

# Citizenship in Action

## Voluntary Sector Sport and Recreation

### Executive Summary

Research report commissioned by CCPR from  
Geoff Nichols, University of Sheffield 2003

"The voluntary sector ... can play a leading role in meeting the challenge of how to translate traditional values of community and solidarity, fairness and compassion into the modern world. ... (it) can help make the good society."

Rt Hon Alan Milburn MP  
12 November 2003

"The majority of sport and active recreation is delivered by volunteers and there is an increasing awareness by Government to 'develop a working relationship' with the voluntary sector."

Rt Hon Tony Blair MP, The Prime Minister  
Foreword, "Game Plan" 2002

## BACKGROUND

The CCPR is the umbrella body for 270 UK and English national organisations for sport and recreation. Its role is to represent and promote the interests of voluntary sector sport and recreation.

Towards the end of 2002, the CCPR was concerned about the way in which sport policy and voluntary sector policy was developing, apparently without any reference to each other. There had been no mention of sport in the Strategy Unit report on the voluntary and not-for-profit sector, "Private Action, Public Benefit", published in September 2002, despite the significant proportion of voluntary involvement through sport and recreation, and the clear implications for sport and recreation organisations in the SU report. During the months following the publication of "Private Action, Public Benefit", this lack of awareness and visibility of sport and recreation in voluntary sector representation became more apparent. It seemed that, despite the significant role played by voluntary sector sport and recreation in the agenda of the Home Office Active Community Unit, it remained unrecognised and unsupported.

The CCPR had also been concerned about recurrent negative messages about perceptions of the contributions of National Governing Bodies of sport and voluntary sector sport, often from senior political figures, and sometimes from the sports councils. Perceptions of NGBs, it seemed, were focused upon their dependency on government and Lottery grants; there was little recognition of the enormous, sustained contribution which NGBs and other national sport organisations make through their social, intellectual, technical and human capital. This taken-for-granted contribution - the very substance of delivery of sport and recreation at local level - was overlooked, not only by the policy makers, but also by the national organisations for sport and recreation themselves. The CCPR felt that sport and recreation's massive contribution to a major element of the Government's agenda - active citizenship, social engagement, volunteering - should be properly evidenced and recorded. One of CCPR's aims was to "set the record straight".

In early December 2002, therefore, CCPR invited tenders from researchers to evaluate the existing research evidence on the contribution of voluntary sector sport and recreation to the agenda of the Active Community Unit. Following competitive bids, the research commission was awarded to Geoff Nichols at the University of Sheffield, who submitted the draft Final Report in March 2003. The cost of the research was met by a contribution from CCPR Enterprises.

CCPR's decision to commission the research was further supported in December 2002, when the Strategy Unit report "Game Plan" was published, which was to form the basis for national sport strategy into the next 18 years. "Game Plan" conceded that Government did not itself deliver sport, being dependent upon the voluntary, educational, commercial and local government sectors to do so. But the strategy was silent on how the existing contributions of those sectors should be maintained and their capacity developed to ensure continued and extended delivery. Despite being issued from the same Government department, "Game Plan" made no reference to "Private Action, Public Benefit", published only 3 months previously; and there was surprisingly little evidence that the SU consultants had recognised or appreciated the massive contribution of the voluntary sector to the delivery of sport and recreation in this country.

The research commissioned by the CCPR confirms the scale and importance of this contribution to formal volunteering, especially by the National Governing Bodies and their clubs. It should be emphasised that **formal volunteering is distinguished by sustained commitment to service delivery to people other than one's own family**, and thus is core to community service and social engagement; it also is an essential component of the viability and remarkable continuity of sport clubs.

## RESEARCH BRIEF

The researcher was asked to analyse existing research data to evaluate the contribution of voluntary sector sport and recreation to the agenda of the Active Community Unit :

- o To build capacity in local communities and promote effective community development;
- o To promote and facilitate positive community involvement and citizenship;
- o To develop productive partnerships between Government and the voluntary and community sector at local, regional and national levels;
- o To develop a modern legal and regulatory framework for the voluntary and community sector and to encourage good practice.

## MAJOR SOURCES

### EXISTING RESEARCH EVIDENCE AND DATA

The Sheffield research used a variety of existing sources of data - all national surveys, commissioned by a range of agencies and undertaken by different research teams:

- o 1997 & 2001 National Surveys of Volunteering
  - o Valuing Volunteers in UK Sport - Sports Council 1995/6
  - o Sport Scotland survey of sports clubs 1999
  - o Sports Council for Wales survey of adult sports participation and club membership in Wales 2000/1
  - o Home Office Citizenship Survey 2001
  - o Sport England Omnibus Survey of Volunteers in Sport 2003 (this piece of research has not been published, but the CCPR research was allowed access to the data, by kind permission of Sport England).
- These seven different sources of data provided impressively consistent findings, and there is a high level of confidence in the generalised data presented in the research.

