Sport Makers — Developing good practice in volunteer and sports development

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Summary

This report reviews the Sport Makers programme to identify good practice in developing volunteers and their contribution to sports participation.

It uses results from interviews with County Sport Partnership (CSP) managers, partners in delivery, workshop facilitators, and observation of workshops.

It identifies where the programme has stimulated the development of new partnerships in novel and innovative ways, and where it has allowed the development of existing partnerships.

A strength of the programme has been the flexibility CSPs have to adapt it to work with their own network of partners.

A limitation has been the influence of the system of monitoring and control which has led to a target-driven approach and the lack of integration into local sports development strategies.

Options are suggested for further development of the programme, capitalising on the database of new volunteers and new partnerships.

While Sport Makers aims to generate a legacy around the 2012 Olympics, the programme’s lessons for developing volunteering and participation are more general.

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1. Introduction

This research, undertaken by an independent team of researchers, aims to find out if, how and why Sport Makers has increased volunteering in sport. More specific questions/objectives are:

1. Has the brokerage of volunteers and sports volunteering opportunities developed the work of County Sport Partnerships (CSPs) such that it has increased both volunteering and volunteering opportunities?
2. How has the operation of the programme been influenced by the monitoring system?
3. To make recommendations for development of the programme after September 2013.

The research is intended to complement the commissioned evaluation of the programme which is not yet available.

A basic description of the Sport Maker programme is followed by theoretical considerations of how and why it might develop volunteering and participation in sport, trends in sports participation and the impact of performance targets.

Interviews were conducted with 9 CSP officers, 5 partner organisations and 2 workshop facilitators. In addition, 2 workshops were observed. Further details of methods are in Appendix B.

The main findings are illustrated by case studies (Appendix A). Options for developing the programme are discussed.
2. **Sport Makers**

Sport Makers is part of Sport England’s **Places, People, Play** programme to promote sports participation as a legacy of the 2012 Olympic Games. The programme to promote volunteering in sport is predicated on the assumption that the Olympic Games will provide a catalyst for interest in volunteering. The programme, funded by £4m from the National Lottery\(^1\), aims to engage 50,000 new volunteers in sport.

‘Key performance indicator 1’ is that 40,000 new volunteers will attend an orientation workshop and each will be deployed, through county sport partnerships, to opportunities to give 10 hours of volunteering. These opportunities will be through sports events, sports clubs, or to act as individual animators who will promote sport in an informal manner. ‘Key performance indicator 2’ is for 20,000 volunteers to continue to volunteer after the initial 10 hours. The programme started recruiting in October 2011, was originally due to finish in March 2013 but has been extended to September 2013.

Sport Makers is delivered through the Country Sports Partnerships as an extension of their work. Essentially the CSP acts as a broker between volunteers and opportunities. Volunteers may become involved by two routes: they may register their interest directly via the national sport maker web site or via an organisation working in partnership with the CSP to recruit volunteers. These may include sports clubs, universities, colleges, National Governing Bodies of sport (NGBs), businesses — any organisation which wants to promote sports volunteering. From whichever source they are recruited prospective sport makers then attend an ‘inspiration’ workshop. The workshops may be open to any potential Sport Makers, or may be ‘closed’ — in which case they are run just for the organisation that has recruited the Sport Makers. Workshops are coordinated by the CSPs but are delivered by a consultancy commissioned for the purpose — Press Red — using over 100 nationally distributed facilitators. The format of the workshops is open to development by the facilitators but has to cover 5 key sections:

1. Olympic & Paralympic Values;
2. Leading From Within;
3. Having Fun & Keeping Safe;
4. Helping Others;
5. Deployment.
Additional elements may be added by facilitators who want to adapt the workshops for different audiences. Workshops were originally scheduled to run for three hours, but have been delivered in as little as 30 minutes for a particular audience, although this is not recommended.

Following the workshop, Sport Makers are linked to volunteering opportunities either directly through a representative of the organisation who has attended the workshop, through deployment sub-brokers, or through the CSP web site.

For example, South Yorkshire CSP ran an open event at which volunteering with the local English Table Tennis Association (ETTA) Ping programme was promoted. It also ran a closed event at a local table tennis club, promoting the same opportunity. At both of these events volunteers were able to meet the local ETTA officer who could then deploy them to help deliver the Ping programme (see Appendix A, case study 7). In contrast, at the end of a workshop run for the National Citizenship Programme participants were directed to the CSP web site for volunteering opportunities.

Monitoring of the programme is through a designated web site. Either prospective volunteers register themselves on the Sports Makers web site directly, or the CSP registers them at the workshop. The Sports Makers themselves are required to register their hours of volunteering.

Up until June 2012 any Sport Maker registering 10 hours or more was entered into a draw for Olympic tickets — after this date CSPs introduced local incentives. A national evaluation of the programme will use records of volunteering hours on the web site as well as telephone interviews with volunteers.

Sport England also use the web site information to monitor the performance of individual CSPs who are set targets of workshop attendees, Sports Makers deployed for 10 hours, and those retained 3 months after recruitment after they have completed ten hours.

The individual CSP targets have been set in relation to the national targets, proportionate to the percentage of the population aged over 16 resident in that county. For example, South Yorkshire CSP is expected to deliver 1,023 volunteers deployed for 10 hours each, and 511 continuing volunteering beyond the initial 10 hours, and 64 workshops.
3. Volunteer development in sport — conceptual issues

This section outlines some of the key conceptual issues behind volunteering and serves as a generic backdrop to this specific report on Sport Makers.

3.1 The importance and nature of sports volunteers

There are approximately 85,000 sports clubs run by volunteers in the UK\(^2\). These clubs are almost entirely reliant on volunteers, with paid staff normally taking only roles of coaches, bar staff and grounds maintenance. Volunteers’ contribution reduces the costs of participation in sport in the clubs. Average club membership fees are £83 for adults and £61 for juniors\(^3\). Volunteers are also important for running events, from the Olympic Games (70,000) to community fun runs (see Appendix A, case study 1: Barnsley Best).

