobics session, and the other participant came on the recommendation of one of the volunteers. The participants present did not previously realise that the sessions would draw on elements of rugby. When they realised this, they were slightly apprehensive about the sessions, with one person stating, "I hope we don't have to tackle anyone". Another participant had been informed of the session through a Spirit of Rugby volunteer, yet she also stated, "I didn't really know what to expect". It was noted by a Spirit of Rugby Croydon interviewee that some lessons had been learnt during the pilot, such as the need to more clearly communicate what the sessions are about.

In terms of the effect of participation on those who were involved in the pilot TryFit featuring Glam Rugby session, no participant stated that they had learnt anything about rugby, and did not seem particularly interesting in doing so. Nevertheless, the class did appear to be enjoyable and pitched at the right level for those who were present. If more young people were in attendance, it

is possible that the pace and intensity of the class would need to be altered. The participants at the pilot session took part in the activities and had fun. It is unknown whether their participation in the session helped to increase their confidence, self-esteem and empowerment to take part in more activities, more research of a longitudinal nature would be needed in order to assess this.

The Croydon volunteers decided that the pilot fitness sessions would be free to attend and, at the time of data collection, the plan was also to make the summer sessions free to attend. The reason for this is explained in Spirit of Rugby Quarterly Report:

*“In the Croydon project one volunteer suggested that the reason more young people don’t participate in sport is the cost, so ensuring activity is free at the point of use was a key insight they want to promote”.*

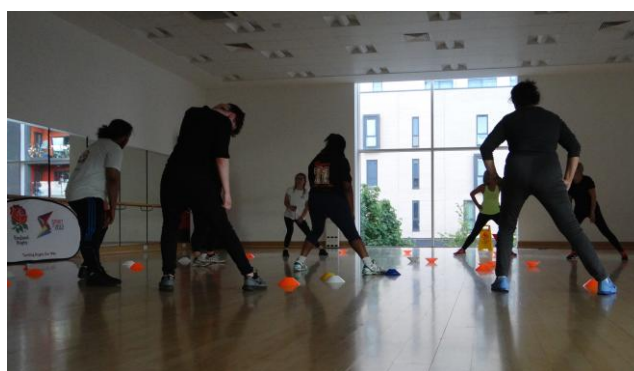
*- Spirit of Rugby Quarterly Report, April – July 2016, p5*

Whilst it is recognised that the cost of participation can be a barrier for young people to participate in a sports activity, the sustainability of the approach of running free exercise classes should be considered. If sessions are always free to attend, then they will run only whilst Spirit of Rugby funding is available. However, in the longer term, if a small fee were to be charged then it could be financially viable to keep the exercise classes running after Spirit of Rugby funding has stopped. If this approach were to be taken, it is recognised that there would need to be careful consideration of how to implement a pricing structure. For example, in order to encourage the target population to participate, sessions could be free for 16-25 year olds, whilst those above 25 years’ could be charged. Market research would be needed in order to test the viability of any charging structures.

Finally, it is encouraging to note that some volunteer groups appear to be learning more about targeted marketing. The latest quarterly monitoring report states the following:

*“The groups are increasingly taking their events to their target populations, as opposed to expecting participants to come to them” (SIRC Spirit of Rugby Quarterly Report June 2016, p34).*

As discussed in section 4.2, if volunteer groups can focus more of their efforts on branding and marketing (both in budget and time) then it is possible that greater participation rates will be demonstrated. Some volunteer groups are already demonstrating high participation rates, such as Croydon and Portsmouth. If the volunteer groups also consider how to actively engage their target audiences then social connections may be made within communities, contributing to social connectedness outcomes.

