

# VOLUNTEERING AT EVENTS IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

*Research consultation conducted by  
FRY Creative and commissioned by  
Birmingham 2022 Legacy Team*



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

Volunteering as part of events in the West Midlands happens at multiple **scales**, and in multiple sectors. This report intends to draw together common themes and learnings from across this practice with the intention of improving events-based volunteering in the region and beyond it. Most organisations we spoke to engage more than fifty individuals as volunteers each year. This consultation is therefore specifically focused on events of medium to large scale.

The report outlines the intentions of volunteering, both on the part of the organisations putting out offers, and the individuals applying for them. One of the main **reasons** organisations in the region gave as to why they engage volunteers, was to 'engage the public in a deeper way with the project'. This speaks to wider practice showing that engaging target audiences in production/co-creation of an

event can diversify and increase engagement across it.

The second most popular reason organisations gave for engaging volunteers was to satisfy a public demand.

Organisations established three principal motivators that fuel this demand in the public. These **motivators** were varied depending on demographic, and therefore provide nuanced methods of attracting diverse engagement in volunteering offers. These volunteer motivations, presented in order of how much organisations perceived volunteers were motivated by them, are: #1 to engage in a social cause that they find important; #2 to gain new skills; and #3 to have fun resulting in improved wellbeing and confidence.

Upon asking organisations about the **processes** of engaging volunteers, the principal finding, which was corroborated in secondary research, was around creating a bespoke offer. The more tailored you can be to individual volunteer needs, the better they will be engaged. The report therefore outlines principal learnings in key areas of the process.

One method of attaining such nuance is through resourcing a dedicated **volunteer team** - this could be in the form of a PAYE role or team within an organisation, or a contracted supplier whose sole intention it is to look after your volunteers.

On **recruitment** most organisations mentioned maintaining a productive balance between bringing new volunteers to the table, whilst also allowing room for people who have volunteered for a long time. When discussing how to bring in new volunteers, in particular when attempting to diversify your volunteer base, trust is key. There were several suggested methods for instilling trust in the organisation. These include, but are not limited to, use of recruitment partners whom target volunteers trust; use of existing volunteers to engage peers; and use of taster sessions to facilitate 'no strings attached' trial engagement.

The majority of organisations delivered **training** informally - either on the day of, or in the days preceding, the event itself.

One of the most common themes in discussion of **role**, was volunteers layering on top of paid event delivery staff to

provide a warmer feel, and subject specific knowledge base. Whilst it could be argued that events could function without volunteers fulfilling these 'added value' roles, the impact as a result of their participation is huge: both volunteers become necessary for delivering a well rounded audience experience, and in turn individuals feel valued, needed and empowered through their positions.

There are some universal practices which can be put in place in an attempt to begin moving some initial barriers to engagement. 75% of organisations, for example, offer volunteers a **bursary** to reimburse travel and accommodation **expenses** and 50% of them offer volunteers lunch and/or dinner. Whilst for some individuals these are perks of the engagement, for some they make engagement possible. In addition a number of organisations informed us of the specific things they do to reward and recognise volunteers. Linking these back to the motivations discussed earlier, and making them as bespoke as possible, will lead to more effective volunteer engagement.

**Exit processes** and **evaluation** are key in a successful offer, and contribute to the wider ecosystem of volunteering. They enable learning, and long-lasting impact, providing individuals with an ongoing volunteer journey, and organisations with the best methods and practises to improve their offers.

Community cohesion and social connection are two frequent outcomes of volunteering at events. If these are to be truly successful, then **inclusion** should be made central to volunteering engagement. This is because community cohesion must be across multiple communities, as opposed to within one. Again, methods of increasing inclusion, representation and access should be as bespoke as possible to the individuals you are aiming to engage.

Finally, there are multiple reasons why organisations delivering volunteering in events contexts communicate with each other. Those which arose in our consultation included to aid recruitment; to signpost on to further volunteering opportunities; and to share best practices, learning and evaluation. The better we communicate across **sectors**, and the

more we can share approaches to volunteering, along with their successes and learnings, the better.

# METHODOLOGY

This research consultation was commissioned by **Birmingham 2022 Legacy team** and United By 2022, and was delivered by **FRY Creative**.

As detailed in the research framework attached as appendix 1 - it seeks to understand volunteering in events contexts in the West Midlands. Further than this, it looked across multiple sectors, including arts, culture, heritage, sports, faith organisations. As part of the study, and as detailed in the appendix, we collected information on:

- the contextual background of the organisation;
- the scale on which their volunteering offer operates;
- the processes through which their volunteering offer operates;
- their general sentiment regarding volunteering success;
- and their connection with broader sector/s regarding volunteering.

Primary data was collected through two principal strands.

A **mixed quantitative and qualitative survey** distributed digitalised. This survey was in two parts - allowing all participants to 'complete' after 80% of questions, or continue to answer. The survey was circulated to key stakeholders and was completed on an opt-in basis, with no financial or monetary incentive offered. All questions were optional. The first section of the survey was completed by  $14 \leq n \leq 16$  organisations. The second section received  $6 \leq n \leq 12$  organisations. The survey was open for a total of 14 days from the 27th January 2023 to 10th February 2023.

A series of **qualitative interviews**. Birmingham 2022 suggested a shortlist of 7 organisations, all of whom were contacted and invited to an interview. Interviews were scheduled in the two week period stipulated above. A total of four interviews were conducted in this period. No financial or monetary incentive was offered.

Finally, in order to not duplicate work which has already been undertaken in this

space, we dedicated a number of days to **desk research** and review of **secondary data** sources and **reports**. These are referenced throughout the report, and are listed in full in the references section.

All participants consented fully to participate in the research and none removed their consent. All participants were fully informed of purposes prior to giving consent. All quote attribution consent was obtained and recorded as part of the qualitative interviews.

Following initial data collection undertaken as detailed above in Winter 2023, United By 2022 brought volunteering organisations together for the launch of their [Volunteering Portal](#) on 7th June 2023. As part of this event stakeholders - made up funders, local and regional authorities, arts and cultural organisations and sport organisations - were brought together to explore four discussion topics. Following a presentation on findings from the initial round of data collection, stakeholders explored the following four questions in more detail:

1. The pool of volunteers is probably bigger than the active volunteers –

how can we foster skills development? (*Skills Table*)

2. Portal is a new concept – how do ‘we’ build trust in the new portal to ensure volunteers and organisations stay engaged volunteers? (*Trust Table*)
3. It is in all our interests to encourage volunteers to try different sectors and to bring in volunteers with different demographics to new organisations – how do we achieve this? (*Cross Sector Table*)
4. With many different events being advertised how do we safe-guard the quality of experience for volunteers on the portal? (*Quality Table*)

These questions were developed between United By 2022 and FRY Creative in response to report findings, to be able to push insight further.

Summative notes of the conversations have been consolidated by United By

2022, and this report has been edited for their inclusion by FRY Creative.

Notes from these conversations are presented here as summative quotes from the table’s discussion areas, which are linked using words from their questions: *Skills, Trust, Cross Sector, Quality*. Quotes from these tables’ discussion are presented highlighted in orange and labelled as above.

This report is brought to you by FRY Creative.



*UK-based with international reach, FRY Creative is a new consultancy established by three friends and colleagues. Since Autumn 2021, Fabio Thomas, Richard Hawley and Yasmin Damji have been collectively responsible for designing and delivering the evaluation of both the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Cultural Programme and UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, a £120m ground-breaking celebration of UK creativity. They have decades of collective experience working across the UK on research and evaluation, in the arts, cultural and heritage sector, and beyond.*

# INSIGHTS

## SCALE

Volunteering in the West Midlands occurs in a multitude of different ways - from formalised institutions like [Citizen's Advice](#), to faith based, locational volunteering such as at [Gurdwaras](#), to [litter picks in public space](#).<sup>1</sup> This consultation is specifically in relation to volunteering at events - activations engaging members of the public as participants and audiences. Further than that, it hones in on events on a medium to large scale. This is with the intention of furthering national level learnings - as published by [Spirit of 2012 in their recent inquiry](#) - on a localised and regional level, specifically in the West Midlands. The reason being, as established by the national research, 'major event volunteering [is] a different type of activity driven by a different set of motives compared with volunteering in [their] local community.' In summation, 'event

<sup>1</sup> [Citizens Advice Birmingham](#), 'Gurdwara feeding up to 15,000 people from all faiths every week as food bill triples', [Birmingham Litter Pickers](#)

volunteering can be a route to more forms of regular volunteering.'<sup>2</sup>

This consultation and research was instigated by a desire for Birmingham 2022 to share learnings about their volunteering journey, whilst also platforming other organisations from within the region to share practice and insights. Birmingham 2022 engaged [14,075 volunteers](#), who completed a total of 1.25 million hours of volunteering as part of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.<sup>3</sup> This report looks into volunteering at that scale, as well as at other larger sporting events such as the [Great Birmingham Run](#) and other arts and cultural happenings like the [Birmingham Weekender](#).

Events of different sizes and lengths, as well as those operating in different sectors, utilise volunteers on different scales. Therefore, before looking into the different processes and learnings on volunteering at events in the region, we must first understand the differing scales on which volunteering occurs.