There is also a growing evidence base that acknowledges the value of engagement in sport volunteering for both the individual and wider society. For example, it is clear from the Sport Makers programme that sport volunteering provides opportunities for individuals to connect with each other, and with other communities. What is more, evidence from other sport development projects (e.g. Positive Futures) suggests that sports participation is a form of ‘social participation’, with the potential to foster the development of individual empowerment, networking opportunities, citizenship and social capital. Certainly the local sports clubs examined in this report offered both structured (organised, competitive) and unstructured (social) opportunities for participating in sport, with the potential for a range of social inclusion benefits.

Recruiting volunteers is a challenge for clubs\(^3\). The general level of volunteering has been static at best over the last ten years\(^4\) and there has been a trend towards episodic volunteering, in which volunteers contribute time for occasional, limited periods. This is in contrast to the open-ended administrative roles, such as chair, secretary, etc., which are important to maintain the club structures, but are the roles most difficult to fill. Sport Makers could help to provide administrative volunteers to clubs — although initially they would be more likely to take more basic roles. There is always plenty to do if the club is organised well enough to identify the tasks.
However, some of these club volunteers will not necessarily think of themselves as ‘volunteering’: they are just ‘helping out’. For example, they may be transporting children to a game but not have a formal role in a club. Other ‘informal volunteering’ takes place outside these organisations but is even more difficult to measure. For example, someone may book a 5-a-side football pitch for some friends and arrange a game with another team. This may encourage informal sports participation. This is another potential deployment for Sport Makers. But these volunteers may be less likely to regard themselves as volunteers, and this informal participation in sport may be harder to sustain outside a formal structure.

3.2 Good practice in promoting volunteers in sports clubs

Clubs are social organisations and are run differently from commercial businesses. This means that effective placement of a new volunteer might normally require: matching the aspirations of the volunteer to the needs of the club, work with the club to help it identify the most useful role for the volunteer and mentoring of the volunteer in the new role. This process takes some time and requires knowledge of the local clubs. An example is the Amateur Swimming Association regional development officer (used as a case study in a recent report on good practice in clubs recruiting new volunteers from outside the club). This volunteer acts as a broker between volunteers recruited through volunteer centres and swimming clubs in the Nottingham area. He will meet new volunteers to discuss what they can offer a club and their needs; match them to a club; visit the club with them to establish the relationship; and then follow this up a month later to make sure the relationship is satisfactory to both parties.

However, it is much more usual for clubs to recruit from existing members or parents of members, and in common with all volunteering, a personal request to a prospective new volunteer is the most effective method of recruitment.

3.3 Types of sports volunteer broker organisations

A trend towards episodic volunteering, which is limited to discrete events, has been capitalised on by organisations acting as brokers between volunteers and sports events, either via a web site or personal contact. This type of broker service allows volunteers to choose which events they volunteer for and how many; thus permitting flexibility and limited commitment.
This type of broker service can be thought of as on a spectrum from ‘basic’ to ‘developmental’. The most basic service allows prospective volunteers to find an event via a web site. This is simplest and cheapest to run — it allows volunteers to deploy themselves through responding to opportunities promoted on a web site. This facility might only require the moderation of opportunities placed on the web site and there is no personal contact with volunteers. This process requires volunteers to take all the initiative and for them to have access to the internet (a lower proportion of elderly people have this). An example of a web based broker service was the ‘Join In’ initiative\(^8\), which linked volunteers to events for one weekend after the Olympic Games.

A more developmental service can develop events’ or clubs’ good practice in volunteer management, and develop the volunteers through the process of volunteering. It will validate the quality of volunteering opportunities before recommending them, offer advice to volunteers, and advise events or clubs on good practice in volunteer management. It might develop volunteers through helping them with CV preparation or providing training courses. Thus it aims to develop volunteers and the organisations they are deployed to. An example is Barnsley Best (Appendix A, case study 1). Others examples run by local government include Manchester Event Volunteers\(^9\) and Newham Volunteers\(^10\).

An example of a broker matching volunteers to sports clubs is Kirklees Council’s ‘volunteer in sport co-ordinator’ who acts as a broker between volunteers (recruited from volunteer centres) and clubs (although she may also place volunteers in other sports opportunities, such as events)\(^11\). As noted in the above example of the Amateur Swimming Association regional development officer (§3.2), before placing a volunteer in a club, work is required with the club to identify the volunteer roles and how the club will support the new volunteer. An interview is also required with the volunteer to determine the most appropriate placement for their skills and motivations. This personal contact with club and volunteer takes considerable time. The person acting as a broker needs particular skills and the confidence of clubs in a relationship which takes time to develop; but this is needed to make sure the match between volunteer and club meets the needs of both.

A similar example is Manchester University’s ‘Sport Development officer (volunteers and club development)’ who aims to develop clubs and student volunteers.
Thus while the most basic broker service just allows for an exchange of information between volunteer and the organisation requiring volunteers, more developed services may aim to develop the volunteer, the organisation using the volunteer, or both.

### 3.4 Potential implications for Sport Makers

The type of broker service provided depends on the objectives of the service and the resources available. The ‘basic’ web-based service is the cheapest: it just aims to exchange information between volunteers and potential volunteering opportunities, and it relies on the volunteers having taken the initiative to use it.

The most ‘developmental’ service is the most expensive, although the Amateur Swimming Association regional development officer example is cheaper because it is provided by a single exceptional volunteer. It aims to develop the organisation the volunteer is deployed to, and possibly the volunteer. The personal contact with both allows a more sensitive placement and a relationship of trust to be developed.

Sport Makers takes a combination of approaches. It uses the web site to link volunteers to opportunities. It has used the personal contact with prospective volunteers in the workshops to try to motivate volunteers and provide some very basic training. But it has not had the capacity to be more developmental, both for volunteers and organisations using volunteers, nor the capacity to validate the quality of deployment opportunities advertised to volunteers. The lack of these developmental capabilities has meant that a development-orientated organisation, such as Manchester University Student Volunteers (Appendix A, case study 3), was unable to partner with Sport Makers.

