

STREETGAMES VOLUNTEERING

Action Research Pilot



JANUARY 2020

Year 1 (2019) of the volunteering action research project has now come to an end, with six clusters across England successfully engaging young people from lower socio-economic groups (LSEG) in volunteering opportunities. 58 volunteers have been recruited to date, with an additional 60 to be recruited, rewarded and retained during 2020.

StreetGames identified and recruited Locally Trusted Organisations (LTOs) in six cluster areas to deliver the action research project; in which each cluster has focussed on an identified audience and target group.

The six clusters are focussing on the recruitment and support required to engage:



Wigan & Brent:

Focus on the recruitment and support required to engage female volunteers from female only doorstep sport activity sessions

Newcastle & Leicester:

Focus on the recruitment and support to engage female (and male) volunteers from mixed gender activity doorstep sport activities

Southwark & Lambeth:

Focus on the recruitment and support required to engage BAME volunteers from mixed gender doorstep activities.

THE DATA

58

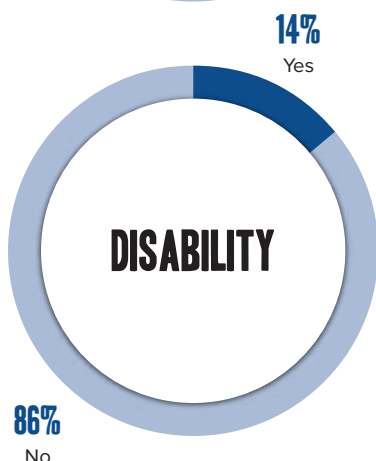
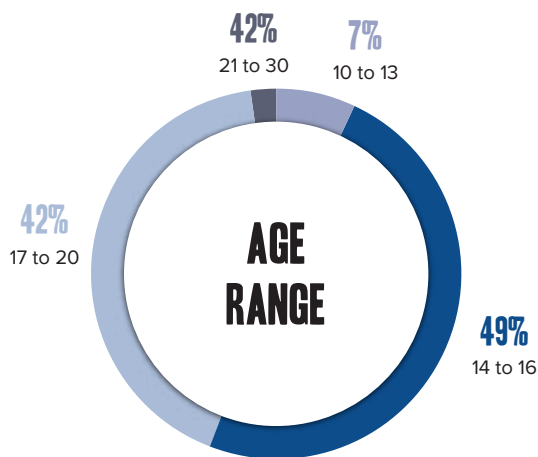
Young Volunteers