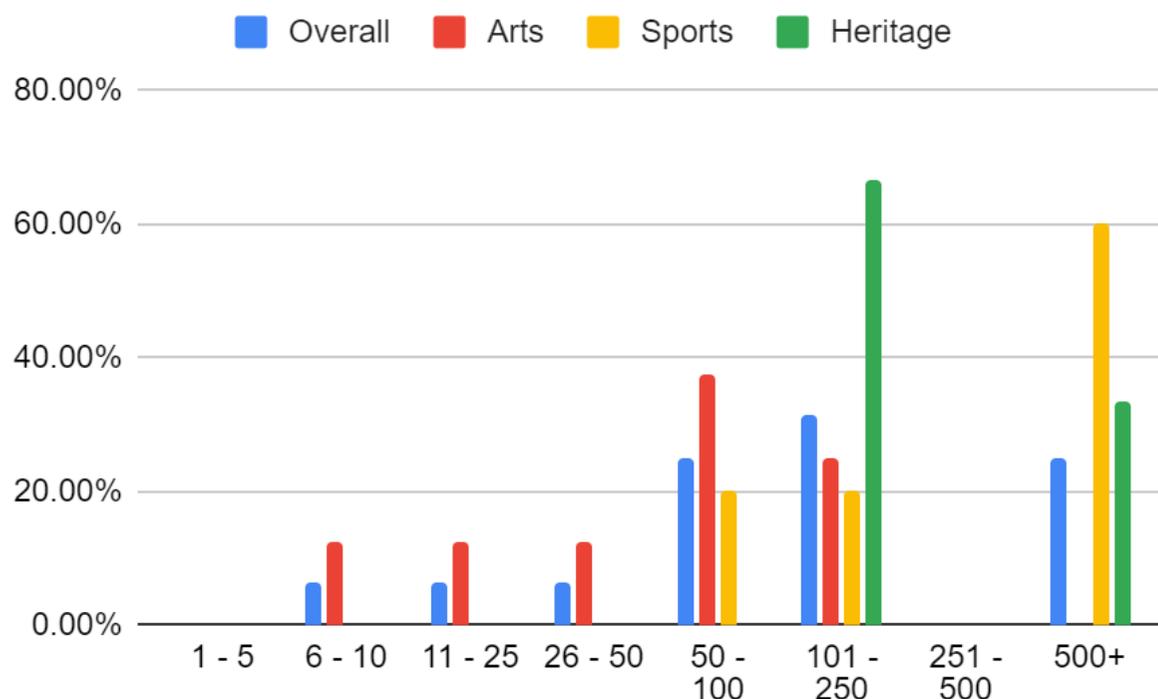
<sup>2</sup> ['How Can Events Boost Volunteering'](#), *Spirit of 2012, National Lottery Community Fund*, January 2023, p.4

<sup>3</sup> ['Evaluation of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games – Interim Evaluation Report'](#), *DCMS*, 17 January 2023, p.14

In general, most organisations that we spoke to as part of this consultation (56%) engaged between 50 and 250 volunteers per year. A further 25% of organisations engaged in excess of 500 volunteers a year, leaving those organisations engaging less than 50 volunteers a year (18%) in the minority. As this consultation focused on volunteering at medium and large scale events - these numbers are as anticipated.

When we look further into these scales (Figure 1) within different sectors, we can see that, generally speaking, sports and heritage sectors in the region are more likely to engage a higher number of volunteers, when compared to arts organisations. This is particularly true for sporting events - 60% of whom said they engage over 500 volunteers a year. Conversely, no sporting organisation said they engage less than 50 volunteers a year.

**Figure 1 - Approximately how many individual people do you engage as volunteers each year?**



Worth further note, is that no organisation we spoke to identified that they engage between 251-500 volunteers per year.

Reports published by the [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) - as part of an inquiry into volunteering for wellbeing in the sector - found that organisations they sampled worked with an average 42 volunteers per organisation.<sup>4</sup> This comes in at slightly lower than our findings on a regional level, which suggest that heritage organisations are principally working with between 101-250 volunteers. However, comparison here is speculative as there are a smaller number of heritage organisations in our sample.

## INTENTION

A key line of enquiry for this project was into the reasons driving volunteering - both on the part of the organisations putting out volunteering offers, but also for volunteers applying for them. Understanding of these motivations seeks to inform how

<sup>4</sup> Chatterjee H J; Elsdon E; Thomson L J, 'Give: Volunteering for Wellbeing Evaluation Report for the National Lottery Heritage Fund', University College London, 2020, p.4

volunteering operates in event contexts, and the impact it facilitates for organisations and individuals alike.

As highlighted in the interim evaluation for Birmingham 2022, volunteering has both an economic value – the value of goods and services that volunteers produce – as well as a wider social value - the impact of these goods and services on society and individual beneficiaries.<sup>5</sup>

### Value for the Organisation

We asked organisations taking part in the research ‘what are the main reasons why you utilise volunteers’. They were provided with four possible reasons, and then asked to put them in order. Results below use the average positioning that each answer received across all of the sample. They are presented here in order of the most popular reason they engage volunteers (#1) to least popular (#4).

*Out of the following options, what are the main reasons why you utilise volunteers?*

Answer	Avg. rank
#1 To engage the public in a deeper way with the project	1.53
#2 To satisfy a public want to volunteer	2.00
#3 To save event costs of more staff	3.07
#4 To fulfil specific funder requirements	3.40

### **Bringing the Public Closer to the Project/Organisation**

As with all events, the principal intention is getting people to attend them. A key way to achieve this - as has been shown in the cultural sector when engaging participants in co-creation of events - is by engaging members of your target audience in an event’s delivery. In this instance this is engaging members of the public as volunteers. As above, the most popular reason given by our sample was that volunteering ‘engaged the public in a deeper way with the project’.

*‘The big [volunteer motivation] is ‘we just want to be part of the event’.*

**British Athletics - Indoor Grand Prix Birmingham**

Engaging as participants or volunteers engenders a sense of ownership for the public. It means they have a deeper level of investment in the event’s success and publicity. Practically, more people are likely to hear about it, as volunteers may share with friends and family information about their volunteering. This is particularly worth note for engaging specific under-represented audiences - as will be discussed further in the ‘Inclusion’ section of this report.

Equally, this is also referenced in the Spirit of 2012 enquiry: ‘some volunteering also facilitates linking connections – between people and institutions.’<sup>6</sup>

### **Public Desire to Volunteer**

The second highest reason given by organisations as to why they engage volunteers, was to satisfy a ‘public want’. This speaks to a wider (non-event specific) reason for engaging volunteers - people want to do it and, therefore, programming volunteer opportunities satisfies a public desire. We will go on to explore the various facets of what motivates this desire, in the following section on volunteer intention.

Inherently therefore, people want to contribute their time and see value in

<sup>5</sup> Birmingham 2022 Interim Evaluation, p.15

<sup>6</sup> Spirit of 2012, p.16

doing so. Organisations harness this desire to then fulfil other practical, strategic or philanthropic aims.

### **Additional Resource and Value**

The third most popular reason given speaks to the most widely-understood motivation for why organisations engage volunteers - that they save additional costs, filling roles which may be otherwise beyond the budget of the event, or would otherwise be absent from the delivery plan.

*'We are a massive commercial business [...] but without the volunteers we wouldn't be able to deliver, we can't excessively pay for stewarding teams to come and hand out medals and support around the finish areas. Without those volunteers we would struggle.'*

#### **Great Run Company - Birmingham Run**

Outside of event specific volunteering 'many organisations would not be able to function without the help of volunteers: for example, almost all grassroots sports and 45% of heritage organisations are largely or solely run by volunteers.'<sup>7</sup>

In these contexts, volunteering clearly fills capacity or funding gaps. However, in event volunteering contexts, this doesn't

<sup>7</sup> Spirit of 2012

operate in the same way. As we will go on to discuss, in many events contexts, volunteers provide 'added value', as opposed to the core structure of operations. The added value here has a knock on effect of less pressure for volunteers, increasing the chance of their experience being positive and productive.

### **Funder Volunteering Requirements**

The sports, heritage and arts sectors are often made up of publicly or charitably funded organisations and groups. In many instances across the bodies which fund such activity, volunteering is often built into grant agreement, as a method of furthering project, programme or funder outcomes. This is broadly due to the widely accepted value of engaging volunteers. As highlighted in the national Spirit enquiry, 'events should only receive public subsidies if organisers set out detailed delivery plans for securing positive impacts on society, including through volunteering.'<sup>8</sup>

In spite of this, in our sample 'to fulfil funder requirements' was the lowest scoring of all reasons to engage volunteers. This is perhaps a direct result of the broadening understanding of the value and importance of volunteers in

<sup>8</sup> Spirit of 2012, p.13

events and non-events contexts. In summary, volunteers are not used because a funder has stipulated so, but because of an organisation's understanding of their value.

### **Value for the Volunteer**

As established, there is clearly a public desire to volunteer. We will now look into the varying reasons behind these desires.

Motivations fall into three principal categories: skills and experienced based learning; confidence and wellbeing; and social action.

We asked event organisers their perceived understanding of what motivates their volunteers. As above, results use the average ranking that each answer received across the whole sample, to establish a preferential order. #1 is the most frequently given perceived volunteer motivation, #6 the least frequently.

Answer	Avg. rank
#1 To become more involved with the organisation/event	2.07
#2 To gain new skills	2.73
#3 To socialise with peers	3.20
#4 To have fun	3.40
#5 To experience the event for free	5.07

## Skills and Experienced Based Learning

The second most popular reason regional organisations gave for volunteer motivation was ‘to gain new skills’. This is echoed at national events as well as in non-event contexts.

Volunteering is a clear way of developing skills, which is perhaps more easily accessible than attaining the same skills through paid employment. Moreover, it’s often understood that careers in sectors which are particularly hard to breach - such as those in question (arts, heritage, sport) - often see people gaining insight and experience via volunteering. This is to later go on to use such experience in job applications. In short, individuals may volunteer with organisations that they aspire to work for.

*‘[students are] passionate because they want to use the experience on their CV, because for them it is an opportunity to get their foot in the door.’*

**British Athletics - Indoor Grand Prix  
Birmingham**

*‘For people looking to join, it is a really good opportunity. And it is especially good if you are looking for a career path in childcare or nursing or something medical.’<sup>9</sup>*

However, as displayed in the Birmingham 2022 Interim Evaluation, as well as in other sources, this skills based motivation is primarily seen in young people, as opposed to across the board for all volunteers.<sup>10</sup>

*‘The survey showed that younger people are more likely to be motivated by the impacts that volunteering can have on their employability, with 87% of 18-24 year olds agreeing volunteering helped improve people’s skills and job prospects.’<sup>11</sup>*

In spite of it being a principal aim which drives people towards volunteering, one challenge we still face, as shown through volunteering at Birmingham 2022, is how individuals convert this volunteering into practical examples of experience, for use in applying for employment.