Sport Makers has not restricted deployments to clubs or other formal organisations — any deployment that will promote participation is valid: for example, organising a run for friends in a park. Sport Makers recognises the need to cater for informal participation taking place out of the club or school structure, possibly reflecting the trends discussed in 4, below. However, this type of volunteering will probably be harder to record and sustain.
4. A trend towards more informal participation in sport

Sport Maker’s decision to focus on promoting informal sports participation may be able to capitalise on a trend towards more individualized sports participation, out of the club structure. This was identified between 1987 and 1996 and has continued between 2005 and 2010. In this second period the biggest growth sports were athletics (including road running and jogging), gym and cycling; while golf, badminton, tennis, cricket, rugby union and rugby league have all experienced a decline.

Further analysis of Active People surveys could confirm this trend, and it appears to be reflected in a slight decrease in the number of sports clubs between 2002 and 2009. This will reflect people’s more fragmented life styles. However, as noted above, it is more difficult to deploy volunteers to support informal participation, to monitor what they are doing in an informal context, and to ensure it is sustainable.

5. The influence of performance targets on delivery

Sport Makers incorporates a system of management in which funding of CSPs is contingent on achievement of measurable performance indicators. Performance of CSPs is monitored by two ‘key performance indicators’: the numbers of Sport Makers deployed for a minimum of 10 hours or more of volunteering, and the number retained and continuing to volunteer after the initial 10 hours. Payments to CSPs from Sport England to run the programme are made at intervals of 6 months, on receipt of completed monitoring and evaluation information — implying that they may be conditional on achieving the targets. Sport England’s performance, as a government arm’s length body, is evaluated by the DCMS in a similar manner. Performance targets can determine the way a service is delivered and can have unanticipated negative impacts (a recent negative example in the UK was their impact on the service provided to patients by health services in Staffordshire). The literature on sports governance in elite sport funding in the UK has shown how target-driven policy can heavily influence NGBs modus operandi. An objective of this study has been to find out how the delivery of Sport Makers has been influenced by these targets.
6. Results

The results are structured by the main findings and cross referenced to the case studies in Appendix A.

6.1 Developing new partnerships

A valuable but unmeasured outcome has been the development of new partnerships between the CSP and other organisations, reflecting innovative approaches to sports development.

For example, South Yorkshire CSP has used Sport Makers to make partnerships with:

- South West Yorkshire Foundation Trust (through Barnsley Best) — working with Mencap clients;
- Doncaster Cheswold Park Hospital — working with sectioned patients;
- Doncaster Deaf College — 14 students have been recruited to set up a volleyball event in the summer;
- Sheffield Teaching Hospitals — for staff to set up table tennis sessions;
- Rotherham Police Cadets.

Another new partnership is between Manchester CSP and a factory wishing to promote sport to its workers through work-based sports provision. This illustrates the diverse range of partners CSPs might work with and the types of sports participation opportunities. These are far broader than traditional sports clubs.

Other innovative new partnerships have been disseminated as case studies in the December 2012 Sport England update15.

6.2 Extending existing partnerships

In many cases the SM programme was an addition to an existing partnership, and it was natural for CSPs to use it to extend their existing work. Examples included Barnsley Best, and the English Table Tennis Association in South Yorkshire, and London NHS Trusts with CSPs in London (Appendix A 1 case studies). At a national level, over 20 NGBs have placed a link on the SM web site, but it is not known how effective these have been in recruiting volunteers.
6.3 Performance against targets
In its December 2012 update\textsuperscript{15} Sport England reported:

‘We go into the year [2013] with 62,410 registered Sport Makers, 38,786 of whom have attended an event and 13,439 of whom have recorded more than 10 hours of activity’.

Thus it would seem that the number of volunteers attending a workshop is close to the target of 40,000. But if the 13,439 figure represents ‘key performance indicator 1’, those who have given 10 hours of volunteering each, then 13,439 is well below the original target of 40,000. The figure might represent progress towards ‘key performance indicator 2’ — i.e. 20,000 volunteers continuing to volunteer after the initial 10 hours. However, we think this is unlikely for reasons discussed below.

6.4 Under-recording performance
The records of those attending workshops can be assumed to be accurate as the CSP manager is able to collect the e-mail addresses of attenders and can ensure they have been recorded on the web site. We can also assume that there is under-recording of hours volunteered, because Sport Makers have to record their own hours by logging on to the web site. Hours may not be logged because volunteers do not see the need, do not have sufficient incentive, just forget, do not have convenient IT access; or they are not IT literate (one of the research team had to contact his CSP for guidance on using the web site).

Under-recording because individuals do not have access to the internet or are unable to use it can be overcome in some cases. For example, in South Yorkshire the CSP logged hours for Mencap patients once the deployment broker had informed them of the hours completed.

Nevertheless under-recording is a significant problem for CSPs if Sport England evaluates their performance using these figures. It is a similar problem for Sport England if they are evaluated in the same way by DCMS.

For the same reasons it will be extremely difficult to measure the ‘key performance indicator 2’, of 20,000 volunteers retained beyond the initial ten hours.

The national evaluation of Sport Makers is being conducted through a web-based questionnaire which is 9 pages long, so it is also likely to gain a
poor response, possibly biased towards those with a predilection for answering long web-based questionnaires.

Under-recording of hours and low response to the national evaluation might also be because e-mails are increasingly received on mobile phones, making it harder to respond in detail but just as easy to delete.

### 6.5 Over-recording performance

The aim of Sport Makers is to produce additional volunteers. In several instances a Sport Maker workshop has been added to an existing programme. Examples include the National Citizens Service programme for young people and college BTEC courses in which the students would have been expected to volunteer as part of their course. Another example appears to be the Coventry Ambassador programme. This was developed to provide volunteers to support the 2012 Olympic Football games held in Coventry. For that 249 ambassadors attended Sport Maker workshops, and presumably their further volunteering counted towards ‘key performance indicator 1’.

One can argue that the SM workshop was an addition to the other volunteering programmes, although the programmes would have existed without involving Sport Makers. It is unlikely that additional volunteers attended the workshops because they were labelled as part of the Sport Makers programme. In the case of the Coventry Ambassadors, if volunteers had attended a Sport Maker workshop after the Games it might have made them aware of different volunteering opportunities, but they would not have required the workshop training. There are other such examples of ‘double counting’ of volunteers between Sport Makers and other pre-existing programmes.