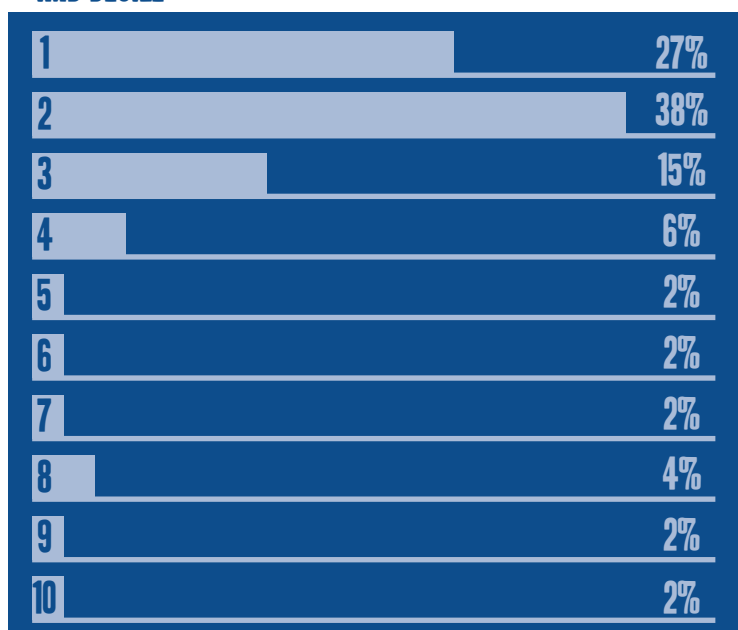
77% FEMALE



MALE 23%



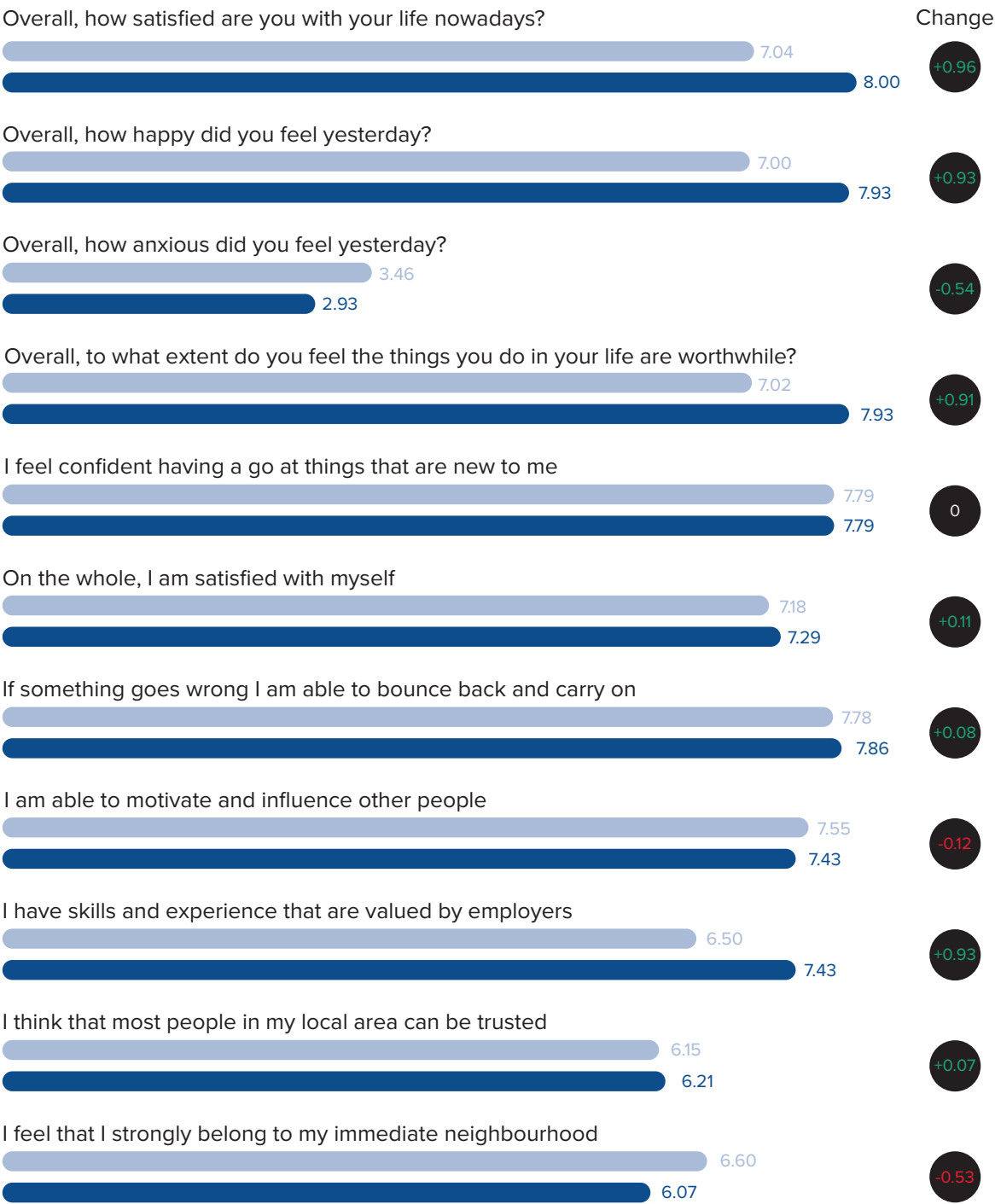
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WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THIS PROJECT?



BASELINE v FOLLOW UP



The data above is based on the 14 follow up surveys we have received to date, the results are likely to change as we receive more.

KEY FINDINGS

The points below summarise some of the initial themes in relation to how best to engage Females and young people from BAME communities in volunteering. Our findings to date suggest that:

- LTOs have had success in engaging BAME young people in volunteering through existing session recruitment, whereas females often get involved through trusted external sources, such as, school teachers and friends
- BAME volunteers have been more motivated by external factors such as rewards, compared to females who are more intrinsically driven by self-development
- Female volunteers have preferred theory-based training because it gave them more confidence in their ability to volunteer
- Females in particular have told us that they like having the security of volunteering with a friend
- Our FABS approach to engaging young people in volunteering is just as important in retaining volunteers

THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE/OFFER

The **volunteer offer** varies across the six clusters in recognition that each community - and therefore young people's - needs differ. As a result, the design and implementation requires a level of local expertise, understanding and individuality which is led by the LTO. Typically, this ranges from weekly coaching, to monthly social-action focussed activity and helping with the general running of the local organisation. Fundamentally however, they are all based on the same principles - a youth-led, local and flexible approach which is underpinned by our FABS (Fun, Altruism, Belonging and Self-Development). All organisations see this offer as part of a youth empowerment pathway, upskilling and supporting a future workforce, which also acts as inspiration for the next generation.