*‘Among respondents to the surveys, when asked the extent to which they feel they have the relevant experience to seek new employment or training/education opportunities, the percentage of volunteer respondents that scored themselves at least 8 out of 10 increased only slightly from an average of 68% prior to being involved in the volunteering programme to 70% post-Games.’<sup>12</sup>*

This particular challenge is drawn into the spotlight in events contexts, as interaction with volunteers is rarely ongoing, and therefore long term support can often be difficult.

*‘We will work really hard with the volunteers, get them engaged, get them ready to a delivery point, look after them on the day, make sure that they have a really good time and then we leave, because as a business we’re then focusing on the next project. We’re trying [with a new piece of volunteer software] to maintain that engagement throughout the year.’*

**Great Run Company - Birmingham Run**

## Confidence and Wellbeing

Perhaps an obvious reason why people volunteer, but one which should not be overlooked, is that it makes them feel

<sup>9</sup> ‘Youth Volunteering in Birmingham Women’s and Children’s NHS Foundation Trust: Briefing by a young volunteer’, IVAR, November 2021, p.4

<sup>10</sup> Birmingham 2022 Interim Evaluation, p.14

<sup>11</sup> Spirit of 2012, p.9

<sup>12</sup> Birmingham 2022 Interim Evaluation, p.65

good. This is reflected in the fourth most popular reason given by organisations in our primary research, that volunteers take part ‘to have fun.’

*‘We want to make sure that everyone has a really good time whilst they are out there.’*

#### **Great Run Company - Birmingham Run**

*‘The biggest thing that would always come back, by I imagine quite a long way, is that they are all in it for the social side of it.’*

#### **Lawn Tennis Association - Birmingham Rothesay Classic**

The increased sense of wellbeing and confidence is noted in Birmingham 2022’s evaluation, in Spirit of 2012’s enquiry, in the National Heritage Lottery Fund report, as well as in the comments of a young volunteer at Birmingham Children’s Hospital.

*‘Just under a third of new volunteers disclosed during one-to-one interviews their previous or current state of poor mental health and how the desire to change it had motivated them to volunteer for the Give Project.’<sup>13</sup>*

*‘I think it has given me more self-confidence and it has given me the opportunity to see how I work with other people to improve my communication.’<sup>14</sup>*

*‘Evidence from surveys of OC volunteers suggests that feelings of inclusion, pride and wellbeing increased among volunteers following participation in the OC volunteering programme relative to prior to being enrolled on the programme.’<sup>15</sup>*

*‘Evidence from the pre- and post-Games surveys suggests that the overall life satisfaction among Games volunteers was increased following participation in the volunteering programme. Life satisfaction is a key measure of wellbeing used by the ONS among others.’<sup>16</sup>*

Volunteering can therefore be a particularly important tool for people who are struggling with ill mental health. Using social action as a method to combat these struggles is reflected in the recent rise in popularity of social prescribing.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> NLHF, p.9

<sup>14</sup> IVAR, p.4

<sup>15</sup> Birmingham 2022 Interim Evaluation, p.15

<sup>16</sup> Birmingham 2022 Interim Evaluation, p.15

<sup>17</sup> [‘Social prescribing: applying All Our Health’](#), Office for Health Improvements & Disparities, 27 January 2022

*‘[Volunteers participate] just for the love of running and sport in general.’*

#### **Great Birmingham Run**

#### **Social Action**

As noted in the national Spirit enquiry, ‘People want to know that giving their time makes a difference.’<sup>18</sup>

*‘Some of [the volunteers] feel like they are making a contribution to their community and similarly making a contribution to Pride the movement and Pride the festival. [...] A lot of people state [in the application forms] that they want to give something back.’*

#### **Birmingham Pride**

With this lens, the most popular reason given by organisations in the West Midlands was ‘to become more involved with the organisation/event’. One facet of this reason could be individuals volunteering with organisations who they perceive to have a positive social impact. As previously noted, this is evidently the case in non-event contexts, for example the volunteering taking place at organisations like Citizens’ Advice and Gurdwaras across the country.

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<sup>18</sup> Spirit of 2012, p.24

In event contexts, this desire to ‘make a difference’ often manifests itself in the form of localism and social cohesion.

*‘Volunteers are more likely to give time in their own neighbourhood, for local organisations and groups, and alongside their friends and neighbours, with NCVO estimating that 81% of volunteers do their volunteering in and for their local communities.’<sup>19</sup>*

*‘Nearly a third of people (29%) still feel that the most important legacy of the London 2012 Games was that it brought us together as a country.’<sup>20</sup>*

Birmingham 2022’s central mission of being the ‘Games for Everyone’ was driven through volunteer messaging, the volunteer group becoming known as the ‘Commonwealth Collective’. The emphasis on community cohesion - via personal, individual connection with other people - was baked into the messaging around volunteering, and had a clear effect on the outcomes. 85% reported that they made new friends or networks through their Birmingham 2022 volunteering role.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Spirit of 2012, p.23

<sup>20</sup> Spirit of 2012, p.4

<sup>21</sup> Birmingham 2022 Interim Evaluation, p.77

This is echoed in the third most popular perceived reason we found why volunteers engage through events - ‘to socialise’.

Finally, as was noted in some of our interviews, the fifth most popular reason ‘to experience the event for free’ - was still incredibly important in pockets across events. This is particularly important for members of the public who may be excluded from events due to the ticket prices required to attend them.

*‘I think Birmingham Pride is unique, if we’re being honest, because it’s a way that [volunteers] can feel involved and included in the festival when sometimes they can’t afford the ticket price.’*

### **Birmingham Pride**

Whilst there is clearly coherence in the reasoning for engaging volunteers in events and non-events contexts, there are also some nuances specific to the events based offers. These are as follows:

1. Whilst many individuals are motivated by gaining skills, volunteering via events often means shorter engagement times. This results in skills gained not

developing into more relevant experience to gain employment.

2. That volunteering can be a route to improving wellbeing - in an event context this should be achieved through ‘added value’ roles for volunteers, as we will go on to discuss.
3. That social action, and caring about a cause, is a clear motivator for volunteering. In events contexts, this often takes a particular focus on community cohesion, localism and social tolerance.

*Stakeholders noted that in order to ensure long term skills development through the portal, and adequate measurement of this impact, skills data ought to be collected upon sign-up to the portal. This could also be rolled out post engagement. Moreover, the portal could explore how opportunities can be labelled according to skill. This will allow more upfront communication with volunteers, as well as the ability to see gaps in skills development provision on the part of providers.*

### **Skills Table**

## PROCESS

This section will look to understand the different processes in place around volunteering. In short, how organisations based in the West Midlands, which deliver medium and large scale events, go about engaging and utilising volunteers.

We will discuss processes around recruitment, training, delivery and evaluation, grouping together findings from our primary data collection and beyond it.

Whilst discussing overarching processes which are coherent across sectors and organisations, we must keep in mind a key insight found in secondary research and primary interviews alike. This was that the most successful volunteering opportunities tailor their offer to the people they're aiming to engage. In short, 'what works for one group of volunteers may not work for another'.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, wherever possible, in delivering processes for volunteering, always aim to be bespoke. Whilst we will

<sup>22</sup> 'The Volunteering Fund: Guide to Inclusive Volunteer Engagement', Sport England, 2021, p.5

therefore discuss generic processes leading to successful event volunteering, we must also keep in mind a tailored, co-created approach.

*Stakeholders noted that the more United By 2022 and partner organisations engaging through the portal can consult and co-create with each other and the volunteers themselves the better.*

### Quality Table

Part of the reasoning for this, as briefly alluded to above, is that different people have different motivations for volunteering and therefore want the practicalities of the roles to look different too. Bespoke offers are also a principal, primary route to volunteering for the first time. As the Spirit enquiry notes:

*'Nearly half (44%) of people who did not volunteer said they would be more likely to volunteer if they knew there were things that they could do that would interest them.'*<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Spirit of 2012, p.11

*Stakeholders noted the necessity to understand individual's motivations and their differences - particularly in relation to relevant skills development opportunities.*

### Skills Table

## Internal Volunteer Team

Across conversations and in secondary research for this consultation, one of the most commonly mentioned factors impacting the processes of engaging volunteers was the role played by a dedicated volunteer team. Depending on the size of the organisation, the structure of staffing (PAYE vs freelancers) and the depth of project based roles, organisations were able to commit differing levels of time solely to their volunteering offer. In spite of this, and in the same vein as the above, a bespoke and dedicated volunteer team will improve the quality of your volunteering offer.

'Employing a dedicated volunteering manager and volunteer coordinator(s)' is step one in National Lottery Heritage Fund's 'Volunteering for Wellbeing '10

STEP GUIDE”.<sup>24</sup> This is also reflecting in Sport England’s recommendations:

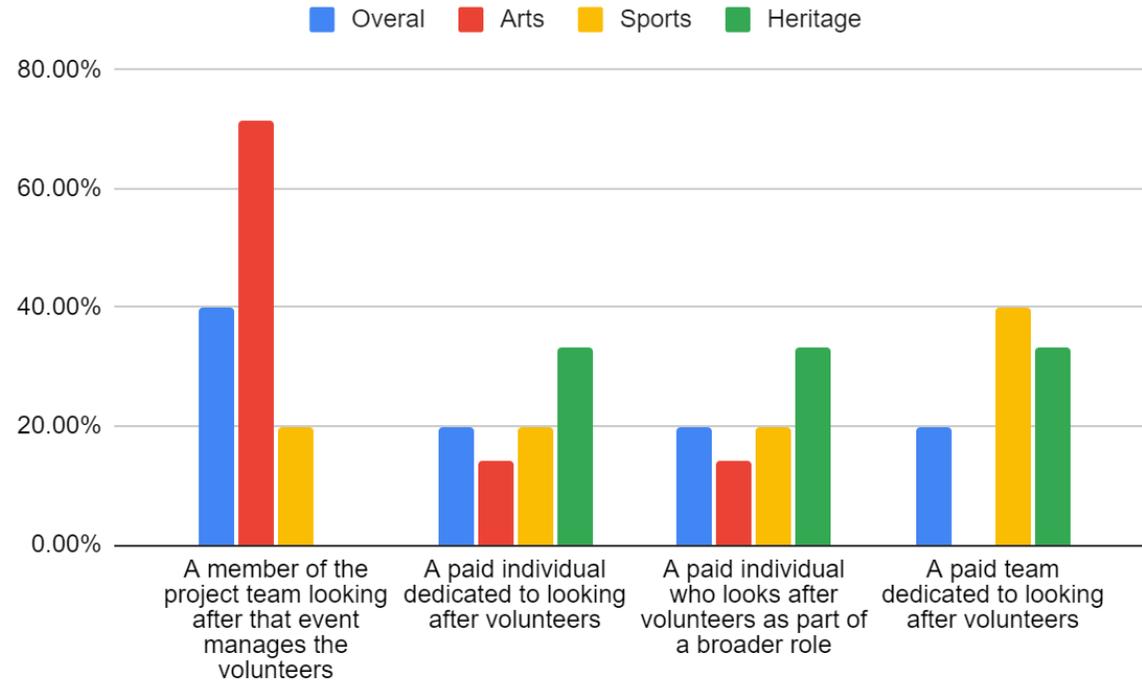
*‘Skilled volunteer coordinators and managers will make all the difference to the success of your volunteering programme.’<sup>25</sup>*

*“Having the right person in place... It’s the quality of the person that looks after it that’s going to make that big change.” [project lead from volunteering fund]<sup>26</sup>*

In spite of this, 60% of the organisations we spoke to in the region said that volunteering responsibilities were factored into broader roles.

