

The Robertson Trust
Sport for Everyone – Phase 2
 June 2017



About The Robertson Trust

The Robertson Trust is the largest independent grant-making Trust in Scotland. Every year the Trust funds a wide range of charitable projects across Scotland with an overarching aim to improve the quality of life and realise potential of people and communities in Scotland. In 2015/16 we awarded £17.1m to charities and Community Interest Companies Limited by Guarantee of all sizes across Scotland. We have various ways of providing funding and support to the third sector, including targeted programmes which have a particular focus on gathering evidence about what works, what doesn't work and why in order to inform policy and practice.

One such area of work is 'Sport for Change' where sporting activities are intentionally used to deliver social impact for individuals and communities beyond increasing participation in sport. By supporting funded organisations to deliver better impact through sport, and evaluating different approaches and interventions we have been developing an evidence base which we think will be of use and interest to the Health and Sport Committee.

More information on our specific programmes in this area can be found on our website: <http://www.therobertsontrust.org.uk/innovation-and-learning/our-il-themes/sport-for-change>

Summary of Key Messages

Through our ongoing engagement with Sport for Change projects we have identified a few key messages which we think are important for the Health and Sport Committee (and other stakeholders) to consider.

- **Effective Sport for Change approaches use sport and physical activity to intentionally bring about positive benefits for individuals and communities**, to address specific needs. Evidence tells us that the wider social benefits of sport or physical activity do not happen automatically for every participant and that instead organisations need to consciously identify what difference(s) they are trying to make and for whom, rather than just assuming there will be wider outcomes stemming from participation.
- Increased participation can help to deliver the outcomes of improving elite performance, and wider social benefits, but **it is not an end in and of itself**.
- Participating in sport or physical activity can be an effective tool for addressing inequalities in our society but **it can only make a difference for those who get engaged and stay engaged**. A whole population approach is unlikely to engage those beyond the usual suspects.

- We know that there are certain people less likely to take part in sport or physical activity and that **the barriers to participation can be complex**. Often, it is not just about cost and access to sessions or facilities but could include other challenges such as confidence, peer pressure, image, family support etc. Organisations need to consciously identify their target groups and be flexible and proactive in how they remove some of the barriers being experienced.
- Sport can be used as an effective catalyst for change but wider social benefits can also be achieved through a range of other activities including art, drama, and youth work. This is why **partnership working between sporting and non-sporting organisations can be so effective**.

Participation

1. Can you provide examples where a community based approach has been successful in removing barriers to participation in sport and physical activity?

Youth Work in Sport (YWiS) is a five year programme (September 2011 – August 2018) aiming to investigate how sporting organisations could improve their engagement with hard to reach young people by adopting a youth work approach. A total of £1.5m was allocated to the programme by the Robertson Trust and the Rank Foundation and 11 organisations received funding. An independent evaluation was also commissioned. This found that all of the funded organisations had improved their ability to engage with and retain young people, and particularly harder to reach young people.

A full evaluation report is available on request and we also expect to publish a summary document shortly.

Active East was a Commonwealth Games Legacy Programme which was funded by The Robertson Trust and other independent funders, and was independently evaluated. The aim of the programme was to engage and up skill local young people in the East End of Glasgow through volunteering in sport. Over 70 young people were recruited as volunteers providing more than 10,000 hours of their time. The evaluation found that the programme had contributed to the skills, competencies and feelings of self-worth of the participants.

An overview report of the evaluation findings can be downloaded from our website:

<http://www.therobertsontrust.org.uk/innovation-and-learning/publications/active-east-evaluation>

2. What were the key ingredients to that success
3. Where there any approaches that were particularly successful in increasing participation among certain social groups, like women, ethnic minorities, certain age groups.

Findings from both of the programmes listed above suggested several key approaches and ingredients which can remove barriers to participation in sport and physical activity. These included:

- **Adopting a youth work or community development approach.** These approaches allow for organisations to focus on who is not participating in their services, the barriers and challenges they face and how they can go about engaging them. Approaches which

focus on participation as the end goal, rather than the difference they are trying to make, often don't focus on who is or isn't engaging and why.

- **Adapting services and activities to meet the needs of target groups.** There needs to be recognition that not all activities (or venues) will be accessible or welcoming to everyone. Instead organisations should think about how they can adapt how or where they deliver the services to make them more accessible to target groups. For example, organisations should reach out to where their target groups already are, rather than just waiting for people to walk through their door.
- **Building relationships and supporting young people** with an individualised, person-centred approach that incorporates personal development.
- **Having a culture and skill set within the organisation that is interested in supporting individuals and communities,** not just increasing participation in their sport.
- **Building partnerships** by identifying and engaging with other partners within the community. These could be other sporting partners but should also include non-sporting partners such as other community groups, youth groups, health providers etc. This will enable organisations to reach new people and to make better use of existing resources.