Training is an integral part of the induction phase for young people interested in volunteering and leadership. All volunteers have taken part in an Introduction to Doorstep Sport workshop and a training needs analysis has been completed to decide on the remaining workshops the volunteers wanted to participate in. Interestingly, the female only volunteers opted for more classroom-based workshops including Safeguarding, First Aid and Managing Challenging Behaviour in addition to the multi-skills activator as this combination gave them the best skills and knowledge for their volunteering roles, in comparison to the other two groups. This provided a foundation for further training workshops, which has in-turn reinforced the retention of young volunteers.

SUCCESSES

Engagement

Six local clusters are now fully engaged, inducted and supporting us with this research project, providing valuable insight and experience of the past 6-12 months in engaging and retaining young volunteers from their local areas. A structured 1-day training induction and training event for project delivery staff has been delivered to all, a significant number of volunteer training workshops have been delivered and Year 2 delivery plans have all been submitted.

"The induction day was really well organised and informative. It was good to meet the other leaders and it got me excited about what I can do back in my local project."

Qualitative Data

We have managed to collect a lot of rich qualitative data as part of the focus groups and interviews held towards the end of Year 1. 25 young volunteers participated in four different focus groups, and a group of project leaders in London came together to share their insight in a similar format. In addition we interviewed 4 different project leaders face to face, discussing both learning from Year 1 and plans for Year 2.

Volunteers becoming more active

As a relatively unexpected consequence, early indications show that volunteering has helped young people become more active. Many traditionally non-sporty volunteers are getting involved: only 52% volunteered to be involved with sport, but they have become more active themselves, including a couple of girls being inspired by social action ideas to set-up a running club. It has also become a key motivator for a couple of volunteers too.

"It keeps me active and out the house – I'd probably just be in room barely doing anything."

Project leaders have also noted this increase in activity, particularly for several volunteers who did little to no activity before:

“From not doing anything to now delivering and seeing how fun it is to be active is massive for their development.”

CHALLENGES

Data Collection

Collecting baseline and follow-up surveys has been a challenge on some occasions as is often the case working with this target group in community settings.

To combat this, the format of the surveys has been designed to be as simple and straightforward as possible for the volunteers to complete them easily. Project leaders have also tried to be innovative when collecting surveys; some volunteers completed them in a group sessions, another in Nando's during their Christmas celebration, and some took them home to complete individually returning when they came to their volunteering sessions.

Given the challenges of collecting surveys, we are really pleased with the number of questionnaires which were completed and returned to StreetGames.

Female only activity

One of the challenges of this project has been the limited number of female only doorstep sport activity sessions available within the Wigan and Brent clusters to accommodate the number of new female volunteers recruited. With limited opportunities, this has resulted in a lower retention rate in comparison to girls in mixed activity sessions. LTO Leads have worked closely with other organisations, to offer alternative volunteer opportunities, but some have been in mixed sessions in order to keep them engaged in positive volunteering activity. In addition, both clusters have held female-only training workshops.

Summer Period

The school holiday months are an extremely busy time for our local deliverers, as they are out in the field delivering all day every day, so communication during this period was a challenge, especially as it coincided with a change of personnel at StreetGames. Since September, time has been specifically spent to build back-up these relationships and get the London-based clusters engaged. We are now in a strong position with these relationships and are confident going into Year 2.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

To round-up Year 1, StreetGames completed fieldwork research by:

- Delivering 4x young volunteer focus groups (volunteers = 25)
- Conducting 4x face to face project leader interviews
- Completing 1x project leader focus group (3x PL's present, plus 1 via conference call)

The conversations were focussed around the engagement and retention of young volunteers and followed a consistent framework. The key findings are summarised below.

ENGAGEMENT

Right Person

As with StreetGames' historic understanding of having the Right Person involved in the recruitment of young people in to Doorstep Sport participation, both the volunteers and the leaders highlighted that this is also the case for volunteer recruitment too. Results of the baseline survey reflect this in that the majority of volunteers heard about the opportunity to volunteer through someone they trust; either a friend or family member (32%) or a teacher or youth worker (38%).