It appears that in some cases the three hours in which Sports Makers participate at a workshop are counted as part of their ten hours volunteering. This may further inflate the volunteering hours, especially if the workshop time is reduced to less than three hours, as has been the case.

### 6.6 Incentivising recording

The low rates of recording hours have led CSPs to offer inducements. The original incentive of entry into a draw for Olympic tickets was reported to have had a positive effect, but had to be replaced once it was no longer applicable. West London CSP has offered an incentive of £10 to each student who logs 10
hours of work. Other inducements have included t-shirts and bags, coaching bursary funding for a qualification after 2 months of volunteering, Amazon vouchers, and a hoody. Inducements have also been made to the deployment organisations — Pro-Active South London had initially provided £10 to partners for each student who logs 10 hours of work.

6.7 Workshop size — big v small

CSPs have attempted to strike a balance between large workshops which make a major contribution to the target numbers and smaller ones which they thought were more effective at promoting volunteering in the long-run.

It is tempting for CSPs to work with partners who can deliver large numbers at workshops but CSPs suggested that work with smaller numbers means there is time to help new volunteers identify the right deployment for them and the support they need, thus replicating the approach noted in §3.2.

‘Smaller workshops allow more attention to individual volunteers to set up viable volunteering opportunities.’ (CSP manager)

For example, a South Yorkshire workshop for Barnsley Best (see Appendix A, case study 1) only had 7 participants but led to volunteer deployments taking associates to a local community run, which may be sustainable in the long run. Big workshops may be successful in helping volunteers find deployments if the partner organisation has the capacity to do follow-up work with the participants (for example, Richmond Upon Thames College (case study 2) and Barnsley National Citizenship Service (NCS) (case study 4).

As noted in §6.5, if the partner was already promoting volunteering — which all NCS partners are — all that has been added is a new set of opportunities. Without this support in finding deployments, big workshops will work only if the participants are motivated and confident enough to act themselves on the potential deployments — in which case they are less likely to have required the inspiration intended to have been provided by the workshop.

As CSPs are aiming at an average of 20 people per workshop, the big workshops (82 and 84 participants in two of the case study examples) create the opportunity for small ones to be run with smaller organisations as they push up the total numbers.
6.8 Facilitators — skills and development

The facilitators, provided by Press Red, are employed only to deliver the workshops. They have no developmental role so are not used for follow-up support of volunteers. However, some facilitators have built up considerable experience and skills with particular target groups. CSPs identified as favourites those facilitators who had most skills in adapting the workshops to the target groups. For example, delivery to a National Citizenship Programme required an energetic active approach, with clear behavioural guidelines and a much shortened time for delivery. (One session observed started with a reminder of rules restricting drugs, violence and abuse of others, and lasted 90 minutes.)

6.9 The impact on CSP workload

Running Sport Makers has become a large part of the workload of CSPs: one reported it had completely taken it over. Thus it must have displaced previous activity. Interviews did not explore the work which had been displaced. Even so, extra staff have been employed to administer Sport Makers, including maintaining the local web site and attempting to maximise reporting of hours.

6.10 The impact of performance targets

All CSPs are acutely aware of their KPI target. As suggested above, this has had a considerable effect on the way the programme is delivered — as in the following examples.

Targeting large numbers

Partners with easy access to large numbers of volunteers have been targeted, especially colleges and universities. Members of these groups have a strong incentive to volunteer to improve their CVs; they are IT literate, so are more likely to record their hours on the web site and have an e-mail address; and they are also more responsive to inducements such as free t shirts. A large workshop attendance is more likely if it is part of a college course. It is possible that the manager of the targeted group may record students’ hours or pass them on to the CSP, who can then enter them directly if he has the student’s e-mail address. As noted above, this group are most likely to be successfully deployed if they have the support of their college. One facilitator described his experience of delivering workshops in Further Education colleges where only a small proportion of attendees were converted
to volunteers many of whom had probably already been volunteering:

‘I think what has happened in FE sector is whole groups have been put forward so you will have a whole BTEC group put forward and it will be offered as a bit of additionality. I would say that for every group of 20 about 5 … actually go on and do some sort of volunteering, and those 5 were probably the ones who were doing it already. A lot come along because they get told to come along for their CV and for the free kit (definite draw), and they might log a few hours but then I think it just tails off unless we stay on their case.’

**Double counting**

Where Sport Makers is added to a course in which participants would have been required to volunteer (see the Richmond Upon Thames College example and NCS) as a requirement of their college course it leads to double counting. Most of the volunteers and much of the volunteering would have occurred irrespective of Sport Makers. This was also the case in the Coventry Ambassadors programme. In these cases Sport Makers has added the workshop and some additional volunteering opportunities to already existing programmes.

**An incentive for additional recording?**

CSPs can access the website and log extra hours on behalf of volunteers, should they wish. This might even be required where it is clear that hours have been delivered but not recorded, possibly because the volunteer is not able to record them for technical reasons (see §6.4). It is possible that a CSP officer could record extra hours to help reach their targets, although we have no evidence for this.

**Allocating resources to record the participation hours**

Under-recording of hours has led CSPs to not only offer incentives for logging of hours but also to dedicate considerable staff time to attempting to maximise this. For example, one CSP tried to telephone 200 workshop attendees to find details of their volunteering and received one response. Some CSPs have responded to volunteers logging hours with individual messages of support. Attempting to record hours has become a significant part of CSPs’ work.
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Delivery is not led by local strategies to develop sport

Sport Makers is part of Sport England’s national strategy to increase participation in sport, but at a local level the target-driven approach meant it was not led by strategies for sports development. This is discussed in more detail in §7.2.

Positive impacts of targets

Targets have motivated CSPs to run more workshops, recruit more Sport Makers, and encourage them to deliver ten hours volunteering.

6.11 A link to Games Makers

Interviewees felt that unsuccessful Games Maker applicants (volunteers at the Olympic Games) who were either not invited to an interview or were not required once interviewed, might have been suitable targets for the Sport Maker programme. 240,000 people applied to be Games Makers, 100,000 were interviewed, and 70,000 were given roles as Games Makers.