As shown in figure 2, this is most frequently the case in Arts organisations, with 71% of people we spoke to reporting that volunteering responsibilities falls with ‘a member of the project team’.

**Figure 2: Does your organisation have a dedicated volunteering team or does it fall into wider roles?**



<sup>24</sup> NLHF, p.3

<sup>25</sup> Sport England

<sup>26</sup> Sport England, p.5

Some organisations mentioned that this varied depending on the scale of the project in hand:

*'all our team are self employed on their different projects, they each manage their own team of volunteers but we also work as a co-operative team where we all support each other especially during bigger events and activities'*

**Arts Organisation - West Midlands - No PAYE staff**

*'A mixture of larger projects having a paid individual dedicated to looking after volunteers to PAYE staff managing volunteers for small projects'*

**Arts Organisation - Birmingham - 4-10 PAYE staff**

Across the board, 40% of organisations we spoke to have either a dedicated individual or team looking after volunteering.

*'For our recruitment process, it's down to our event coordinators.'*

**Great Run Company - Birmingham Run**

Whilst no organisation told us that a lack of dedicated volunteering-focused staff

caused issues, across the dataset there are several suggestions about where it can add value, improving both the volunteer experience and overall outcomes of the event.

This is taken a step further in the learnings from Birmingham 2022's volunteering offer, which suggests that outsourcing volunteering to external contractors who were also responsible for other facets of delivery, caused issues. This was particularly around training in venues and distribution of accreditation.<sup>27</sup>

In short, if the central principle around a successful volunteer process is a bespoke offering, then a dedicated member of staff, or a contractor, as the case with the [Birmingham Rothesay Classic](#) for example, will enable better results. Central oversight via the means discussed above will enable tailoring of specific roles and events, to specific volunteers and groups.

<sup>27</sup> Birmingham 2022: Workforce - Transfer of Knowledge

*'It has a volunteer manager who deals with the long term volunteers - those people who would be working at a tennis club across the year hosting sessions, training etc - but it doesn't have someone specifically focused on event volunteering.'*

**Lawn Tennis Association - Birmingham Rothesay Classic**

*Some stakeholders mentioned the opportunity for volunteers to act as mentors or buddies to each other throughout the process. In this instance it would further deepen nuance and bespoke elements of delivery roles - with more experienced volunteers holding the ability to take a more active and formalised responsibility for training and mentorship.*

**Quality Table**

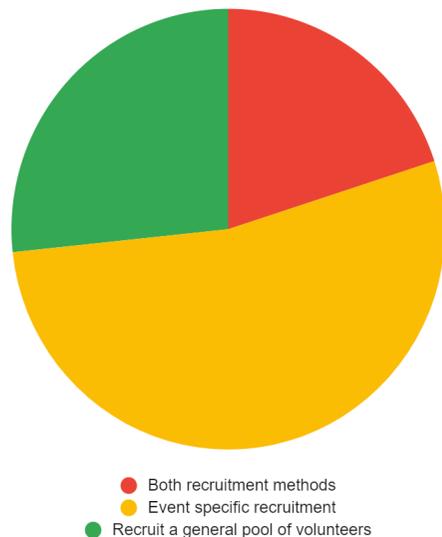
**Recruitment**

Across our primary research via surveying and interviews, we found that there were two general approaches to recruitment of volunteers: event specific recruitment, where volunteers apply to take part in a specific event, or general recruitment, where volunteers apply to be part of a volunteer pool, from which volunteers for events are selected.

Stakeholders noted the importance of generating significant initial interest around the launch of the portal. It's crucial to maximise and replicate the initial excitement of volunteering at the Games. They noted that volunteers will not continue to log on to the portal if their initial experiences are unsatisfactory, or if when they first log on there are not very many opportunities of interest.

### Skills Table

**Figure 3: Do you recruit for specific events, or do you recruit a general pool of volunteers, then allocate accordingly?**



As in Figure 3, the majority of organisations recruit for a specific event, as opposed to recruiting a general pool of people. The anticipated reason for this is that recruitment is more effective and efficient when organisations can be clear about what their volunteering offer is, down to the specific delivery aspects of the role.

*'Participants in the discussion groups told us that they would be more likely to volunteer if they had more information about what it entailed and they knew that there were tasks that would interest them.'*<sup>28</sup>

Stakeholders noted that organisations utilising the volunteer portal need to be as clear as possible when articulating what their volunteering offer is to manage expectations about how their experience will differ from that of the games. Volunteers may not even get a T-shirt, and this should be clearly communicated to them prior to expressing interest in opportunities.

### Trust Table

When organisations are able to refer to a specific event that the volunteer will be part of, this clarity increases, along with

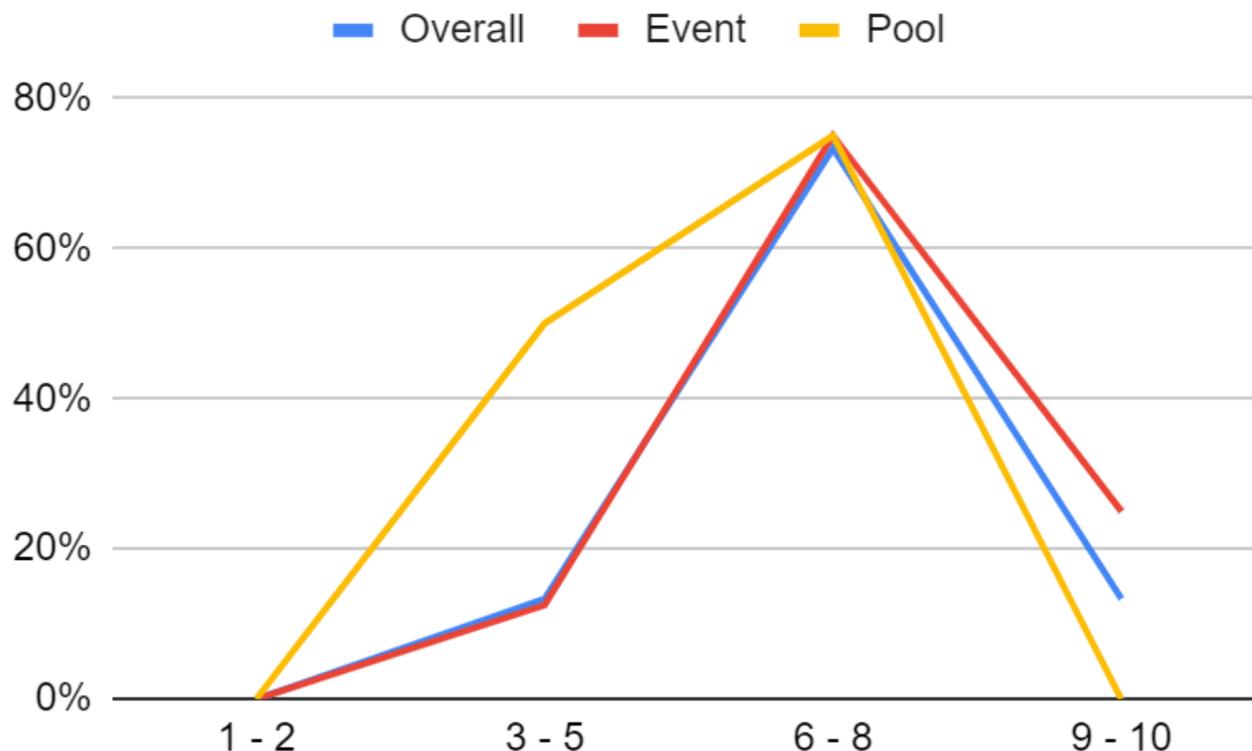
efficiency of recruitment. This is displayed in figure four - that shows how organisations which use event-based over pool-based are more likely to report easier recruitment.

As previously mentioned, one of the problems with engaging volunteers solely for single, short events is that there is less opportunity for sustained development and relationship building.

In our interviews, we found that recruitment looked different across organisations - many used open days, some used specific software, others relied on long-standing, informal relationships in communities. However, in spite of these differences, a common theme was the consciousness towards maintaining a balance of bringing in new volunteers to an organisation, whilst maintaining satisfaction and enjoyment with the recurring volunteer base.

<sup>28</sup> Spirit of 2012, p.29

**Figure 4: On a scale of 1 - 10, how easy is it for your organisation to recruit volunteers? (1: challenging, 10: easy)**



*'There is no formal application process, we just have a [personal] kind of relationship with them from the build up to the event, and the event coordinators build up that relationship with the groups and individuals, and we just make contact with them on an annual basis.'*

**Great Run Company - Birmingham Run**

*'We wanted to maintain a balance of falling into the trap of it becoming a closed group [...] who might be resistant to change [...] so we try to have a balance of old and new.'*

**Lawn Tennis Association - Birmingham  
Rothersey Classic**

Trust is another key factor in recruiting volunteers.<sup>29</sup> There are a number of ways highlighted in primary and secondary research that display how trust can be built with volunteers.

