



Volunteering Fund Evaluation- Impact Report

June 2022



Contents

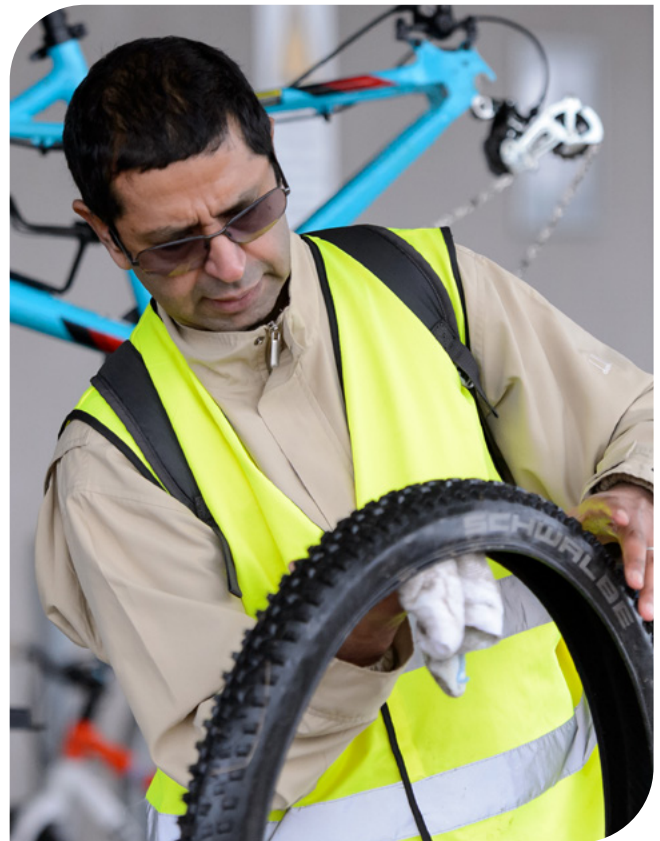
Introduction	3
The Volunteering Fund: What we achieved	4
Projects were successful in recruiting a diverse range of volunteers to a range of opportunities	5
Volunteers enjoyed the activities and plan to continue volunteering in the future	6
Taking part had a positive impact on volunteers	7
Personal wellbeing	8
Individual development	9
Community and social development	11
Physical activity levels	12
Volunteers have had an impact on their local community	13

Introduction

Sport England's Volunteering Fund worked with 37 projects to increase the diversity of people volunteering in sport and physical activity. Projects tested new approaches to volunteering to reach under-represented groups including women and girls and people from lower socio-economic groups.

Sport England also sought to understand the power of sport and physical activity to promote social action among young people in partnership with the #iWill Fund. We tracked the impact of the Fund on individuals and communities. This resource celebrates what was achieved.

CFE Research, with their associate Dr Carolynne Mason, undertook a four-year evaluation of Sport England's Volunteering Fund. This comprised a series of surveys with volunteers; depth interviews with project leads; and case studies which engaged project leads, volunteers and community members.



Partners



Proudly supporting
youth social action



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport



The Volunteering Fund: What we achieved

37
projects
were
funded

19 Opportunity
Fund projects



Targeting those aged 20 or over from economically disadvantaged communities.

18 Potential
Fund projects



Designed to help 10 to 20-year-olds get involved in volunteering. Match funded by the #iwill Fund, a partnership between DCMS and the #iwill Campaign to increase the number of young people engaging in youth social action.

8,918



volunteers
took part

94,169



sessions of
volunteering

211,118



hours of
volunteering

Projects were successful in recruiting a diverse range of volunteers to a range of opportunities

Although it was challenging, projects successfully recruited volunteers with varied demographic characteristics to take part. Each project focused on different target groups.



39%

had never volunteered before



19%

had a disability or mental health difficulty



38%

were from ethnically diverse communities*



19%

from areas of high deprivation

Volunteers took part in lots of different activities with their project.

40%



coached, refereed, umpired, or officiated in sport or physical activity

26%



campaigned for a cause

31%



undertook a leadership role (e.g. leading or mentoring others)

32%



organised an activity or event

34%



helped to renovate/clean/fix a space, building or equipment

*The full ethnicity breakdown is: 13% Black/Black British, 11% Asian/Asian British, 7% Mixed ethnicity, 2% Other ethnic group, 6% White other, 60% White British and 2% prefer not to say.

Volunteers enjoyed the activities and plan to continue volunteering in the future

Projects tailored their activities and often co-designed these with their volunteers. The more satisfied a volunteer was with their experience the greater the impact it had on them. Most plan to continue volunteering in the future.