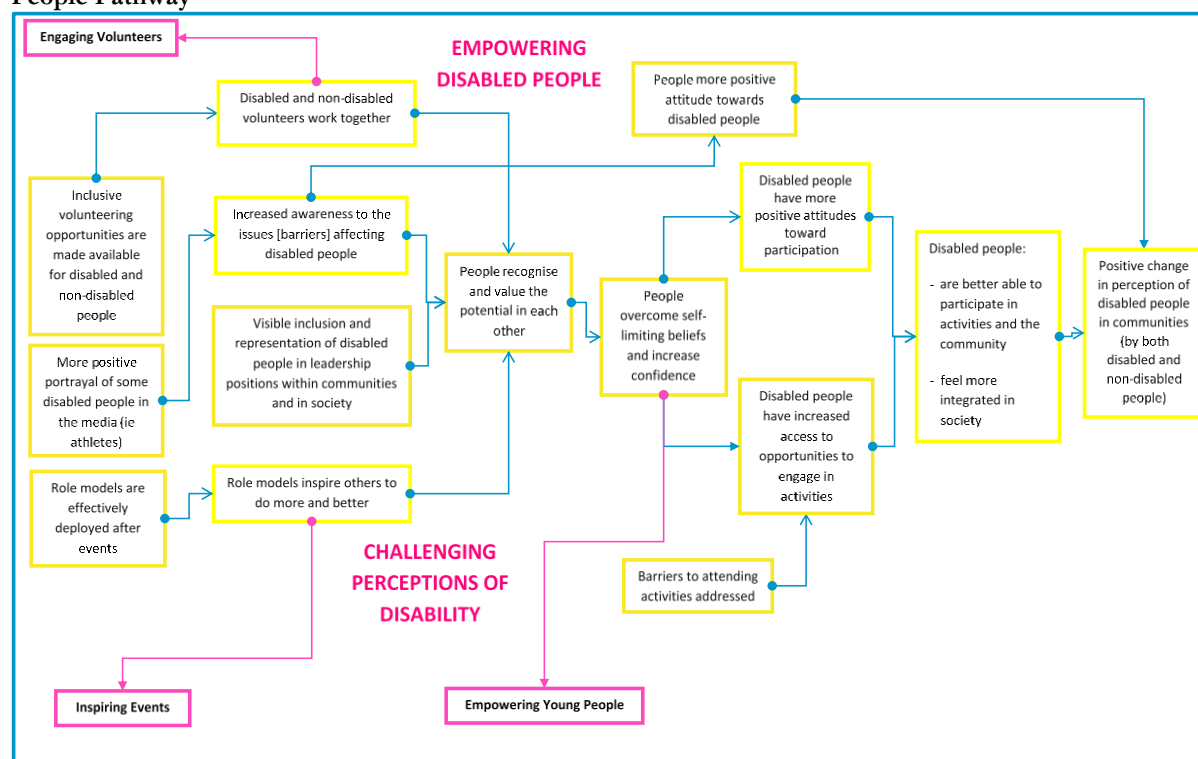


**TryFit featuring Glam Rugby session in Croydon at Waddon Leisure Centre**

## 4.4 Disability

Figure 5 shows the outcomes pathway for this specific thematic area.

**Figure 5: Spirit of 2012 Theory of Change – Challenging Perceptions of Disability and Empowering Disabled People Pathway**



In the Spirit of Rugby programme, empowering disabled people relates both to empowering disabled volunteers and empowering disabled members of the community. With regards to empowering disabled volunteers, three of the Spirit of Rugby projects include at least one disabled volunteer (SIRC Spirit of Rugby Report, June 2016). However, the impact of this participation on the disabled volunteers is unknown.

In terms of empowering disabled members of the community, the only Spirit of Rugby project for which this is currently a focus is Brighton. As stated in the SIRC report:

*“The Spirit of Brighton project ‘try it’ is focusing on raising awareness of disability sport, specifically wheelchair and mixed ability rugby within the Brighton area through events and taster sessions”.*

- SIRC Spirit of Rugby Report, June 2016, p8

To date (June 2016), the Brighton project has registered a total of 9 participants (please see graph 1). Since only one Spirit of Rugby project focuses on the integration of disabled people in society through the use of rugby, it must be considered that the empowerment of disabled people is less of a prominent outcome for the programme.

## 5. Conclusions

**Engaging volunteers:** Over the relatively short lifespan of the programme to date, a high number (159) of volunteers aged 16-24 have been recruited to implement the Spirit of Rugby projects in 15 locations. The volunteering opportunities available at the Spirit of Rugby contain a high level of responsibility. Whilst a slow start was seen for some of the Spirit of Rugby projects, success factors include the projects' ability to recruit and motivate volunteers, set volunteer expectations and provide adequate support through lead volunteers, key stakeholders and Project Coordinators at the RFU. When these elements are in place, the volunteers should be able to make the most of the responsibility that has been afforded to them, gaining experience in areas that interest them and working with commercial organisations such as branding agencies or sports organisations to implement the projects.