A method which was used broadly by nearly all organisations we spoke to was the use of recruitment partners. Namely, organisations that individuals already know and trust, which are able to signpost them to your volunteering opportunities. Over 80% of organisations in the West Midlands we spoke to as part of this

<sup>29</sup> Sport England, p.16; Spirit, p.24

research said they used recruitment partners.

*'We've worked heavily with the sports development officer from the University of Birmingham. Sometimes we will get the women's football team to come and engage, sometimes the cycling team. [It acts as] team skills building exercises.'*

#### **Great Run Company - Birmingham Run**

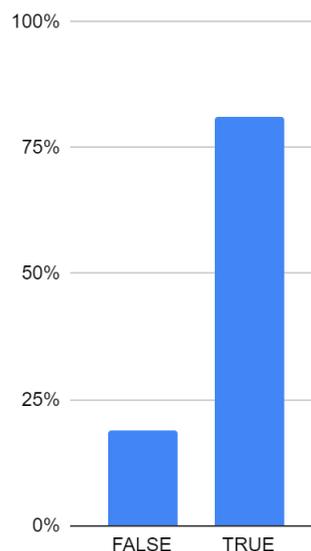
*Access to social media must not be the sole route to signing up to the portal. Analysis of demographic groups signing up via this method will aid better targeting of prospective volunteers. Equally, how does the volunteer portal account for and engage people who experience digital poverty, or those that may not have regular access to the internet and/or the hardware?*

#### **Skills Table**

*'The Inquiry survey suggested that 39% of people who do not volunteer said they would be more likely to volunteer if asked by a person or organisation that they trusted.'*<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Spirit, p.30

**Figure 5: Do you work with other organisations or groups to recruit volunteers?**



Trust building through partnership recruitment is particularly important for drawing in new volunteers to your organisation. In particular, people who don't know you or your work. This is also shown in the inquiry conducted nationally by Spirit:

In addition, as the above suggests, one of the strongest recruitment sources for building trust in new volunteers is your current pool of individuals.<sup>31</sup> Whilst this may be less effective in diversifying your volunteer base, it will prove efficient, as the volunteers who are currently engaging clearly believe, and are invested, in the work. Nationally, other organisations have employed 'volunteer buddying schemes' to this end.<sup>32</sup>

*Stakeholders noted that the portal will build on positive trust and relationships engendered through volunteer's engagement in the games. United By 2022, as the official legacy charity, should have positive association with Birmingham 2022. Therefore, volunteers will have some level of trust with the portal. In spite of this, organisations and United By 2022 must manage expectations of volunteers, as experience engaging with smaller events is unlikely to be similar to engaging with Birmingham 2022.*

#### **Trust Table**

<sup>31</sup> Sport England, p. 17

<sup>32</sup> NLHF, p.3

Finally, building trust with potential volunteers can often take the form of no-strings attached, trials, taster sessions and meet and greets. These provide a valuable opportunity to meet prospective volunteers in an open and informal setting. These sessions can also provide a useful opportunity to gain feedback, insight and input into your volunteering offer.

*'The open days are key to us.'*

#### **Birmingham Pride**

Finally, perhaps a newer emerging feeding strand of new volunteers is via other businesses and employers. This is due to the fact that, following covid-19, there has been an 'increase in employer-initiated volunteers, with businesses encouraging their staff to volunteer'.<sup>33</sup> This has been taken up at central government level in the civil service, as well as across the private sector.<sup>34</sup> This form of volunteer recruitment may be specifically useful for event-based volunteering, due to the fact that employers may only offer limited days per year to conduct this volunteering, which

<sup>33</sup> Spirit of 2012, p.22

<sup>34</sup> Horn Hannah; Martin, Millie; '[Volunteering in the Civil Service: taking time for our wellbeing by supporting causes we care about](#)', *Digital Trade Blog*, 6 December 2021

are often easier to facilitate when taken in one go.

*'Employer-supported volunteering grew in 2020, with more businesses offering their staff paid leave or flexible hours to enable them to volunteer.'*<sup>35</sup>

One factor in ensuring that volunteers, once they are recruited, have a positive experience in the role, is to ensure, at those early stages, that you 'spend time making sure volunteers are a good fit'.<sup>36</sup>

In this vein, not all people who apply to be volunteers in event contexts are successful in their application. In primary qualitative interviews undertaken for this study, a reason which arose for this was that the nature of events (which are public facing) necessitates a certain willingness to chat to people, be welcoming, and facilitate a positive atmosphere at the event.

At the organisations we spoke to, not all volunteers who applied to take part were successful. 50% of organisations said they accepted everybody, 50% said they had to turn people away. The reasons for the

<sup>35</sup> Spirit of 2012, p.31

<sup>36</sup> '[Top Tips Volunteering](#)', National Lottery Community Fund

latter ranged from having more applications than roles, to individuals not being the right fit for a particular type of event and/or role.

*'We interview everybody we are wanting to take forward [as a volunteer].'*

#### **Birmingham Pride**

Worth note is that if organisations recruit principally to a volunteer pool, then they were also more likely to accept everyone. In spite of this, the sample of organisations who recruit solely to a pool was smaller in this context and therefore the finding is speculative.

*Stakeholders noted that there may be risk in limiting the portal to volunteers who applied for the games or who were successful in their application. Particular communities may not have felt represented in the volunteering collective. This may continue to exclude groups. In order to combat this, United by 2022 - as principal organisation responsible for the portal - need to actively foster relationships with organisations or communities that were not engaged during the Games.*

#### **Trust Table**

*'We were very fortunate in that we had a lot more people who wanted to volunteer, than capacity.'*

**British Athletics - Indoor Grand Prix  
Birmingham**

Nationally, as suggested by the National Lottery Community Fund, organisations should 'signpost volunteers to other appropriate roles, if they are not for you.'<sup>37</sup>

*'They are not all successful [...] Some people we know just aren't right for our core audience and our core community.'*

**Birmingham Pride**

**Training**

As has been noted, and as we will go on to see, ensuring a positive experience on the day is crucial in order for volunteering opportunities to achieve the outcomes listed in the 'Intention' section of this report.

A crucial factor in furthering this positive experience is training. As noted by Sport England, 'training in its most basic form enables your volunteers to engage in

activities safely and effectively, and it gives them confidence in what they are doing.'<sup>38</sup>

This is also reflected in national findings from the Heritage Fund:

*'Learning appeared to increase volunteer feelings of being valued, consolidate volunteer confidence and bolster feelings of agency.'*<sup>39</sup>

Organisations we spoke to in the West Midlands offered approximately an average of 6 hours of training for each volunteer they engage. 63% of organisations in the region said they offer refresher training to volunteers, after they are initially trained.

This training was most commonly reported to take place either on the day of the event or in the days preceding it, on site, at the event location.

*'We don't actually see them until the first day of the event.[...] the training is delivered on their first shift.'*

**British Athletics - Indoor Grand Prix  
Birmingham**

*'We don't necessarily do any pre-event training [...] but we keep communication up prior to the event and send them a one-sider document with the basic information prior to the day'*

**Great Run Company - Birmingham Run**

*Stakeholders clearly identified that a massive opportunity for both organisations to gain capacity, and for volunteers to be more efficiently engaged, was to use the portal to ensure training is not duplicated across opportunities. For example, this could help ensure that a volunteer who is engaging in two opportunities simultaneously is not having to undergo crowd management training across both. Whilst both opportunities may need to brief the volunteer as to the specifics of their events, this does not mean they need to be trained from the ground up, twice.*

**Quality Table**

The formality of training delivered to volunteers in the region varied depending on the sector. This is displayed in figure 7 below.

<sup>37</sup> NLCF

<sup>38</sup> Sport England, p.19

<sup>39</sup> NLHF, p.7

**Figure 7: On a scale of 0 - 10, how formalised/uniform is your training offer, or do you conduct training more informally, or bespoke to the specific event?**

[1: Formal, 10: Informal]

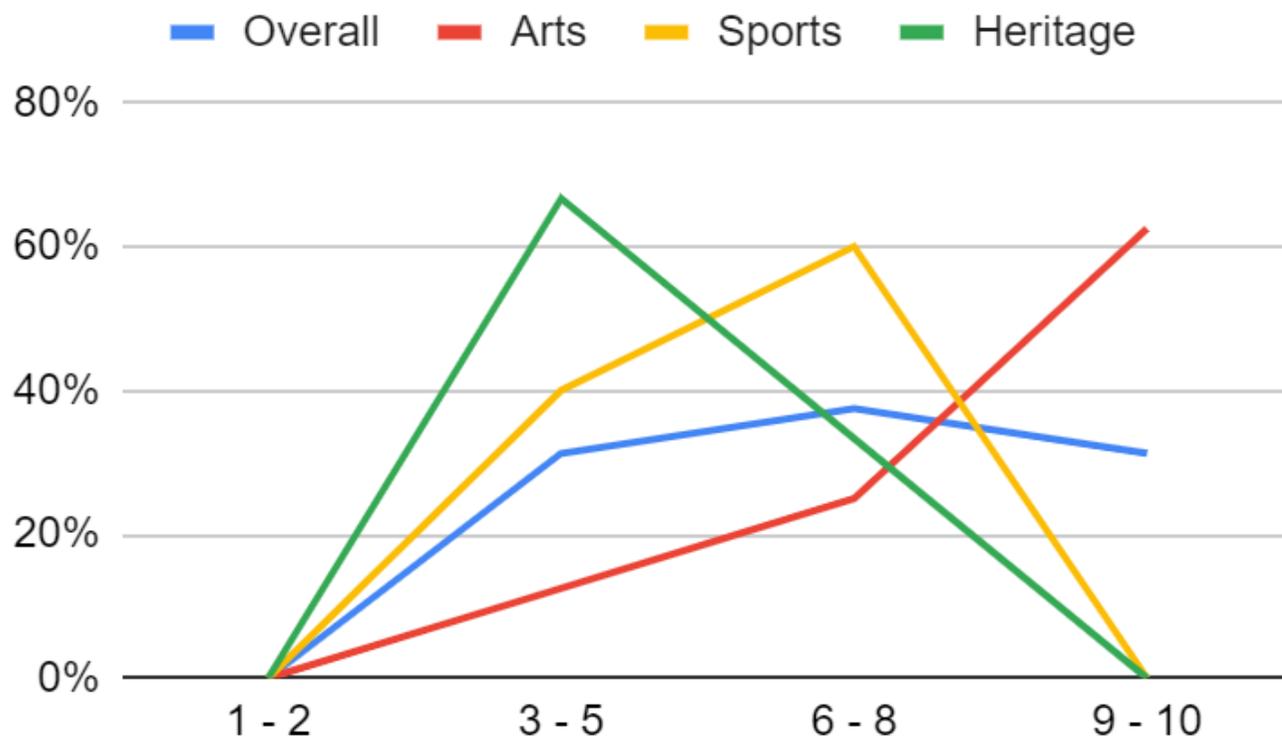


Figure 7 shows that heritage organisations are most likely to deliver formalised training. This may be symptomatic of the (perhaps perceived) higher degree of specialist knowledge required to deliver heritage events. Arts organisations delivered the most informal training for event volunteers.