4. To what extent are these approaches unique to a particular area and set of circumstances, or replicable in other parts of the country

These approaches are totally replicable; indeed, they are the approaches advocated and used by wider sections of the third and public sectors across Scotland.

However, for these approaches to be adopted within the sport sector there needs to be a change in direction at a strategic level away from focussing purely on participation in sport and towards thinking more about how the needs of individuals and communities can be supported through sport. We need to encourage and support sporting organisations to be curious about how they engage harder to reach groups within their community, how they retain them beyond a one off taster session, and what difference their engagement in sport and physical activity is making. It is this curiosity – gathering and sharing what works – that will help to remove barriers to participation across all groups and sectors of society.

Community and volunteers

5. What are the barriers facing volunteers (either those wanting to volunteer for the first time or sustaining ongoing volunteering)?

Within our **Legacy 2014: Sustainable Sport for Communities Programme** (a £1m joint initiative between The Robertson Trust and Scottish Government) we funded 33 sporting organisations, through two strands of funding, around improving their sustainability and impact. They provided us with information on how they work with volunteers within their organisations which highlighted that volunteers are a key asset within the sporting sector but organisations often lack the time, knowledge and resources to support their involvement and development.

Volunteers act in a range of roles including coaches, trustees, caretakers etc. The most commonly reported role for volunteers was as a board member or in the direct delivery of sporting activity. The feedback given by a number of organisations was that their volunteers,

particularly those who have taken on additional governance or capital development roles, are often overstretched and that this can lead to them becoming disillusioned. The focus on utilising volunteer skills to deliver the sporting elements of the organisation's work means that there can be a lack of attention paid to other governance, operational and planning elements.

Organisations may lack the resources and skills to support their volunteers effectively and this too can lead to a higher turnover level, and higher stress levels for volunteers.

Development of capital programmes can be particularly challenging in this respect, not least because the process from start to finish can take up to five years and can absorb a huge amount of board, staff and volunteer energy and requires a different skill set.

For the organisations involved in the Legacy 2014 Programme, none we asked were able to evidence that they had any kind of volunteering policy in place to support and guide how they worked with volunteers. This is despite all of the organisations confirming that they were working with volunteers in some way.

The Scottish Sports Association estimates that there are around 195,000 volunteers within sports clubs in Scotland. This reliance on volunteers has enabled sports clubs in their traditional form to thrive. However, it can also make it difficult for clubs to take on additional operational roles (such as running a facility), to look at the infrastructure required to support their activities and future development, or to develop their activities "beyond sport". This often requires already busy volunteers to take on additional and diverse organisational and developmental tasks which they may not have the desire, time, or skills to do.

6. How might these barriers be overcome?

For a sector that is so wonderfully supported by a volunteer workforce, the support offer to organisations is very underdeveloped compared to other areas of the third sector.

Sporting organisations need to be provided with more support, training, guidance and resources around how to recruit, manage, retain and develop volunteers, both for the benefit of their own organisations but also to support the development of the volunteers who engage with them.

Volunteering relationships need to be two way in that they should focus not just on what the volunteer can do to support the organisation, but also on what the organisation can do for the volunteer. We found in our Legacy research that sporting organisations were able to articulate clearly the first part of this relationship, but not always the second part.

The independent evaluation of the **Active East Programme** (referenced on p.2) highlighted some factors that were deemed important for organisations seeking to develop volunteers and volunteering opportunities. These included:

- Building relationships and setting goals which help maintain volunteer motivation
- Responding promptly to the needs of volunteers
- Ensuring that there is a range of training and development opportunities available
- Building strong partnerships within the community
- Providing a more diverse set of opportunities for volunteers
- Finding opportunities to celebrate success

7. What are the challenges in retaining volunteers beyond the short term

As detailed above, the biggest challenges in retaining volunteers beyond the short term are the lack of skills, resources and capacity within sporting organisations to support their volunteers. By developing and providing better support to the organisations we believe that it is likely to have a positive effect on their ability to retain volunteers.

8. What examples are there of good practice to encourage and maintain volunteers in community sport and are there lessons to learn from other sectors around attracting and retaining volunteers in sport?

The Active East Programme which has previously been referred to is a good example of this. We have summarised the key learning points about what worked and why under question 6 above but more detail can be found on pages 3 and 4 of the overview evaluation report: <http://www.therobertsontrust.org.uk/innovation-and-learning/publications/active-east-evaluation>

School Estate

10. To what extent is the school estate currently being used effectively to increase opportunities for sport and physical activity participation?

Anecdotally, many of the sporting organisations that we work with have stated that they struggle to get access to the school estate, particularly in the hours between 3pm – 6pm. Others have also asserted that the costs of accessing the school estate are too high. Indeed, we have had conversations with organisations seeking to take on or build their own facility due to the fact that they are not able to access facilities in their local community at a time or price that is suitable for them.