**Empowering young people:** The Spirit of Rugby is succeeding in providing its volunteers with opportunities to develop skills, both on-the-job and through formal training. Around 40 per cent of the currently active volunteers have received some form of professional training. It has been found that volunteers are keen to learn from each other and that role models can provide inspiration, having a large impact on the motivation of the volunteers.

However, the Spirit of Rugby programme relies on its young volunteers to implement the programme and as of April 2016, the volunteer retention rate was 68 per cent. Whilst the Spirit of Rugby deliberately aims to provide its volunteers with increased opportunities for employment, high turnover rates are not preferable because it means that RFU must heavily invest in recruitment, and the knowledge and experience gained by the volunteers who then go on to secure paid employment is lost. At least one volunteer group is, therefore, considering how to recruit replacement volunteers and how to manage the process of handing over responsibilities.

**Social connectedness:** The 15 different projects have demonstrated mixed success in inspiring communities that were not previously engaged in Rugby. The participation rates for the Spirit of Rugby may be seen as proxy indicators for their levels of social connectedness. As of June 2016, the Spirit of Rugby volunteer groups have run a total of 70 activities with 2,681 participants. However, each project registers very different total numbers of project participants, from 0 to 800.

It is reported that the volunteer groups that have concentrated more time and budget on branding and marketing demonstrate increased levels of success. Four of the fifteen projects have spent in excess of £1,000 on branding and marketing and these projects have, on average, attracted 31 people per event, which is more than double the portfolio average. Therefore, higher levels of branding and marketing spend appears to have been a catalyst for higher participation rates of these four projects.

**Disability:** Three of the Spirit of Rugby projects include at least one disabled volunteer but the impact of this participation on the disabled volunteers is unknown. Since only one Spirit of Rugby project focuses on the integration of disabled people in society through the use of rugby, it must be considered that the empowerment of disabled people is less of a prominent outcome for the programme.

## 6. Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** In order to provide consistency and learning, it is recommended that the volunteer groups are tasked with documenting both processes and learnings from their projects. The appointment of an M&E partner for the programme is a welcome development. Further documentation of the programme could help with the challenge of high turnover rates, as new volunteers would be able to read up on the project's institutional history. It could also facilitate cross-group learning. For example, if a volunteer group wrote a short piece on what they have learnt so far, this piece could be shared with the other groups through social media and presented at one of the national learning events.

**Recommendation 2:** In order to tackle the challenge of high turnover rates, the Spirit of Rugby could consider formalising the role of the lead volunteer to that of an intern, and providing them with a salary. The job descriptions for one lead intern per project could be specified and their roles formalised. The idea behind this measure is that it could standardise processes and increase the commitment of the lead volunteer. If possible, the intern would have more experience than the other volunteers, and the ability to guide and support the volunteer group. Whilst the measure may not reduce turnover rates overall, it would provide some consistency and direction within the projects.

**Recommendation 3:** For sustainability purposes, the Spirit of Rugby could consider charging some participants of the projects a small fee to be involved. This may not be appropriate in all cases. However, the Croydon project is running an exercise class, and participants of exercise classes would usually expect to pay to be involved. Taking care not to exclude the target age group, the Spirit of Rugby in Croydon could introduce a fee structure whereby those who can afford to pay to participate do and those who cannot afford to don't. This could improve the sustainability of the project, providing the opportunity for projects to keep running after the Spirit of 2012 funding comes to an end.