This suggests a major potential source of Sport Makers, although there is a lot of difference between the motivation to volunteer for a ‘once-in-a-life-time’ experience at the Games and a local fun run!

In October 2012 Sport England had created a web page linking Games Makers to Sport Makers\textsuperscript{16}. This was three months after the Games and 12 months after Sport Makers started recruiting. Possibly LOCOG were reluctant to allow Sport England to promote Sports Makers earlier in case volunteering as a Sport Maker was a substitute for volunteering as a Games Maker. At the end of February 2013 a partnership of Sport England, UK Sport and London & Partners negotiated to own and manage LOCOG’s database of 5.3 million individuals\textsuperscript{17}. This figure includes the Games Makers, all those who applied to be Games Makers, and all the people who applied to buy a ticket for the Games. This gives Sport England the potential to disseminate information about volunteering across the UK and regionally, using a very targeted approach.
7. Discussion

7.1 Sports Makers as good practice in developing volunteers?

Even if the system for recording volunteer hours were accurate it would not allow an identification of how many Sports Makers were new to volunteering, or whether volunteering with Sport Makers had displaced other volunteering (so was not a net addition), or how many Sports Makers had increased their overall volunteering. The commissioned evaluation may attempt to deduce this from questionnaire responses but will be limited by the response rate and accuracy of recall of those who do respond.

This section focuses on the process of the programme rather than the recorded outputs.

In §3.3 we noted that while a basic programme might act only as a broker, enabling volunteers to find opportunities to volunteer, some programmes had objectives of developing the volunteers, developing the organisations hosting volunteers, or both. Sport Makers was close to the basic model of matching volunteers with opportunities, supplemented by training offered in workshops. The basic approach of putting volunteers in touch with opportunities via a web site allows well-motivated and confident volunteers to find a new volunteering opportunity. This may be especially valuable, for example, for a strongly motivated person moving to a new area where he/she lacked local contacts.

The workshops offer basic training, however young people targeted by the large workshops would probably have needed additional support to find a volunteer placement. The Sport Maker programme by itself provided this at large workshops only if a representative of the organisation the volunteers would be deployed to was present. Support might have been provided by the deployment organisation, such as colleges and the NCS, but in those cases volunteering was normally already a component of the course the participants were on.

Smaller workshops were better able to provide the support new volunteers needed, but this time and attention had to be bought by running other workshops with large numbers.

Developing either a general positive disposition to volunteering, or an extended commitment to a particular organisation, will require a volunteering experience that meets the needs of the volunteers and makes them feel valued.
This cannot be assured without checking the quality of the deployments, as is done by organisations such as Manchester Event Volunteers, Manchester University Student Volunteering Service, and others (§3.2, §3.3). To help young people, especially, develop as volunteers, a good match is required between their needs and the volunteering experience. The inability of Sport Makers to ensure this was why Manchester University Student Volunteering Service chose not to partner with Sport Makers.

Sport Makers also did not have the capacity to develop the volunteer deployment organisations, such as clubs and events, in the way illustrated by Kirklees Council’s volunteer sport co-ordinator (§3.3) to help them use volunteers most effectively and thus also ensure a good experience for the volunteer.

Sport Maker workshops might offer a useful additional training to existing volunteer development programmes; such as Barnsley Best (case study 1) but more research with existing programmes would be required to assess the value of additional training. However, overall, Sport Makers’ role in developing individual volunteers and the organisations they volunteered in was limited.

7.2 Sports Makers as good practice in developing sport?

We found little evidence of the Sport Maker programme being integrated into CSP or other local sports development strategies. The priority was to run the required number of workshops and attempt to attain ‘key performance indicator 1’, the number of volunteers recording 10 hours.

A more strategic approach would have been to start from the sports development strategies of the CSP partners, identify where volunteers were required and the skills they needed, and then target recruitment, training and deployment accordingly.

For example, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council started its own sports volunteer development programme in October 2011 in an attempt to develop community sports club capacity by increasing the number of volunteers in clubs led by volunteers. This was in anticipation of an increase in demand for the clubs arising from the Olympics. The clubs needed coaches so the programme offered a level one coaching qualification. This including training in safeguarding, first aid and disability awareness in exchange for 20 hours volunteering in a club. It has since been developed to offer a level 2 coaching qualification, which means that participants can take coaching roles
in the clubs. Volunteers are deployed to clubs where the development officer is confident they will be used effectively.

Prior to the Olympics it was not possible to anticipate which clubs would experience the most increase in demand. Post-Olympics, athletic clubs have experienced increased demand, so further volunteer training and deployment could be adapted to meet this increase.

Recruits represented a cross section by age and employment status — an aim being to not recruit people who regarded it mainly as a CV-building exercise but rather people who would make a longer commitment. The Council are also attempting to recruit volunteers to support a new ‘park run’ from those who volunteered to support the visit of the Olympic Torch.

South Yorkshire’s Sports Maker programme explored the option of linking to Rotherham’s strategy by providing a specific workshop but it was not possible at the time to get the 20 participants required to make this viable. South Yorkshire CSP has recently managed to arrange a specific workshop to recruit volunteers for the new park run. This is just one example, but illustrates the potential value of a more strategic approach.

8. Recommendations

Our investigation thus highlights a number of areas in which there is opportunity for improvement:

8.1 Adapt the programme to meet the needs of local partners

- The programme should be modified at CSP level to best meet the needs of local sports development strategies, as illustrated in §7.2. The starting point should be what is needed to develop sports participation locally.

8.2 Become more developmental

- To become more effective in developing both volunteers and the organisations to which they are deployed, Sport Makers could learn from the examples discussed in §3.2, §3.3 and §7.1. However, that would require more specialist skills, time and resources. Where organisations already have the skills and capacity to deliver this more developmental approach, CSPs could work with them. For example, Manchester University’s Sport Development officer would be more willing to deploy
students to volunteering opportunities presented by the CSP if they were guaranteed to provide a good experience for the students. If the CSP cannot directly provide these opportunities it could link Manchester University to an organisation that can. A good example of working with an organisation with a developmental agenda is South Yorkshire CSP working with Barnsley Best (Appendix A, case study 1).