"Most important reason they got engaged was because of the teacher. She is a massive influence on them and is massively looked up to. She has a good relationship with them. We have a great relationship with the teacher which probably made it more successful than it would have been"

"Without her, we'd struggle to keep them involved; she's a huge asset. She has something about her – people warm to her and connect with her."

"The staff here make you want to come back. It's not volunteering, when you have fun it doesn't feel like volunteering."

"I am one of the kids from the estates that grew up here. Christian said he saw something in me. No one ever said that to me. Ever. He saw something in me and it made we want to help him."

Whilst the right person is crucial to the recruitment of volunteers across all LSEG young people, it is interesting to note that when comparing the engagement of the different demographic groups, it is clear that the best way for engaging BAME young people in volunteering is through existing session recruitment, whereas girls get involved through trusted external sources such as school teachers and friends.

Motivations

It is very important to understand the young people's motivations for volunteering, especially as a lot of the young people recruited had never volunteered before (46%). For some, the initial engagements were actually due to external motivations, such as accumulating hours for Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) or their college courses, or simply for the rewards on offer. However, positive volunteering experiences have transformed these motivations to more intrinsic gain such as having fun, giving back and self-development.

These motivations were reflected by the results of the baseline survey with 75% stating they volunteer to learn new skills, 71% stating they volunteer in order to help people and 70% stating they volunteer to have fun

"Some of the girls were doing their DofE - they needed to do it for that, so that initially got them involved but as they've enjoyed it, seen what they can do and what Hat-Trick can offer and the whole experience, they've stuck at it and that's no longer the motivation"

In Lambeth, the LTO initiated the project by using reward trips as the incentive for BAME young people to turn up to planning meetings, volunteer at various local events and doing social action. Trips have included ice skating, cinema and dining out. Similarly, the BAME volunteers in Southwark reference a reward trip at the end of holiday camps as a big motivator for completing hours.

Conversely much of the feedback from the girls has been a desire for more opportunities for self-development, requesting for reward budget to be spent on additional training.

Many volunteers also highlighted one of the main reasons for volunteering was relating to career aspirations and a pathway into paid work. Young people see volunteering as something they can put on their CV or job application, and giving them valuable experience in a sector of interest to them.

This is an area that really stood out when comparing the data from the baseline and follow up surveys. In the baseline surveys, we asked the volunteers whether they felt they had the skills and experiences valued by employers. The average response to this question was 6.5 out of 10, this was a noticeably lower score than the other marker questions, really highlighting that they felt they weren't able to demonstrate any relevant skills to a potential employer.

Encouragingly, the follow up survey results show a significant jump in the average score, now up to 7.43 out of 10. The biggest increase across any of the marker questions we asked. The impact of this is huge; the young people now feel confident and equipped to be able to achieve employment in areas of work they want to pursue, a very positive sign for the volunteers' next steps.

"One girl wants to work with young people for job opportunities and future career inspiration as a nursery nurse. This is the perfect test bed for her"

"I want to go into social or youth work, so this helps me to see if it's for me."

"This is a good opportunity for me because in the future I'm going to be working with young people – I get some work experience related to my college course and it's relevant for the future"

"Growing up in Walworth, job opportunities are pretty low. One of the coaches came to speak to us and he told us that he's now getting paid to coach in our community that he used to play in after becoming an ambassador. It made me think that I could do that too."

This could relate to the double benefit of volunteering: when young people take part in meaningful social action there's a double benefit – they develop and improve their own confidence, skills and wellbeing, whilst making a positive difference in their communities.

Peer to Peer

A peer promoter model has worked really well to drive volunteer engagement. Similar to having the right person to engage with volunteers, it's important to understand the role of young people in bringing other young people in. Girls in particular have told us that they have liked having the security of volunteering with a friend, someone they know and trust. Some female volunteers emphasised that the only reason they volunteered was because their friend(s) did.

"My friends got me involved in volunteering as I wouldn't have done this on my own due to low confidence."

"I was so shy at the start. I was doing it with a friend, but didn't know anyone else"

In Wigan, there was an existing group of girls who were united by their fundraising charity work. As part of this project, they were challenged to recruit non-volunteer friends and this worked really well, ending up with a strong group of 10. The peer promoter model also works really well for communicating with the volunteers; a key volunteer can act as the link between project staff and volunteers, such as getting the word out via WhatsApp.

Girls also highlighted that since volunteering, they have found a new good group of friends and benefit from the peer support in these new/different friendship groups.