In addition, the researcher undertook interviews with four selected National Governing Bodies, representing the range of size and scope of CCPR's membership, during the first 3 months of 2003.

CCPR was also provided, with a copy of Robin Wright's research report, "Fit for Purpose: Human Capital in Sport and Recreation within Lincolnshire" , some of whose findings have been included in the CCPR report, since they provide particular insights on coaches, communication and the value of volunteer expenditure.

## SUMMARY FINDINGS

- o Between **12.5% and 14% of the UK population are members of voluntary sports clubs.**
- o There are approximately **151,000 voluntary sports clubs in the UK.**
- o 46% of clubs have been in existence for more than 30 years; and 34% of clubs have been in existence for more than 50 years - **a major continuity of contribution to local communities and social capital.**
- o 14.8% of the population volunteered in sport during the previous 12 months (2002).
- o Between 12% and 13.4% of the population volunteered in a formal organisation to provide sport in the previous 12 months (2002) - an estimated total for the UK of almost 13 million people. **This gives an estimated total for the UK, of 6.29 million volunteers, the vast majority in NGBs and their clubs.**

- o A further 9.4% of the population volunteered "informally" for sport;
- o **6.6% of the population volunteered in the context of "a sports club organised by its members"** in the previous 12 months (2002).
- o Sport and exercise comprises the most significant area for formal volunteering (ahead of education, the Church, youth sector, health) - it is important as a medium for active citizenship.
- o **26% of all "formal" volunteering takes place in sport and recreation.**
- o **Sports clubs organised by their members are the most significant organisation in which sports volunteering takes place - above even schools & youth organisations.**
- o Volunteering in sport is especially important in Higher Education. This too is important, given the rising percentage of 18+ year-olds participating in Higher Education, and the prevalent myth that young people are unwilling to volunteer.

## THE VALUE OF CONTRIBUTIONS

The research estimated the value of the contributions from the voluntary sector. The findings support the projection that government investment in the voluntary sector has a return of £30 for every £1 invested. A model has not yet been developed to evaluate the return on investment specifically in voluntary sector sport and recreation, and no estimate has been available of the value of the sector's organisations and paid staff to delivery and to communities. However:

- o The time given by **formal** volunteers in sport and recreation is at least 187 million hours each year, **169 million of which takes place within the National Governing Body structures (clubs, events and competitions/leagues).**
- o **The hours contributed by formal volunteers to sport and recreation in the UK is at least equivalent to 108,000 full-time workers - value £1,555 million in 1996.** This is a conservative estimate, based on minimum wage: the value based on average wage would be increased three-fold.
- o 43% (64,930) of clubs offer both "pay & play" and subscription membership. This shows that they are open to wider participation than only for their members, to cater for casual participation & social interaction.
- o 55% (83,050) of clubs have both adult and junior membership, and therefore offer opportunities for young people. Given the large proportion of clubs with restricted access to a small number of facilities, **these last two findings demonstrate an impressive contribution to sport development by voluntary sector clubs.**
- o The Lincolnshire survey (Wright 2003) showed that **volunteers each expend an average of £13.60 per week on travel** while working as a volunteer.

## GOOD PRACTICE AND GOOD NEWS STORIES ADDED VALUE FOR SPORT

The researcher was not able, within the constraints of the commission, to undertake any detailed work on "added value". However, the following further contributions from voluntary sector sport and recreation and formal volunteering were recorded:

- o **Youth programmes** - many NGBs and their clubs make major contributions to youth sport development. This is often unremarked and unrecorded;
- o NGBs have adopted or adapted Sport England's "ClubMark" (quality benchmark) for their own use;

- o **Voluntary sector sport provides paid officer support/development for volunteer contributions. This contribution has been little recognised in policy to support club or NGB development;**
- o **Some NGBs are almost wholly led by volunteers;**
- o Part-time paid workers often provide full-time contributions on a voluntary basis. Many use their part-time payments, consciously to support their voluntary contributions;
- o NGB links are beginning to develop with volunteer agencies;
- o **Voluntary sector sport and recreation represents a significant return on investment - the Institute for Volunteering Research estimates £30 return for every £1 invested.**

## CONCLUSIONS

The researcher (Geoff Nichols) concluded:

"The voluntary sector in sport makes a massive contribution to the agenda of the ACU through voluntary sector clubs and the structure and support provided by the national governing bodies of sport. Volunteering in sport is the most significant single area of formal volunteering. Voluntary sports clubs make a substantial contribution to social capital through both providing the structure which provides the opportunity for active citizenship to be expressed through volunteering, and the opportunities for social interaction, both for volunteers and participants. Voluntary sports clubs exhibit a remarkable degree of stability as social institutions and are a valuable social resource."