- Another way of providing a more developmental approach would be through volunteers themselves taking a broker role, as the example in §3.2. Although such 'volunteer super-brokers' are exceptional, they illustrate the potential of this role and might be developed through NGBs.

- In developing volunteers Sport Makers could consider other major target groups of potential volunteers, such as those approaching retirement age. These individuals will have different skills to offer, will want different rewards, and may offer a longer-term commitment. They might be targeted through workplace schemes: for example, some employees have programmes of phased retirement where workers work reduced hours. Volunteering opportunities could be offered as part of these programmes.

8.3 Capitalise on the new partnerships

- A major positive outcome of the programme has been the development of new and innovative partnerships. These should be capitalised on. Sport England can continue to disseminate summary examples of good practice in the way it has appended cases to the December 2012 Sport Makers Update (Sport England 2012 c).

8.4 Retain and develop the web site

- The web site can be retained to continue to offer the basic broker service. Individuals could still opt to register as a Sport Maker with their relevant CSP. The web site could retain the links to NGB schemes.

- To be of increased value the web site would need to be constantly maintained. Links could be made to web sites of other organisations who seek to broker volunteers, such as local volunteer centres. The web site could continue to offer a useful service to college tutors seeking volunteering opportunities for their students, or to people new to the area who wished to become involved in volunteering locally.
• At the CSP level, Sport Makers could be sent periodic updates of new opportunities, but these would need to be precisely targeted to avoid being ignored. It may be possible to analyse the database of volunteers to categorise them into marketing segments, differentiated by type of volunteering. For example, if one group of volunteers have repeatedly volunteered at large events, e-mail shots could target them for similar volunteering opportunities. It might be possible, at a local level, to target Sport Makers for particular opportunities. For example, volunteers with Sheffield Ping (Appendix A, case study 7) could be targeted if they were required to support a table tennis tournament.

8.5 Move from target-driven to development-driven

• Delivery of the programme has thus far been led by the target-driven approach. It appears that the national targets Sport England were committed to, presumably as a condition of DCMS funding, may have been unrealistic. When cascaded down to the CSP level, targets (§5) have obliged CSP managers to choose a compromise between work which appears to attain the targets (although records might be misleading: §6.4, §6.5) and work which they judge to be most effective.

• An alternative would be to adopt a more collaborative style of management. Sport England and the CSP managers share the same objective of developing sport. The CSPs can be helped with advice and support from Sport England, but also need autonomy to take account of their own particular circumstances, especially to make sure the programme complements local sports development strategies. Realistic local targets could still be agreed, but used as benchmarks for review if they have not been achieved. (The England and Wales Cricket board have modified their approach to ‘managing’ the County Cricket Boards in this way.)

• Ideally a changed role of targets in the relationship between Sport England and the CSPs would be reflected in a similar relationship between Sport England and the DCMS. An open discussion between Sport England and the DCMS about the lessons learnt from an innovative programme and why the original targets were unrealistic would contribute to a valuable Olympic legacy.
9. Conclusion

Sport Makers has been an innovative programme which has recognised the importance of volunteers to delivering opportunities to take part in sport. It has had a major impact on the work of the CSPs.

While it has not met its original targets it has been a catalyst for CSPs developing new relationships and ways of working. There are valuable lessons about how volunteering has been developed through new partnerships and approaches.

Stepping back from the target driven approach will help CSPs use what they have learnt more strategically in integrating the development of volunteers into the development of sports participation.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all the interview respondents and those who provided other information.
References


Sport England (2012a) Sport Makers national partners update December 2012 [e mail communication].


Appendix A

Case studies of partnerships

1 Barnsley Best — partnership with South Yorkshire CSP

Barnsley Best (BB) is a volunteer development programme run by Barnsley Council and with similar organisation to Manchester Event Volunteers. Prospective volunteers attend an induction event in which they are given information about what is expected of them as volunteers and what they should expect in return. BB makes sure organisations it sends volunteers to adhere to good practice — including paying volunteers basic travel expenses and food costs if they volunteer over a certain period. BB will provide organisations with a ‘volunteer tool kit’ which includes descriptions of good treatment of volunteers, and promotes respect of volunteers. BB distributes an electronic e-mail of volunteering opportunities every 2 weeks. Volunteers contact BB if they are interested in a particular opportunity. The volunteer manager then puts the volunteer in touch with the organisation. If a volunteer fails to turn up 3 times they are taken off the programme, as unreliability undermines BB’s reputation.

BB’s record-keeping system relies on the organisations volunteers are deployed to claiming back from BB the travel and subsistence costs the organisation has reimbursed to volunteers. These records are incomplete because some volunteers do not require expenses and if they volunteer informally, there is no organisation to claim expenses back from. Hours are under-recorded.

BB has a social inclusion agenda, in that it wants to ensure that anybody who wants to volunteer can do so, regardless of their personal circumstances. For example, volunteers who do not have internet access or knowledge are directed to a local library where staff can help them.

The partnership link to Sport Makers was made because the managers of the CSP and BB recognised the value of partnership work between them in general. BB only started running in January 2012 so saw the new partnership
as a valuable enhancement to its work. The CSP could suggest clubs to approach as volunteer opportunities. The CSP could also have provided venues for induction events but this was not needed.

The CSP provided the standard SM workshop, but this was not fully appropriate for BB as it was much longer than BB’s normal induction. It was focused and labelled as sport while BB had a broader focus. The standard SM workshop involved physical activities unsuitable for elderly participants. Finally, participants were supposed to register on the SM web site before participating, but since they had already registered with BB it was not clear how many would attend.