Stakeholders suggested that the portal could facilitate cross-organisational training opportunities. Here volunteers who are working across different opportunities and organisations could be brought together for more in depth training opportunities to deepen their skills development in roles. This will also further engender bespoke delivery of particular roles through deepening volunteer investment and therefore skillsets.

**Skills Table**

[Volunteers who have engaged with multiple sporting events in the past] find that the training is always the same, and so therefore, most of the stuff is in the handbook, so [what we deliver at training] is more relevant to your role at the event.'

**British Athletics - Indoor Grand Prix Birmingham**

## Volunteer Delivery Roles

*'Consult with volunteers prior to planning, understand their motivations, barriers and understanding.'*<sup>40</sup>

*'The volunteers put 'these are the roles I've done in the past at events for different organisations, and I want to try my hand at everything', so then we'd try and find them something that they hadn't done before.'*

### **British Athletics - Indoor Grand Prix Birmingham**

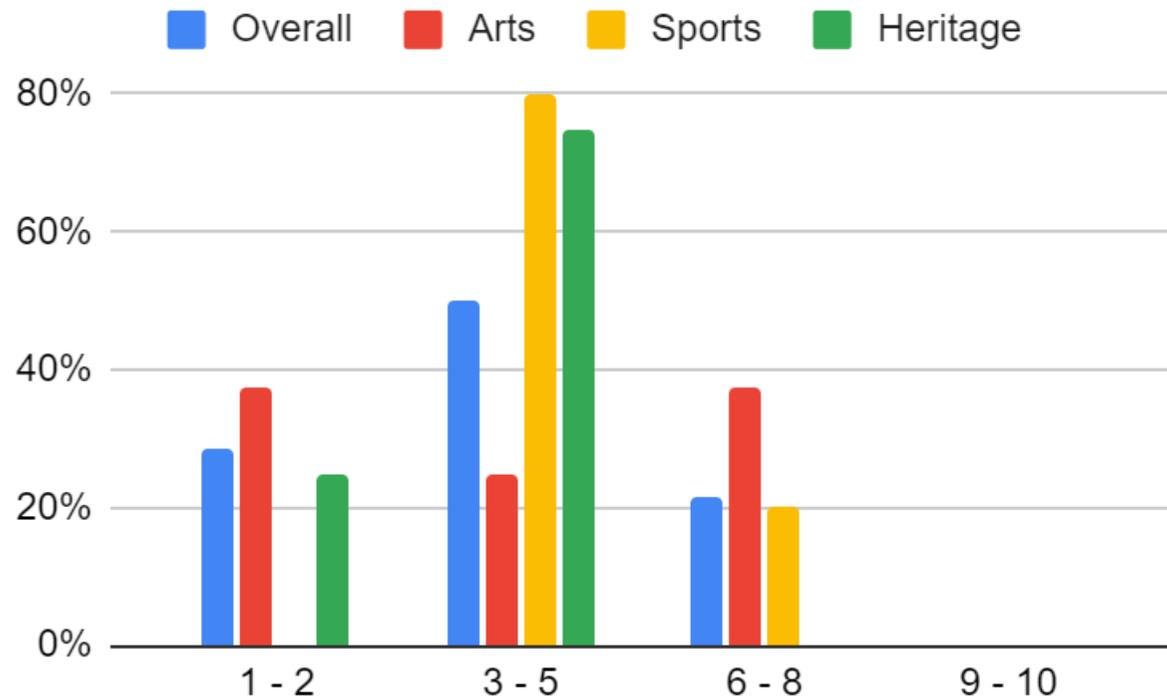
As previously mentioned, in secondary reading as well as in primary interviews, a bespoke volunteering offer often leads to successful volunteering in events. This is particularly noted when referring to the delivery role of volunteers on the ground. So much of the success of listed outcomes is derived from volunteers' 'on-the-day' experience and facilitating quality volunteer engagement at the event itself.

*'To be able to provide spectators with a good customer service, because the majority of our event volunteers end up in customer facing roles.'*

### **British Athletics - Indoor Grand Prix Birmingham**

**Figure 8: On a scale of 0 - 10, are individual volunteers assigned specific roles/responsibilities according to skillset or preference, or are roles/responsibilities evenly/randomly allocated?**

[1: Allocated, 10: Randomly Distributed]



<sup>40</sup> Sport England

As noted in Spirit's enquiry, 'offering people a range of volunteering activities, including one-off tasks or things that they can do from home, has been shown to be a successful means to getting more people to volunteer.'<sup>41</sup> However, this becomes more difficult in an event context, where volunteering delivery roles are often driven by time-bound tasks in specific locations.

Of the organisations we spoke to in the West Midlands, none randomly allocated volunteer positions. The majority of organisations said that there was some element of specificity, but this wasn't the sole driver.

*'We would put role descriptors up, so when people were applying, they'd know what role they were applying for.'*

**British Athletics - Indoor Grand Prix  
Birmingham**

*'They could be doing a different role or position each shift, or each day that they are volunteering.'*

**Lawn Tennis Association - Birmingham  
Rothesay Classic**

In some instances, specificity of volunteer responsibilities was even self-directed, as in this example given by the Great Birmingham Run:

*'There may be a specific part of the course which gets congested, or there might be a specific resident out on the route that needs a little bit of extra support or information on the day, and its those volunteers that year on year will deal with that unknown to us, they will just go and do it, so its just massively valuable. They know their worth and their place in the event delivery itself which is wonderful.'*

**Great Run Company - Birmingham Run**

One of the most common areas of discussion in our interviews with organisations was how volunteers can layer on top of event delivery staff - in particular stewards or security - to provide a warmer feel, and subject specific knowledge base. This is the particular 'added value' roles referred to in sections prior. Whilst it could be argued that these events could function without volunteers fulfilling these roles, the value added as a result of their participation is huge. The impact is that both volunteers become necessary for delivering a well rounded audience experience, and that in this happening, volunteers as individuals feel

valued, needed and empowered through their positions.

*'I get the impression that other festivals add volunteers to enhance what they already have in place.'*

**Birmingham Pride**

*'[We do hire] professional stewards. They are in there from a health and safety and counter terrorism perspective, we then overlay that system with volunteers. Volunteers offer a softer approach, they are more agile, they can also offer local knowledge.'*

**Great Run Company - Birmingham Run**

*'All of the roles in Birmingham are front of house roles, they are about improving the vibe and the atmosphere of the event itself'*

**Lawn Tennis Association - Birmingham  
Rothesay Classic**

*'Pump it up areas or sporting zones, we use volunteer groups to deliver them on the ground, which is a bit more engaging for them.'*

**Great Run Company - Birmingham Run**

<sup>41</sup> Spirit of 2012, p.31

## **Bursaries and Incentives**

*'Link incentives back to their motivations for engaging in volunteering. For example, if they wanted to help others, celebrate the impact of their support; if they wanted to develop skills, a certificate of engagement, award or qualifications may maintain their engagement; or if they wanted to volunteer to make friends, think of ways to bring your volunteers together.'*<sup>42</sup>

*Stakeholders noted the opportunity to use the portal and the central hub to shine a light on particular volunteers. Recognition simultaneously acts as a method of incentivising volunteering offers whilst also promoting to prospective volunteers.*

### **Quality Table**

Part of engaging people as volunteers involves removing barriers preventing them from taking part. Sometimes these barriers manifest as the time pressures of other work/life commitments and how this impacts on ability to volunteer. More often however, these barriers are those obstacles preventing under-represented groups from engaging, as we will go on to discuss in the 'Inclusion' section of this report.

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<sup>42</sup> Sport England, p.22

*'We give a donation into a club when they come forward to volunteer'*

### **Great Run Company - Birmingham Run**

Primarily, there are some universal practices which can be put in place, in an attempt to begin moving some of these initial barriers. A large portion of the organisations we spoke to in the region had begun putting some of these in place.

75% of them, for example, offer volunteers a bursary to reimburse travel and accommodation expenses and 50% of them offer volunteers lunch and/or dinner.

*Stakeholders discussed methods through which volunteers could be offered centralised reward and recognition via the portal. This could mark milestones in personal volunteer journeys such as: 10 hours of volunteering completed.*

### **Trust Table**

Whilst for some individuals these are perks of the engagement, for some they make engagement possible. This is especially true for people not in education or employment, or those on a government

pension, who, without the contribution would be significantly out of pocket, whilst still offering their time in kind. It is also worth note that these two particular groups are often young people or over 65s - both of which represent the groups most likely to engage in volunteering opportunities, as highlighted by the Spirit enquiry.