Whilst peer support and friendships is important to all young people, it appeared to be less of a deciding factor for males who were part of the BAME focus groups in comparison to the girls.

Flexibility

When asked about pre-conceptions about volunteering, the young people told us they were concerned about their time. They said "volunteering" sounds time-consuming and requires a lot of commitment – even 1 hour a week.

"I find it hard to balance volunteering with my desire to chill out and not give up my school holidays"

This was also the biggest barrier that project leaders felt they had to overcome; they understand that young people lead complex lives, and as a result, leaders made the effort to allow flexibility as well as showing they care.

"We are very flexible and basically run an open door policy. They can commit as much or as little as they can and we're happy with that."

"They lead complex lives and have new things that come up all the time – it could be exams, personal stuff going on, younger siblings to look after etc. So you have to work with that and welcome them back in, even if they haven't been for the last 2 sessions. As long as they know you will be there, that's the most important."

It was reported that those who stopped volunteering were linked to the time of year. In June, a number of volunteers stopped coming along because of school and exam pressures. Unfortunately, once the summer holidays arrived after the exams, they had got out of the routine to come back, however a couple have returned since September and "it was as if nothing had changed".

The project leader in Wigan shared that to keep the volunteers engaged she was flexible with the meeting venues, letting the girls decide where they wanted to meet. She has treated them at Costa Coffee, met them in their own patch and visited Central Park as an inspiring venue for the social action event. This has kept the girls interested and has shown that this project is truly led by them.

Following our discussions with the project leaders, it's important to highlight that there is still a big need for a change in the narrative of volunteering, and that meeting up, for example as a group to plan some social action is still volunteering; they are still giving up their time, with purpose and still learning. This is the case for both the project leaders and the young volunteers.

RETENTION

Somewhere to go/ Something to do

One of the most impressionable things that came out from the focus groups was the sentiment that the reason why the young people keep coming back is because it is somewhere to go and something to do. These local organisations are there for them; regularly, it's familiar, it's routine and reliable, sustained delivery.

"Because it's a good opportunity for me to do something instead of just sitting at home"

"I don't have anything better to do – it's not going to hurt. I sometimes bring my friends."

It's something to do. It gets me out the house, instead of being bored"

"Mandy is a local hero. I know she cares about every single one of us and I know she will be there every day, every week and she will get in touch if she hasn't heard from us."

Volunteering for many has also been described as an escape and a positive use of their time. Some young people growing up in areas of deprivation have difficult home environments, so volunteering offers them a safe place to go, peers to socialise with and to get their voices heard.

"There's very few other opportunities for these young people – this fills in a bit of a gap."

"It keeps me out of trouble"

"I get in trouble a lot and I get grounded if in trouble at school. My punishment is not being allowed out by my parents, so this is a good incentive to be good at school."



Our research has highlighted that our FABS approach to engaging young people in volunteering is just as/almost more important in retaining volunteers. By having an offer that allows young people to have Fun, build on their existing instinct for Altruism, giving them a sense of Belonging whilst also allowing them the opportunity for Self-Development through learning new skills has positively impacted on the retention of young volunteers in all the clusters.

Fun

Volunteers were often reluctant to admit that one of the key drivers that keeps them coming back was because they enjoy it and they enjoy making others have fun because they feel like they shouldn't enjoy it or they think they should say something more profound. But the truth is that they all enjoyed it for a variety of reasons: from being able to socialise with their friends, to seeing the kids happy, a rewarding feeling and a sense that they might be missing out if they don't attend.

70%

**volunteer to
"have fun"**

"I just like it – it's fun!"

"The atmosphere. The bond I've built with my colleagues and the kids is lovely. It gives me something to look forward to."

"I don't think they realised what they would get out of it – a lot of them always say it's the enjoyment that they see that the kids get out of it which makes think they're doing a good job and enjoying it. This has stood out massively"

Altruism

The young volunteers gave a real sense of pride when talking about the difference they feel they are making to others. It is important to them to be able to see the difference they are making to others and the community they live in.

71%

volunteer to
“help people”

“I want to help my community. When I was younger I didn’t have anything like this – I want it to be available to others”

“I volunteer because it actually makes me feel like I’m doing something to help other people. It makes me happy to be here”

Project leaders also explained that this motivation to help others and give back was the one common goal of their volunteer groups. They all had their own individual motivations, but they were primarily coming along because they enjoy helping out.