After a few induction events the facilitator became better at building-in references to BB and BB and SM were always both mentioned in publicity. The incentive for BB to work with SM was the general long-term benefits of the partnership between the two organisations, rather than specific benefits of SM; however, SM did open new volunteering deployments. For the CSP, BB was a good way of recruiting volunteers. Although numbers tended to be small, this allowed more intensive work with volunteers to plan practical deployments, and BB was able to provide volunteers with further support. For example, one workshop had only 7 attendees, but they were linked to a weekly mass run in a Barnsley park. The run was open access and offered weekly so it was easy for participants to join. This example builds on a general trend in the UK towards more informal participation, but it is also sustainable out of the club structure. It also offers the possibility for participants to develop, for example by entering local 10k races.

The South Yorkshire BB partnership illustrates how the commitment of the two managers to work together has overcome some limitations of the SM programme by simply adapting it. BB have gained the workshop; the CSP has gained a new pool of recruits and new deployments. Workshops might be small, but this, and the continued support of BB for volunteers, has ensured more viable deployments. Monitoring data for workshop attendance will be accurate, but monitoring data for deployments will still pose problems of accuracy.
2 Richmond Upon Thames College — partnership with Pro-Active South London

The further education sports co-ordinator at Richmond Upon Thames College (RuTC) had a previous partnership with Pro-Active South London CSP. RuTC always hold volunteer training at the beginning of the College year (under the Inspire Marked RSvP Programme). The CSP were able to add a SM workshop to the existing programme. The workshop facilitators were all local and known by the College **Further Education Sports Co-ordinator** (FESCo) and were skilled in adapting the session to this particular group. The session was shortened from 3 hours at the request of the FESCo.

Of the 84 college students who attended the workshop 34 were on an International Baccalaureate programme which required them to do 30 hours of volunteering as part of this course. Of the remaining 50 students, 24 have continued volunteering with an NGB present at the Sports Maker event, through links already formed with the College FESCo. The SM workshop was followed the week after by separate training events held by the NGBs at the College. The most effective volunteering deployments have arisen from the NGBs building-up their own relationships with the volunteers either by regularly coming into the College to see the students or communicating through social media such as Twitter, which has provided a strong tool for NGBs to keep in contact with students.

RuTC presented the volunteers with multiple volunteering opportunities they had set up, both NGB specific and also College FESCo specific, allowing the students to gain volunteer hours that fitted extremely well with their College timetable, and in a range of sports as well as media and marketing roles. The College was also a pilot for a Sport England project which enabled the students to access funding for courses to enhance their volunteer opportunities.

From the partnership RuTC gained a SM workshop. The CSP gained the ability to register another 84 Sport Makers from one workshop — the target number of workshops per CSP being based on an average of 20 attendees. It gained the deployment opportunities already in place and the continued support to the student volunteers provided by the college. The college will be able to monitor the students’ volunteering — so this can be more accurately recorded towards the ‘key performance indicator’ target of deployed leaders. This type of partnership appears to be typical of those between CSPs and higher education institutions.
3 Manchester University — declined partnership with Manchester CSP

Interestingly, in contrast, Manchester University’s Sport Development officer (volunteers and club development) decided not to recommend Sport Makers to its students. The University’s own student volunteering programme involves a general induction; a one-to-one interview to discuss what students want to do and the skills they can contribute; placement with a provider; and a record of volunteering and skills development the student can use in job applications. There are opportunities to access subsidies for training courses, coaching qualifications or other relevant qualifications. All the deployments — including community sports clubs — are checked by the officer to ensure they will provide the student with a valuable experience. This often involves work with the club to help them develop. Thus the Manchester University programme aims to develop the student through volunteering and the club through involvement in the project.

It was felt that Sport Makers would not add significantly to the programme already existing at Manchester University which already had 49 deployment organisations. The only extra thing students would gain would be a t shirt! The Sport Maker programme would not offer one-to-one support, or a contact for student volunteers if they needed advice while on a placement. It would not be able to offer a guarantee of a good quality volunteering experience at the placement, or a record of gaining employment related skills. Involvement with Sport Makers might dilute the quality of the University service and might lower its reputation with students — which is a very important asset. So this illustrates where a partnership with a well-established volunteer broker was not viable.
4 Barnsley National Citizenship Service — partnership with South Yorkshire CSP

This was a new partnership for the CSP. A SM workshop was provided as part of the second day of training for 82 16/17 year-olds on the Barnsley National Citizenship Service (NCS) award. This award requires 30 hours of volunteering. Young people volunteer to take part.

A previous NCS training event had been held at the same venue, but without a SM component. The facilitators skilfully adapted the workshop for this group, who required very active engagement, by breaking them into small groups of around 20. The workshop time was reduced to an hour and a half.

The NCS presented the volunteers with 6 volunteering opportunities they. Two of these involved football, however the CSP also provided the NCS with other sports volunteering opportunities. At the end of the workshop participants were presented with a list of deployment activities including: BME Olympic festival; an allotment, coffee morning; forestry commission work; disability coaching; a youth club fundraising day; and a BME football festival. More opportunities were demonstrated through the Sport Maker website ‘Find Opportunities’, but this was right at the end of the session when all 82 participant were together and attention had waned. If the groups were to take up these opportunities the NCS manager would have to support them and they would have to be local because of the travel costs.

The NCS gained the SM workshop, which presumably it sees as a useful addition to its training as it is well delivered, at the level required, and introduces sport leadership skills. The workshop will have been paid for by the CSP. The NCS has also gained a further range of deployment opportunities — although the young people will need to use their own initiative to take them up. The CSP has gained 82 workshop attendees. The NCS manager will supply the CSP with details of volunteers who provide 10 hours or more at sports events. At the workshop the CSP manager had collected the e-mail addresses of all participants, so even if they do not register themselves on the SM web site their attendance and volunteering hours can be recorded by the CSP. SM has been a catalyst for developing a new relationship between the Barnsley NCS and the CSP, and this could have long-term benefits of developing links between the NCS and other sports deployment opportunities. SM has acted as a catalyst for the CSP to work with the Barnsley Football trust who hosted the workshop. However, the potential benefits of SM developing these new partnerships are difficult to quantify.
5 Cargill food processing factory — partnership with Manchester CSP

Cargill food processing factory has 300 employees, including shift workers and office workers. The Company’s Human Resources Management (HRM) department was keen to promote a healthy workforce and create good will with employees. The company already had a workplace activity committee and a workplace activity challenge programme for 2012 in which different opportunities to take part in sport were provided each month.