*'Help with expenses: Some volunteering opportunities require travel and the inability to afford transport is a barrier for some people, particularly those who are unemployed or economically inactive and who might stand to gain from the boost to skills and wellbeing that volunteering can bring.'*<sup>43</sup>

Further than covering expenses which would have been incurred as a result of volunteering, some organisations also offer incentives for participation. 31% of organisations offer volunteers free tickets for their other events, and 13% offer volunteers a cash contribution to reimburse them for their time.

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<sup>43</sup> Spirit of 2012, p.31

*'Invitations to events and activities, thank you parties, free drinks, discount in cafe'*

**Heritage Organisation**  
**26 - 50 PAYE staff**  
**Black Country**

*'Depends per event and funding. We offer parking and aim to offer refreshment. We offer our own volunteer recognition system with pin badges and additional uniform.'*

**Sports Organisation**  
**4 - 10 PAYE staff**  
**Coventry**

*'Discount on tickets to event & uniform'*

**Lawn Tennis Association**  
**Birmingham**

As above, in creating a bespoke offer for your volunteers, keep in mind their motivations and their resultant needs in doing so. Linking incentives back to this will improve success. As with the above example from a heritage organisation in the Black Country: if a principal driver for your volunteers is to socialise, then they would respond well to 'thank you parties'.

*Stakeholders also noted that it would help organisations if United by 2022, via the portal, could aid organisations with volunteer expenses such as travel costs, or meal tickets. If this could be centrally housed via the portal, it would increase efficiency.*

**Trust Table**

*As a central network of organisations will now form around the portal, to what extent can incentives be shared between organisations? The incentive that you received may not be linked to the organisation that you're volunteering with, but rather a partner in the wider network. This would diversify the incentives on offer whilst also fostering more connection between different volunteers and organisations who may have not interacted prior.*

**Trust Table**

## **Systems**

As noted on a national scale, digital platforms have the potential to revolutionise the way volunteering works, across multiple sectors, and is currently an underexplored avenue for engagement.<sup>44</sup>

Organisations within the region use a number of different pieces of software to manage their volunteering engagement - this ranges from bespoke software built for the organisation, to software designed for managing volunteers, to more universal tools such as forms and spreadsheets. Just under a third of organisations we spoke to said they did not use any software.

*Do you make use of any software and/or systems when engaging volunteers? If so, what are they?*

*'We have a bespoke online portal we use for volunteers to track their personal development and reflect on their progress'*

**Sports Organisation**  
**11 - 25 PAYE staff**  
**Birmingham**

*'Blackbaud bespoke system'*

**Heritage Organisation**  
**100+ PAYE staff**  
**Working Nationally**

*'I wish! Good old excel'*

**Arts Organisation**  
**No PAYE staff**  
**Birmingham**

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<sup>44</sup> Spirit of 2012, p.12

*'Not yet but this year we will be piloting a new accreditation system which includes volunteer management'*

**Arts Organisation  
4 - 10 PAYE staff  
Birmingham**

*'We're now, as a business, working towards a new volunteer management platform.'*

**Great Birmingham Run - Great Birmingham Run**

Whilst for some organisations bespoke software may be beyond the scale of their work, some events based organisations, such as those above, have begun investing in bespoke software to develop their volunteering systems and therefore offer. Lengthy processes such as accreditation and document checks have the potential to be made more efficient as a result. Another aim, as mentioned, is the ability to maintain engagement over a longer period with volunteers.

*'In 2017 after the world championships in London, we had so many people that wanted to volunteer at the world championships and the world para-championships that we created a central database.'*

**British Athletics - Indoor Grand Prix Birmingham**

In other regions, sectors have begun to explore what a centralised volunteering system may look like. [The Norfolk Volunteer Passport](#) for example 'helps volunteers gain knowledge and skills to help them find new roles more quickly and move more easily between volunteering roles.'<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, it doesn't just signpost to volunteering opportunities. The platform adds to the volunteering offers of the organisations who use it. It provides them with tools, whilst also removing some of the administrative burdens associated with engaging volunteers in events. In this way, it models some of the best practices discussed in this report, in particular further promoting the use of partner organisations.<sup>46</sup>

This has also been trialled on a national, cross-sector level via business '[Dolt](#)'.<sup>47</sup> They build in volunteer listings as well as private sector partnerships - as discussed

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<sup>45</sup> [Norfolk Volunteer Passport](#)

<sup>46</sup> [Norfolk Volunteer Passport](#)

<sup>47</sup> [Dolt](#)

in the recruitment partner section - in order to drive people to opportunities.

### **Exit Processes**

One of the most important processes an organisation can put in place to ensure long-lasting impact for volunteering is an exit process.

Primarily, as noted by Sport England, 'it is important to prepare a process to support this stage of your delivery to benefit you and your volunteers. This will ensure that the experience ends in a positive way to encourage them to volunteer in the future'.<sup>48</sup>

This may include encouraging your volunteers to share experiences about their journey, signposting them to other opportunities of interest, and to stay in touch where appropriate.

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<sup>48</sup> Sport England, p.23

## **Evaluation**

*Stakeholders spoke about the opportunities posed via the portal platforming volunteers to share their experiences. How can a centralised approach push this further and help volunteers talk more publicly about their experiences.*

### **Quality Table**

100% of the organisations we spoke to in the region said they had some form of monitoring and evaluation process in place for volunteers. Strong practice in this area will evidently lead to more bespoke offers, as organisations tailor their engagement directly to the feedback given by volunteers taking part.

Sport England have published an incredibly useful guide on how to conduct effective evaluation with volunteers - which can be found [here](#).<sup>49</sup>

*'I would do post event surveys with the volunteer team.'*

**Lawn Tennis Association - Birmingham  
Rothesay Classic**

*Stakeholders noted the unique opportunity held in the portal to begin a process of shared and uniform volunteer evaluation and learning measurement. This process will enable better centralised learning.*

### **Cross Sector Table**

## **INCLUSION**

*'It's got to be the right people, it's got to be the right cross-section of the community wherever possible.'*

**Birmingham Pride**

This section begins to discuss how a broader, more representative range of people can become involved in volunteering in the events sector, and how organisations in the region currently approach inclusion in volunteering.

*'We tried to have a mix of people who'd volunteered in the past, and those who were volunteering for the first time, because we didn't want to just keep having the same group of volunteers.'*

**British Athletics - Indoor Grand Prix  
Birmingham**

As previously mentioned, a key factor in this is continually encouraging new people to volunteer for an organisation, through a variety of methods. However, further than this, inclusion in this context is looking specifically at how volunteers can be more representative, diverse and inclusive.

*'For all the events available to take part in that year, we limited individuals to participating in three events each, as we wanted to broaden the opportunity for new volunteers to come through.'*

**British Athletics - Indoor Grand Prix  
Birmingham**

As established, a principal social action outcome of volunteering in the events sector is community cohesion and connection. Therefore, volunteering in this context has an incredibly important role to play in furthering acceptance, understanding and empathy between people of different backgrounds.

Inclusion in this context can mean, but is not limited to:

<sup>49</sup> ['Volunteering Evaluation Toolkit'](#), Sport England, June 2019

- Diversifying the age range of people who take part in volunteering. Where previously noted, research has shown that young people and over 65s are most likely to take part in volunteering opportunities.

*'[Before we began working with Universities] we found that the majority of our volunteers were aged 60+'*

**British Athletics - Indoor Grand Prix  
Birmingham**

*'The smallest band tend to be those in their 20s - 40s who are working full time.'*

**Lawn Tennis Association - Birmingham  
Rothesay Classic**

- Changing the attitude towards gender roles in these sectors through more positive modelling in volunteering. This is particularly relevant in sports sectors, which have made recent progress in platforming of female athletes and sportspeople. This is also a particularly live conversation for the involvement of trans people in sports - diversifying volunteering bases through inclusion of more

people who identify as trans may lead to changing attitudes in this area.<sup>50</sup>

- Engaging people from different ethnic backgrounds, of different faiths and of different nationalities in volunteering. As mentioned, due to a range of specific faith and culture based offers, people of a range of different ethnic, faith and cultural backgrounds take part in volunteering everyday. Further cross-pollination of these groups and events, particularly through working with partner organisations, would further the aims of community cohesion and social connection.

*'I don't know if this is reflective of an event which is being held in Birmingham, but in terms of race and ethnicity we get a mixture, it is predominantly white but certainly now exclusively so, and not as much as people might expect for the sport of tennis, which obviously has the connotations of being a white, elitist sport.'*

<sup>50</sup> Lopiano, Donna; ['A Fair And Inclusive Solution For Transgender Women In Sports'](#); *Forbes*, 4 August 2022

