

## Asset Transfer of Public Sport Facilities to Volunteers

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## Overview

- What is asset transfer and the current picture among sport facilities in the UK?
- What methods did we use?
- What are some examples (and a model) of asset transfer?
- What has changed within the facilities?
- What has worked well/success factors?
- What are the challenges volunteer groups face with asset transfer?
- Conclusions and questions raised.



## Recent Asset Transfer in SPORT

- Swimming pools and sport/leisure centres.
- Also happening with libraries.
- Volunteers plan and execute the transfer to trust-status themselves.
- Take roles of governance and delivery afterwards.
- An alternative to local government closing non-statutory services as a consequence of reduced funding.




## Methods

- Semi-structured interviews with managers and volunteers (sometimes the same person);
- In 12 facilities (8 sport facilities and 4 libraries);
- Mainly facilities transferred from local government to volunteer control;
- One facility built by the community, and one facility in an authority which developed volunteers to work alongside employees ;
- All interviews conducted 2014-15.
- (NB. Libraries were Conwy, Ecclesfield (Sheffield), Jesmond (Newcastle) and Salford Leisure Services.)



Facility	Overview
Bramley Baths, Leeds	A centre which houses a fitness suite, swimming pool, steam room and space for community events, meetings and fitness classes. Established in 1903, community led since 2013. <a href="http://bramleybaths.com/">http://bramleybaths.com/</a>
Deerness Gymnastics Academy, Durham	Centre of gymnasiums, dance studio, activity and fitness rooms. Transferred in 2011 to Deerness Gymnastics Academy which specialises in acrobatic gymnastics and tumbling. The facility is operated by a limited company (some members of the club) and the club is a charity. <a href="http://deernessgymnastics.org.uk/">http://deernessgymnastics.org.uk/</a>
Jesmond Pool, Newcastle	Council pool, closed in 1991, reopened by Friends of Jesmond Pool (now Jesmond Community Leisure), a charity with limited guarantee, in 1992. <a href="http://www.jesmondcommunityleisure.co.uk">http://www.jesmondcommunityleisure.co.uk</a>
King Edwards Baths, Sheffield	A small swimming pool; the King Edward VII School Swimming Pool Trust, formed in 1993 to run the pool. <a href="http://www.kersp.co.uk/index.php">http://www.kersp.co.uk/index.php</a>
Lonsdale Pool, Derby	Lonsdale Swimming and Sport Trust Ltd. are a company limited by guarantee. The trust was created to take over the management of Lonsdale Pool in 2007. <a href="http://www.lst.org.uk/">http://www.lst.org.uk/</a>
Richmond Pool, North Yorkshire	Actually Richmond Pool, Colburn Leisure Centre and Liberty Health Club. Under the management remit of charity Richmondshire Leisure Trust, since 2005. <a href="http://www.rlttrust.org.uk">http://www.rlttrust.org.uk</a>
Tadcaster Swimming Pool, North Yorkshire	Purpose-built community asset, opened in 1994. Two pools, fitness suites and small social area. Trust is a registered charity, limited by guarantee. <a href="http://www.tadcasterpool.org.uk/">http://www.tadcasterpool.org.uk/</a>
Wirksworth Pool, Derbyshire	A community swimming pool, the pool operates as a charity. Run by volunteers since 2012. <a href="http://www.wirksworthswimmingpool.co.uk/">http://www.wirksworthswimmingpool.co.uk/</a>

### Example - Bramley Baths, Leeds



- A small swimming pool and leisure centre – outskirts of Leeds – built in 1903. Used by local residents and schools for swimming lessons.
- Opening hours reduced in September 2011 as part of a spending review by Leeds City Council.
- Local community group established to support the pool in February 2011 and re-opened in January 2013 as an Industrial Provident Society on a 25-year lease from the Council.
- Houses a fitness suite, swimming pool, steam room and space for community events, meetings and fitness classes.
- The trustees are volunteers, and both paid workers and volunteers manage the pool and deliver the service.