The CSP made contact with the company through personal relations between a CSP staff member and a company manager. This led to the CSP providing 4 SM workshops and ‘sports clinics’ in which introductions to sport, or advice were offered. These included one on running and one on table tennis. The first two workshops were at standard lunch time and were attended by the office staff, so it was realised that two more were needed at other times to make them accessible to the shift workers. Staff were invited to the workshops by the HRM department.

Table tennis was promoted by supplying two of the Instant ‘Ping’ kits from the English Table Tennis Association — at a cost of £50 each to the CSP. (Ping is an ETTA initiative to promote recreational table tennis by providing cheap and mobile equipment.) These proved very popular — leading to employees requesting, and the company purchasing, a full size table and installing it in the board room for employees’ use.

It was easy to record the participants in the workshops — they registered internally at the company and this was transferred to the SM web site; but it was not easy to persuade the employees to record their participation in the sport. Virtually no deployment hours have been logged by employees. There is already an internal record-keeping process in the company as part of a ‘workplace activity challenge’, so volunteers are uninclined to record the same hours twice.

The factory has gained SM workshops, the sports clinics and the instant ping kits. The CSP has gained workshop participants. It has gained volunteers, although not the record of their deployments. This example illustrates the potential for workplace programmes but also the inherent difficulties with record-keeping.
6 NHS Healthy Workplaces Initiative — partnership with London CSPs

The NHS Healthy Workplaces Initiative aims to increase sport and physical activity opportunities in six Acute NHS Trusts across London. The project aimed to train 2 or 3 key “Workplace Champions” per hospital to design, deliver and evaluate physical activity opportunities throughout the Trust. The British Heart Foundation trained 10 individuals from the six Trusts, and 104 Sport Makers were then trained to support those individuals.

The Sport Makers’ role is organising, signposting, promoting or coaching sports and physical activity within the workplace, delivering a minimum of 10 hours of volunteer work per Sport Maker.

All those attending workshops had been registered as Sport Makers on the web site, although some were also registered by the CSPs. Only approximately a third of these Sport Makers have logged over 10 hours, but in common with other projects, there is probably considerable under-recording by the volunteers themselves.

The hospitals were already partnered with the CSP so SM was a development of this partnership.

The hospitals have gained the SM workshops. The CSPs have gained access to a very large workforce of 36,000 hospital staff; however, despite the massive potential, only 104 SMs have been developed in 5 months.
7 Yorkshire Ping — partnership with South Yorkshire CSP

The English Table Tennis Association (ETTA) Ping programme is in its third year and lessons have been learnt as it has developed. Year 1 was in London, year 2 was in Hull and Birmingham. Year 3 is in London, Bristol, Liverpool, Sheffield and a set of other towns. The ETTA Yorkshire Regional Development Manager was responsible for the Hull and Sheffield schemes. He has had a close relationship with the South Yorkshire CSP so SM was a natural extension of this when volunteers were required for the Ping programme. This involved 40 open access table tennis tables being set up across 22 venues in Sheffield for 4 weeks from June 15th. Nearly all were outside. Bats and balls were provided. At some tables occasional demonstration events or tournaments were run. Table tennis volunteering was promoted at 2 SM workshops — one open event, and one held at a table tennis club. From the open event 10 volunteers were recruited — 2 who had previously been involved as table tennis club players, and 8 who had no previous involvement in the sport. These more general volunteers could be directed at maintaining the tables and monitoring use. From the club workshop 13 volunteers were recruited. These more specialised volunteers could be directed towards roles such as helping at events.

Volunteers were presented with a matrix of venues and events, and asked which ones they would like to help at, and if they would like to do anything else related to the programme. A guiding principle was to offer the volunteers as much choice and flexibility as possible — allowing them to give just the time they wanted, and to use their specialist skills, if they wanted. It was useful that the TT development manager was able to speak to SMs at the workshops to develop a personal relationship, describe the programme and match individuals to appropriate opportunities.

The Ping deployments were for a limited duration and the programme ran for only one month, but the TT development officer may contact SMs in the future if more volunteers are required, and the SMs can contact him. They can also look for other opportunities on the SM web site.

Monitoring was conducted through volunteers sending a monitoring form to the development officer recording the hours they had contributed and the number of people who had played on the tables. This allowed detailed records
of table use, which could be related to the weather and location, and was reasonably accurate. Although volunteers did not record hours directly on the SM web site they were passed from the development officer to the CSP manager to do this. Thus in this example recording of hours might have been accurate. The monitoring of table use was to meet the conditions of a Sport England ‘small grant’ which was applied for by Sheffield Council and the Sheffield Table Tennis League. The target associated with the Sport England small grants bid was 22,000 users. However, the development officer is confident he can justify lower usage figures because of poor weather and other factors.

The TT development officer gained volunteers from the SM workshops. The CSP gained a deployment opportunity. Although total numbers were small, the quality of the programme and the support to the volunteers meant they could be effectively deployed. The Ping monitoring system was already in place as a condition of its grant. This system produced reasonably accurate figures, but may have been a further deterrent for the SMs recording their hours a second time on the SM web site.
Appendix B

Methods

A set of semi structured interviews were conducted with 7 CSP managers, 2 workshop facilitators and 5 partner organisations; focusing on London, Birmingham, Sheffield and Manchester. In addition, 2 workshops were observed.

Methods included:

- Interviews of CSP managers: South Yorkshire, Manchester, Pro-Active West London, Pro-Active North London, Pro-Active East London, Pro-Active South London, Birmingham.
  
  Interviews in south Yorkshire and Manchester were repeated to develop understanding and check details.

- Interviews of programme partners: Barnsley Best, Sheffield Ping, Manchester Student volunteering service, NHS London, Richmond upon Thames College.

- Interviews of workshop facilitators: Pro-Active East London, Kent.


The research benefitted from one of the author’s roles as a Further Education Sports Coordinator which allowed observation of workshops and made possible the relationship between the college and the local CSP.
Sport Makers — Developing good practice in volunteer and sports development

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March 2013

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