**Lawn Tennis Association - Birmingham  
Rothesay Classic**

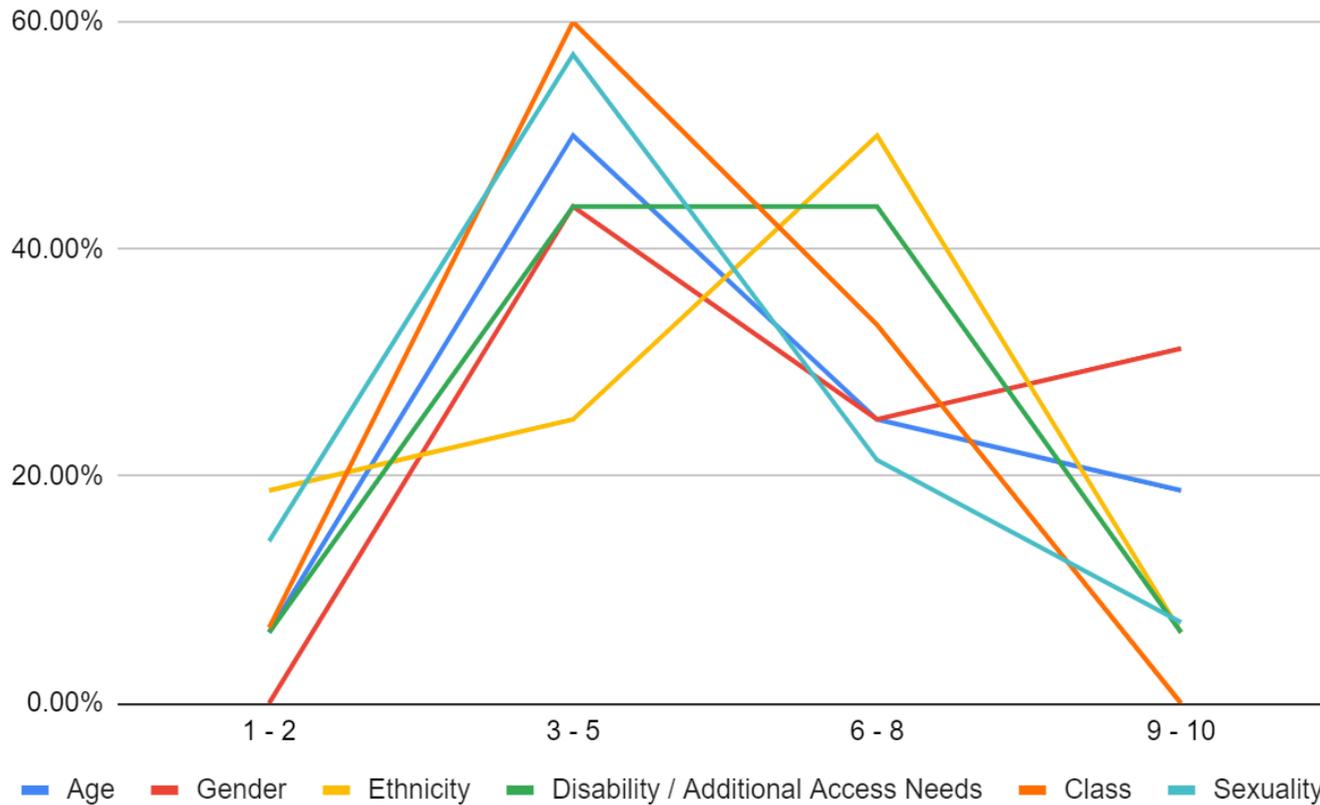
- Actively breaking down access and mobility barriers for people who identify as disabled, neurodiverse or living with a long term health condition. More work towards bespoke volunteering offers will further this aim. Events based volunteering offers opportunities and challenges in this area. As mentioned, as volunteers provide 'added value' roles to events - which are inherently more flexible - there should be more room to accommodate the needs and differing skill sets of different people - those who identify as disabled, and those who don't, alike.

*'We've recently made the addition of specific access volunteers - who are there primarily to enhance the experience for those with access needs at the festival.'*

**Birmingham Pride**

**Figure 9: According to the following characteristics, how diverse in terms of identity would you say your volunteer pool is?**

[1: People of the same ages/background, 10: people of different ages/backgrounds]



- Sexuality is often less discussed in these contexts but is nonetheless an incredibly important factor to assess when diversifying volunteers. Again partnering with organisations whom people trust, for example LGBTQ+ charities, will further this work.
- Finally, another lesser-discussed factor in how diverse our volunteer base is, across sectors, but also across other forms of cultural and sporting engagement, is deprivation and economic inequality. People from areas of social deprivation, or those without access to education and employment, seek to benefit most from volunteer opportunities, but are all too often left unengaged. In events contexts this becomes especially pertinent due to the occasionally short lived engagement between volunteer and organisation, which often prevents skills from developing into relevant experience.

Organisations based in the West Midlands have at their doorstep one of the most diverse populations in the UK, in particular with regard to faith and ethnicity. We are also home to some of the most socially deprived wards and constituencies in the country.

Figure 9 (above) shows how organisations based in the West Midlands perceived the diversity of their volunteers.

Generally, across the board, organisations were slightly more likely to identify that their volunteers were of a similar identity. Of the varying identities listed, organisations felt that their volunteers were most diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender and disability. It is, however, certainly worth note that these can be amongst the most ‘visible’ of identity characteristics. However, these insights should remain speculative, as they pertain to an organisation’s perceptions of their volunteers, as opposed to the volunteers’ self-identified demographics.

*‘Demographic questions have now been moved to the acceptance form as part of the application process, so that [legally] we can’t be accused of being bias.’*

### **British Athletics - Indoor Grand Prix Birmingham**

Of all the organisations we spoke to in the region, an almost equal balance set Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) targets for their volunteer pool to those who didn’t. This is shown in figure 10. 100% of the heritage organisations we spoke to said they didn’t set EDI targets, and generally, sports organisations were more likely to set EDI targets for their volunteers than Arts organisations.

## **SECTORS**

A principal driver of conducting this research was in order to understand how far organisations work together and/or share learning and insight into engaging volunteers as part of events.

As previously seen, the majority of organisations we spoke to, work with

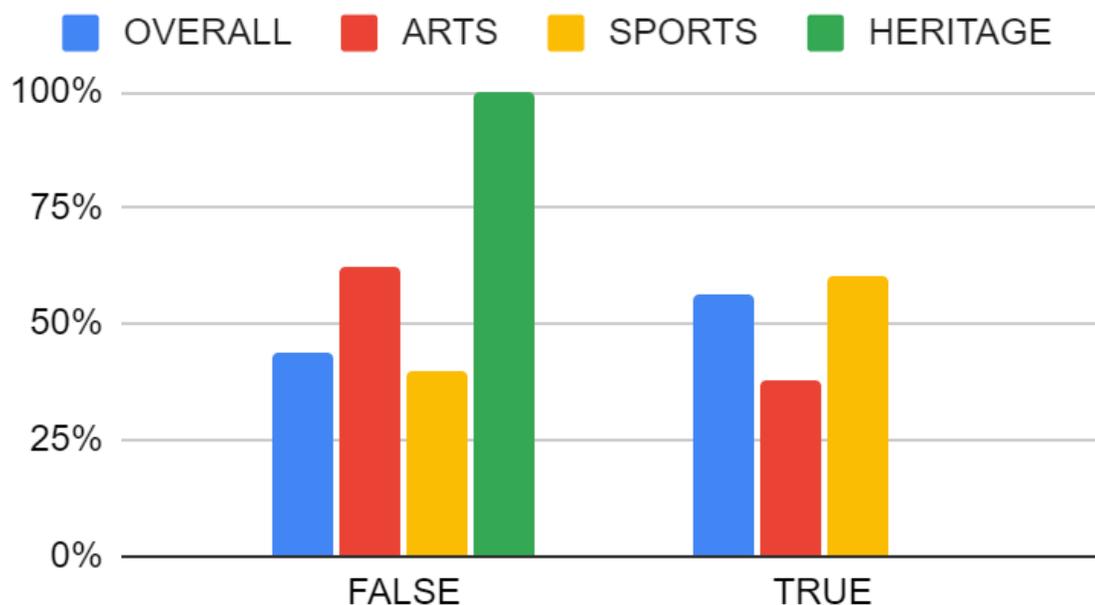
partners in order to further diversify, as well as increase, recruitment. However, throughout interviews, there were a number of other references to how organisations collaborate on volunteering offers.

Primarily, as seen below, organisations such as Pride, meet with their other regional counterparts on a regular basis, to discuss planning of their events. A key facet of these discussions is use of volunteers and their role at events.

*Stakeholders noted that more could be done to foster better communication between organisations and sectors regarding volunteering opportunities and offers. This is something which the portal could also facilitate.*

### **Cross Sector Table**

**Figure 10: Do you set Equality, Diversity and Inclusion targets for recruitment of volunteers?**



*'I had a meeting yesterday with our colleagues at Manchester, London and Brighton Pride, and they too face similar experiences to us, albeit that the models are different in certain areas. For the same reasons they have a core of around 150 volunteers, because they are not-for-profit, in the same way we are. [...] They too couldn't run without volunteers.'*

**Birmingham Pride**

This was also the case for the governing bodies of UK Sports organisations such as British Athletics.

*'We [interviewee and volunteer representative at Birmingham City Council] would have regular meetings, and I would have meetings with UK sport as well and all the other governing bodies about what they do for their events. We'd talk amongst ourselves about how we give the best experience for volunteers, so that they would come back.'*

**British Athletics - Indoor Grand Prix Birmingham**

Aside from partnering with other organisations who may feed your volunteering offer. A large number of organisations who offer volunteering themselves, also signpost the people they engage to other opportunities. 92% of the organisations we spoke to as part of this consultation said this was the case.

This was also reflected in secondary research on productive exit processes - which explained the importance of an exit process for volunteers no longer wanting to engage with your organisation. Whilst they may not wish to continue participating in this context, they may wish to in others, or may be looking for a change. This is where signposting to other relevant organisations is key, otherwise individuals may cease to volunteer again.

It is also particularly important in this instance that events-based volunteering opportunities signpost to non-events based offers and vice-versa. The individual may be looking for a different form of volunteering offer to what they are currently engaging in.

In spite of this, some organisations did express concern about signposting. They mentioned hesitancy regarding other volunteering offers. They mentioned that it is important to have familiarity with the volunteering opportunities you are signposting to, or long built trust with volunteers may be damaged as a result.

*'We don't signpost our volunteers to other opportunities. [...] because we can't be sure that the other events that you are recommending [...] are safe and well run and well organised and that they are treated in the same way as how we treat them.'*

#### **Birmingham Pride**

*This was also noted by Stakeholders. It is crucial that organisations feel confident and happy using the portal as the central pathway to volunteering. In order to engender this confidence, we must ensure centralised methods of ensuring quality of offer.*

#### **Cross Sector Table**

*Stakeholders engaging in separate conversations echoed this point, explaining the potential use of a charter to which all organisations engaging in the portal can sign up. This would enable centralised commitment to universal aims, intentions and quality. It would then become crucial for United by 2022 to play an active role in governance of this charter.*

#### **Quality Table**

Finally, as is the case with the 'Give: Volunteering for Wellbeing Evaluation Report for the National Lottery Heritage Fund' report referred to throughout this report, as well as mentioned in primary consultations: organisations collaborate on evaluation and research. Linked up approaches to participating in research and evaluative studies of volunteering for events, particularly across sectors and scales, is invaluable. They enable us to better share learning as well as compare impact and challenges.

*'If we take part in [UK Sport's] research, then we will benefit from their learnings.'*

#### **British Athletics - Indoor Grand Prix Birmingham**

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