“Young people in a very community-driven area. They are motivated to stay involved and give back to their community”

“The group is a mixture of sporty & non-sporty girls, but united by passion for helping others. As such, they do a mix of physical activity with fundraising, doing different roles that complement each other, using their different skills and interests.”

Belonging

To provide a sense of belonging to the StreetGames Young Volunteers programme, we provided volunteer kit (including t-shirts and hoodies) and resources (bags, speakers, power bars). These resources were utilised as part of each clusters’ incentives.

52%

volunteer to
“socialise / make friends”

In Newcastle, the girls came up with how they wanted it to work with their kit incentives and decided that they wanted to work towards it, exchanging volunteer hours for incentives, working the way up from a water bottle > bag > t-shirt > hoodie > power bank > speaker. In Leicester and Lambeth, the volunteers got their organisation logos added on. The hoodies in particular have been popular.

“They really love the hoodies and t-shirts. They feel part of something, feel a sense of value and like they have a role”

“Kit makes them feel part of the team, feel like they are valued and respected and they’re volunteering”

“They love the hoodies. We got the ER logo on them too which provides them with recognition, and makes them stand out”

Some clusters have also given themselves a unique identity, coming up with a name: Project 19 (Wigan), TRU Volunteers (Lambeth), Young Ambassadors (Southwark) and also designed themselves a logo, giving them a sense of ownership.

This sense of belonging to their local LTO, in addition to the national StreetGames Young Volunteers programme shows them that someone cares about them. There is a greater sense of mutual trust and respect.

“It’s important to be part of something”

“I’m ever so proud of the volunteers”

Self-Development

Another key incentive for young volunteers is the opportunity to develop their experiences, skills and expertise. The training workshops attended by the volunteers have helped to develop their technical knowledge and skills which they have in turn been able to put into practice during their voluntary hours. In addition to the kit, a small budget has been made available to the clusters to reward their volunteers and one of the main requests has been for more training.

75%

volunteer to
“learn new
skills”

“The girls are hungry to learn and develop more. We asked them what they wanted and they have asked for us to put on a Sports Leadership Level 2.”

“Volunteering gives me the chance to show what I can do. I’ve got skills and I want to use them.”

“You personally get something out of it – a feel good factor and better social skills”

Helping the volunteers to recognise what they have learnt, how they have developed and how they can articulate their transferrable skills is crucial to help with the development of the young people.

“It’s important to help them to see and understand what they’re doing and what they’ve learnt”

This is something we will look to explore more as we transition into the self-development and impact phases of this research, especially supporting the clusters to help their volunteers see the difference they have made beyond the lifetime of the project.

CASE STUDY

Evie

“Evie is a volunteer from the North [of Newcastle]. She got involved in Hat-Trick in February 2019 and has been supporting part of the community football sessions in the North. Evie has gained so much confidence and new skills her time volunteering. She has gained so many new skills like communication, leadership and problem solving. She has currently contributed to 39.5 hours of volunteering with us plus training over the year. Evie is currently completing a level 2 sports leadership and will gain further experience in developing new skills and coaching multi-sport sessions in the North. Her progression has been outstanding and is still improving and developing her skills further.”



YEAR 2

All clusters have completed a Year 2 delivery plan for:

- Recruiting a further 10 young volunteers
- Training , retaining and developing all 20 volunteers

We will pay particular attention to the impact of volunteering on the individual and the local community as clusters deliver social action projects, give more of their time and attend training, including the StreetGames Young Volunteer residential in April 2020.

We hope to do some further research into the differences between female and male volunteers and also the difference within BAME communities.

FUTURE PLANNING

We know there continues to be unmet demand from young people living in lower socio-economic groups (LSEG) in terms of quality volunteer training and volunteer opportunities. Paired with this, we know that LSEG young people are not fairly represented in the workforce due to the many different barriers they face, so we plan to disseminate the outcomes from this research across the other 44 StreetGames clusters to help further remove these barriers through training and support.

The existing Training Academy suite of workshops for project leaders and young volunteers will need updating with the new up to date research and delivered locally within regions to share the knowledge and provide the support to deliver volunteering that meets the needs of the young volunteers.

Project leaders have told us that they have valued the local DSA support, the delivery style and expertise of the training tutors and the strong relationships with the national volunteer manager to make a success of this project, and would continue to need this level of support in future youth volunteering work. We in turn value the excellent work these local organisations do in achieving our mission, so would want to ensure that they are well supported with resources and time from StreetGames staff to fully embed volunteering as the golden thread of Doorstep Sport.