"The NGBs of sport in the case studies in this report provide an essential support network which is sensitive to the needs of volunteers. They provide specialist advice and resources. They also provide the mechanism by which substantial amounts of public funds can be distributed to promote sport through the clubs, within the context of national strategies. In particular, they have enabled public funding to be used to promote sport for young people, and it is in the interests of the NGBs that those young people should progress in the sport to full club membership. The NGBs also enable the funding for elite sport, with the objective of winning Olympic medals, to be channelled to support competitors. The case studies illustrate the capacity of NGBs, and to a lesser extent, individual clubs, to work in partnership with a range of other organisations."

The Lincolnshire research (Wright 2003) indicates that there is a shortage of coaches holding higher level qualifications; and that, while there is a loss of coaches around ages 25-44, there is re-engagement after age 45. Lastly:

"... the different layers of structure and organisation struggle to communicate effectively. ... communication is only reaching 69% of the grass roots of sport. The study recognises the need for a communication strategy to relieve the duplication and frustration that exist."

# MAJOR POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since sport and recreation comprise the largest contribution of any sub-sector to formal volunteering (26%), failure to retain or increase the volunteers in this area will have a significant effect on the likelihood of reaching the Government target of increasing community participation by 5% by 2006.

1. There should be an **integrated strategy for sustainable infrastructure for voluntary sector sport and recreation**, including the recognition of CCPR as a national infrastructure organisation for voluntary sector sport and recreation. This should include and influence:

- o Active Community Unit and Directorate agenda;
- o Treasury and ACU infrastructure reviews - recognition of CCPR as an existing national infrastructure organisation;
- o Fiscal policy (VAT, tax, rates, Community Interest Companies, sport as a charitable status);
- o Primary legislation following recommendations from "Private Action, Public Benefit";
- o Sports councils' and DCMS funding for voluntary sector support & development, especially towards establishing a sustainable infrastructure at national, regional and local levels.

2. There should be an **integrated strategy to support formal volunteers in sport and recreation, especially those in NGB structures and clubs**, to include:

- o Exploring the feasibility and effectiveness of a **Government "bond"** to protect volunteers (as in Nova Scotia and Western Australia);
- o Reviewing the **costs and effectiveness of requirements for police checks**; exploring the possibility of a centrally funded umbrella organisation for accreditation (as in Scotland); communications infrastructure;
- o **Access to mainstream funding for qualifications, health & safety training**. This will entail strategic discussion with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, about the importance of volunteers and voluntary sector organisations to the delivery of sport and recreation.

3. There should be strategic discussions with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and partnership with LGA, CLOA, ILAM, ISRM to achieve better support through local authorities - "Towards an Excellent Service". **The benefits for local communities, of making sport and recreation a statutory service**, with responsibilities for investing in and supporting voluntary sector sport and recreation, should be urgently considered.

4. **Further research** should be undertaken, including construction of a model for return on investment in voluntary sector sport and recreation; and research on the financial and human resource dynamics of sports clubs.

5. Given the importance of NGB structures for formal volunteering in the context of a sports club, care should be taken in any strategic development, to ensure that **club development takes place within the framework of national governing bodies of sports' national, regional and local structures**.

# Full research report

The full research report, price £20, can be obtained from

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Further copies of the Executive Summary can be downloaded from the CCPR website  
[www.ccpr.org.uk](http://www.ccpr.org.uk)

## References

<sup>1</sup>Strategy Unit (2002) Private Action, Public Benefit HMSO, London

<sup>2</sup>Strategy Unit/Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2002) Game Plan DCMS, London

<sup>3</sup>Active Community Unit (2002) <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/acu/acuaimob.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>Davis Smith, J (1998) The 1997 National Survey on Volunteering London: National Centre for Volunteering

<sup>5</sup>Gratton, Chris; Nichols, Geoff; Shibli, Simon; & Taylor, Peter (1997) Valuing Volunteers in UK sport London, Sports Council

<sup>6</sup>Allison, Mary (2000) Sports clubs in the new Scotland - report on a study for SportScotland Centre for Leisure Research, Edinburgh

<sup>7</sup>Attwood, Chris; Singh, Gurchand; Prime, Duncan; Creasey, Rebecca et al (2003) 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey: people, families and communities Home Office Research Study 270, London

<sup>8</sup>Taylor et al (2003) Unpublished research, London, Sport England

<sup>9</sup>Wright, Robin (2003) Fit for Purpose: Human Capital in Sport and Recreation within Lincolnshire Lincoln College, Department of Tourism and Recreation

<sup>10</sup>Institute for Volunteering Research (2003) Public sector support for volunteering: an audit  
<http://www.ivr.org.uk/audit.htm>