## Appendix 1: List of Interviewees

Role and Organisation	Name	Date
Programme Manager of Spirit of 2012	Harris Lorie	21/03/2016
Spirit of Rugby Project Coordinator, Rugby Football Union	Joanna Loughlin	26/05/2016
Participant observation and informal discussion with the 4 participants present at a 'TryFit featuring Glam Rugby' session		18/05/2016
Informal discussion with the organisers present at the 'TryFit featuring Glam Rugby' session, including:		18/05/2016
Chief Executive, Spirit of 2012	Debbie Lye	18/05/2016
Spirit of Rugby Project Coordinator, Rugby Football Union	Joanna Loughlin	18/05/2016
Volunteer Engagement Manager, Rugby Football Union	Jenny Box	18/05/2016
Coach for 'TryFit featuring Glam Rugby'	Charlie	18/05/2016
Spirit of Rugby Croydon Volunteer	Laura Stansfield	18/05/2016
Spirit of Rugby Croydon Volunteer	Sam	18/05/2016
Spirit of Rugby Croydon Volunteer	Nathan	18/05/2016



## Appendix 2: Spirit of Rugby Project Descriptions

Location	Project Description <sup>10</sup>
Birmingham	Under the group name 'Touch 4 Life' the volunteers aim to increase opportunities for their peers through small grant opportunities and a social media campaign #SaveDave to raise awareness of rugby in a football focused area.
Bristol	Bringing rugby and all the opportunities it provides to a socially deprived urban area of Bristol, aiming to tackle anti-social behaviour and increasing social cohesion.
Brighton	Focusing on raising awareness of disability sport, specifically wheelchair and mixed ability rugby within the Brighton area, through events and taster sessions.
Cumbria	'TriSpirit'- Introducing Tag Rugby to the Air Cadets throughout Lancashire and Cumbria. The volunteers will do this through the creation of a Cadet specific rugby publication, kit drops and coaching training for their cadets.
Croydon	Spirit of Rugby volunteers are targeting women and girls with new free fitness focused rugby sessions called GlamRugby, housed within a free pop up gym. The sessions provide a route into fitness and sport for young people in the area who currently might not have access to facilities or appropriate teams.
Liverpool	Spirit of Rugby is organising four events in the city to coincide with major rugby events. The first event was a 'City Takeover' in early April to capitalise on the interest generated from the Six Nations.
Darlington	The 'Scrum Down Scrub Up' project is looking to break down misconceptions that you have to be 'manly' to play rugby, providing introductory rugby sessions in combination with beauty therapies from the local nail bar.
Exeter	The Spirit of Rugby volunteers are working with the local rugby club network to provide a voucher system for new players to the game, in order to promote rugby and create local partnership links between the college, university and clubs.
Folkstone	Spirit of Rugby volunteers are running a series of beach rugby events to bring rugby to isolated communities on the coast.
Loughborough	The Spirit of Rugby 'Pass it On' project is split into four strands: Playing, Coaching, Volunteering, Spectating. The group aims to get young people engaged in rugby, ranging from paid coaching qualifications to incentives such as trips to Premiership games.
Luton	Luton have a two-pronged approach to their Spirit of Rugby activity. The first is focused on increasing rugby participation in the South Asian university community at the University of Bedfordshire through touch rugby, while also working with local colleges and 6 <sup>th</sup> forms to introduce rugby to 16-18 year olds, with the aim of reducing anti-social behaviour.
Manchester	Split into two strands, the Spirit of Rugby volunteers are working with university students and Manchester's Village Spartans, a local LGBT and

<sup>10</sup> From: <http://www.englandrugby.com/my-rugby/volunteers/spiritofrugby/>, access on 19/07/2016



	inclusive rugby club. Whilst the students aim to increase engagement in rugby, the Spartans hope to recruit new players to their club and the sport as a whole.
Northampton	Spirit of Rugby's 'Engage.Try.Convert' project hopes to engage the large Eastern European community in the local area. To do this they have created a social media campaign, website and promotional video. All of which is translatable into six different languages and helps to promote the current playing offer in the area.
Norfolk	The Spirit of Rugby's 'RugbyFit' project looks to emphasise the fitness aspects of rugby by delivering rugby based fitness classes and O2 Touch across the Norfolk area. The group hope to remove barriers to entry, such as fear of injury or extensive time commitments.
Portsmouth	The Spirit of Rugby volunteers in the area are running weekly sessions at Bransbury Park to introduce rugby to the football focused area, with events taking place every quarter to ensure continued engagement. The group are also hoping to develop as coaches and referees and are working to set up a number of disability sessions within the community.