



**Sports Volunteering North West Ltd
Volunteering research study 2006**

Executive Summary from Sport Structures Ltd

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Executive Summary

To provide consultation and review of sports volunteering in the North West in order to produce a sound evidence base for the development of Sports Volunteering North West Ltd five year strategy (2007 – 2012).

The project was conducted using a three phased approach design, analyse and report. The three phases were separate in their development and conclusion; however were inter-linked to ensure a progressive response to the needs of the study.

Phase one was undertaken through the design of two questionnaires;

1. For those who provide services or support for volunteers
2. For volunteers themselves

The questionnaires were formatted as an online survey (available on a number of websites), developed for email distribution and were made available in hardcopy. A comprehensive database was developed through desk based research and key informant techniques the database acted as the basis for distribution of the questionnaires. To ensure that the questionnaires reached the targeted organisations and individuals, desk and telephone contact with key agencies was undertaken to promote the level of response.

Phase two was initiated by a consolidation of data sources within SPSS™ (the Statistical Package for Social Sciences) all quantitative data was then subjected to first level and second level statistical analysis. All qualitative responses were collated, coded and condensed; this enabled a more quantifiable analysis of responses allowing any key trends to be identified.

Phase three concluded in the production of this report compiled to present key findings, conclusions and recommendations for the development of the Sports Volunteering North West strategy and potential future research.

From the study the following conclusions were established:

- The data identified by the Active Peoples survey highlights that the North West region is below the national average for sports volunteer participation. At a local authority level volunteer participation is 1% below the national average.
- Organisations that provide services to volunteers are from a range of organisational types some with distinct specialist priorities such as youth provision, equality, sport specific or geographic areas.
- Data collected on volunteers by service provider organisations is limited with 29.7% of responding organisations not holding a database of volunteers. From those which do hold databases there are limitations in the extent of the information captured.

- 42.9% of organisations suggested that they worked with all priority groups however from those to target specific underrepresented groups support for ethnic minorities is relatively low.
- There appears to be little consistency in volunteer guidance documents and volunteer strategies. With high numbers of organisations (52.0%) not having a volunteer strategy. The lack of strategic direction is further highlighted in the self reflection rating as strategic development was identified as a weaker area.
- The majority of service providers suggested that they had no awareness of funding opportunities for sports volunteering.
- Funding, resources, communication, recruitment and training were perceived as a way in which Sports Volunteering North West Ltd could improve provision to sports volunteers.
- Training and development opportunities were offered by service providers with a substantial number suggesting that they provide access to placement opportunities, National Governing Body awards, sport coach UK workshops and first aid courses.
- In addition to a lack of awareness of training and development opportunities time constraints, cost, location of courses and the inconvenience relating to the times of courses are the main barriers for not attending.
- Training and development were seen as the main areas of partnership working between service provider partnerships.
- There is clear enthusiasm amongst these organisations to support the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games through pre and post games initiative or areas including, recruitment, support, training and retaining volunteers. The enthusiasm is reflected by the active volunteers through the number to suggest that they would like to see initiatives within the region. Although over half of the responding organisation had no plans in place for linking to London 2012.
- The following issues and challenges were described by service provider concerning trying to develop the voluntary sport sector within the North West: Funding, Recruitment, diminishing facilities and resources, lack of supported placements and time. Sports volunteers themselves suggested the following main concerns: demands of full time job, support, legislation, cost, recognition and time.

From the study the following recommendations were established:

1. SVNW should utilise the Active Peoples survey volunteering data to highlight geographical areas to target within the strategy such as a focussed approach to improve volunteering representation within Liverpool City Council and Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council. The Active Peoples survey could be used to monitor

progress towards achieving the national average for sports volunteering within the region which suggests the need for a 1% increase.

2. The strategy should reflect the various types of service provider organisations within the region. This will require cooperative working to promote an understanding of their role, capacity and their ability to link to the direction of sports volunteering within the region.
3. Actions could be developed towards establishing a centralised database of volunteers and volunteering activity within the region or at a minimum developing standardised guidance on suitable data collection from active volunteers. Any database consolidation or development would require significant partnership working to develop and maintain a database tool which would be beneficial to all partners such as Volunteering England and Sport England.
4. Consideration should be given within the strategy to priority groups and their under representation within the volunteer workforce. Further research may be required at a regional level to link with national data sets regarding the identification of the issues and barriers facing involvement with sports volunteering. Links should be made with the regional Equity Alliance and Equality groups. With the potential for SVNW to work towards achieving the Equality Standard for Sport.
5. The identification within the study of a lack of strategic direction suggests that SVNW could take a positive lead in providing a regional strategic direction for sports volunteering. Indications are that the SVNW strategy would be well received within the region so should be promoted through a variety of methods to ensure that an understanding of the strategic direction is understood within all aspects of the sports and voluntary sector. Individual organisations also need support and guidance to develop their own volunteer strategies guidance could therefore include an outline for basic volunteer strategy, how it should be implemented and link to the regional direction.
6. Documentation or signposting is required for training opportunities, sources of funding and general resources such as legislation guidance as it appears that there is limited awareness. Training and Development of volunteers is a key areas within the study which requires consideration as to the relationship with SVNW and whether its role should be direct training and development interventions or an indirect but strategic approach to coordination and promotion.
7. Communication should be a central aspect of the strategy to include internal dimensions of working with key partners such as Volunteering England and Sport England as well as external communication processes to market sports volunteering opportunities to active and potential volunteers. Communication strategies will need to closely to wider partnership working to ensure that a consistent message relating to sports volunteering and sports volunteer activities within the region is established.

8. The enthusiasm for initiatives relating to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games suggest that there should be development of these concepts within the region whether this is led or influenced by SVNW will need to be determined clearly defined priorities within the strategy.

More detailed information on the project methodology, key findings, conclusions and recommendations can be found within the full report.