### Legal Status and Volunteer Involvement

Delivery	Governance	Governance By Paid Staff	Governance by Paid Staff and Volunteers	Governance by Volunteers
Delivery By Paid Staff			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>King Edwards Baths, Sheffield</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wirksworth Pool, Derbyshire</li> <li>Richmondshire Leisure Trust, N. Yorks.</li> </ul>
Delivery by Paid Staff and Volunteers			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jesmond Pool, Newcastle</li> <li>Tadcaster Community Swimming Pool, N. Yorks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bramley Baths, Leeds</li> <li>Lonsdale Swimming Pool, Derby</li> <li>Deerness Gymnastics Academy, County Durham (from 2<sup>nd</sup> year)</li> </ul>
Delivery by Volunteers				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deerness Gymnastics Academy, County Durham (during 1<sup>st</sup> year)</li> </ul>



### Changes in the Facilities – post-transfer

- Building change and refurbishment.
- Grants and fundraising.
- Service change: grow usage; different activities and group users; fill all space/time; make sure earlier and later opening times are well used.
- Prices and opening times.
- Volunteers on Board in operational roles/task completion.
- Paid staff role interchangeability.
- Close watch on costs (e.g. renegotiated utility bills).



### Success Factors

- Stability:** stable community and key volunteer teams (local population and/or internal to an existing volunteer club set-up).
- Key Volunteers:** lead volunteers’ USPs – political, social capital, access to knowledge.
- Loyalty:** community loyalty to a facility (sometimes iconic buildings).
- Skills:** skills package from existing volunteers or grown from members/ community.
- Conviction:** confidence and belief.
- Balance:** get the right balance of long-term volunteer team and interim member volunteering – but acknowledge all volunteers.
- Appointments:** key paid manager appointments – head-hunting, waiting for the right person.



### Success Factors (cont’d)

- Support:** excellent LA support – business planning and technical training, rate relief, favourable leases, grants, liability protection, TUPEE (re-deployment?), political goodwill.
- Distinctiveness:** distinctive service, sensitive and responsive to consumer needs (volunteer market info. system).
- Entrepreneurialism:** compete to survive; shorter chain of command; free from corporate (LA) ‘shackles’ & political interference; running costs cut – by attention to detail for each item.
- Ownership:** greater sense of responsibility for success (whether volunteers or paid staff). Grow community engagement.
- Focus:** focus on single/smaller number of services (e.g. the pool) rather than a larger or several leisure centres.
- Overall:** ‘public service ethos allied to a business/enterprise mind-set’ (Potts, 2015, p.237).



## Challenges

"...it's not as easy as just handing someone the keys and saying 'you run the pool'" (Facility Manager, Tadcaster Community Swimming Pool)

1. Need a particular 'can do' mentality/drive for this volunteering to be successful.
2. Breaking down skills requirements – professional and technical/building-related trade needs. Harder to get volunteers for the roles of responsibility (e.g. health and safety).
3. High expectations of volunteers.
4. Managing enthusiastic, but unrealistic ideas of new volunteers.
5. Agreeing the terms of the lease, and need decent length of lease to be eligible for bank loans and capital grants (25 years plus).



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## Challenges (cont'd)

6. Finance is a continued challenge – sustaining facility capital costs and paid staff salaries. Strategic application for grants.
7. Pensions Act 2011, auto-enrolment from 2016; increasingly stringent health and safety legislation change; green levies.
8. Staff costs need to be reduced or removed – local employment cuts or staff on less favourable terms. Issues around TUPEE.
9. Council may not co-operate or support – viewed as unwelcome competition or even with suspicion
10. Insecurity/disincentive of relying on local authority support.



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## Conclusions and Questions Raised

- Limitations: sample size – exploratory.
- Need to look further at:
  - National picture;
  - Those that failed to transfer or failed after transfer;
  - Local government and supporting body perspectives.
- Importance due to:
  - i. Sustainability – the volunteer-led model is working;
  - ii. This will keep happening – so need to learn lessons;
  - iii. Relying on volunteers to save especially the 'little pools and centres'.



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# ANY QUESTIONS?



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