8.5 out of 10

satisfied with the type of activity



“ The support and opportunities were amazing.”

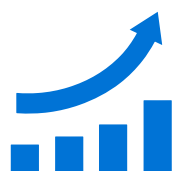
8.7 out of 10

satisfied with the support they received from their project



“ It is the best thing I have done, it's kept me busy with fixing bikes and riding with volunteers who are now my friends.”

77%



reported an increase in the amount of volunteering they took part in over a 12 month period compared to when they started

51%



have encouraged others to volunteer

78%



plan to volunteer in the future

Taking part had a positive impact on volunteers

Volunteering had a range of positive impacts on volunteers, including on their personal wellbeing, individual development, their sense of community and physical activity levels.

Volunteers were asked to rate themselves, on a scale of 0–10, against a range of aspects when they joined their project and part way through. A low score indicated low levels of wellbeing and a high score indicated high levels of wellbeing. For each measure, the mean score across all volunteers is reported. Those statements with a * were only asked to volunteers at projects who were trying to achieve that particular outcome.

The full question wording for each statement can be found at the bottom of each page.

- The blue bars show the mean scores the volunteers gave when they joined their project.
- The red bars show the mean score volunteers gave whilst with their project. The length of time volunteers were with their project before they provided follow up scores varied.

“ Volunteering has helped me to become more positive and happy.”

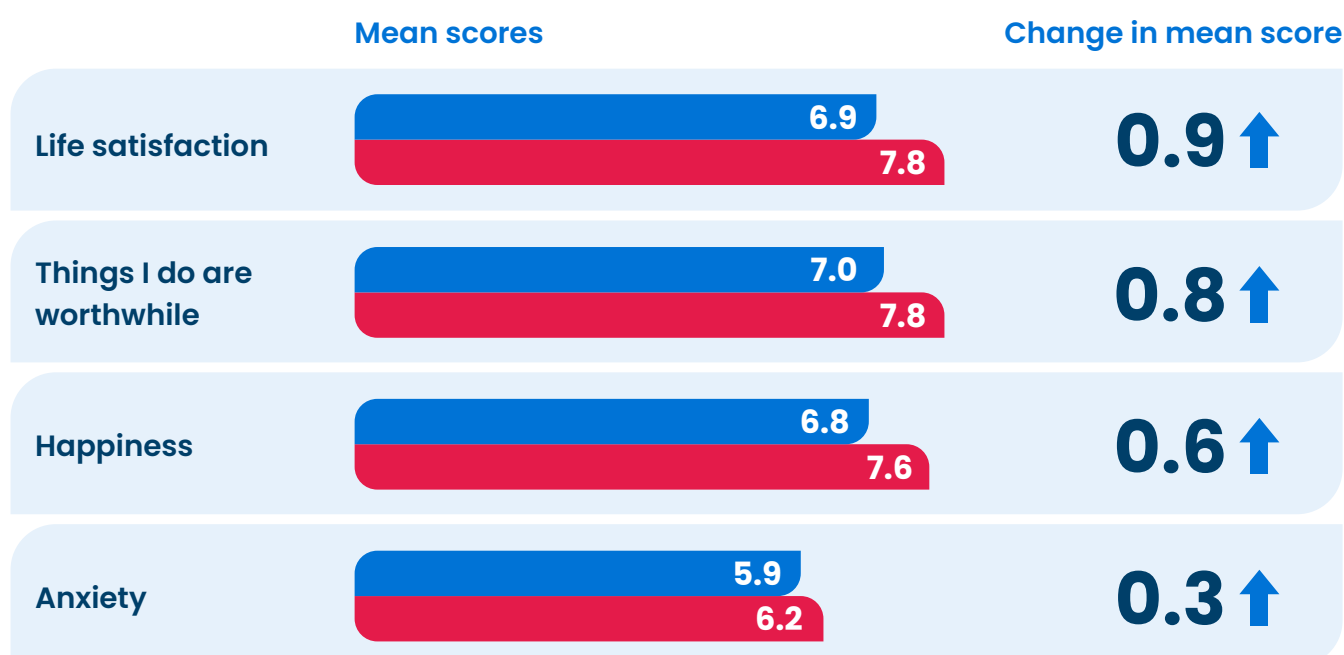


Personal wellbeing

Volunteers experienced improvements in their personal wellbeing whilst with their project, with an increase in mean scores across all personal wellbeing measures.

Project activities connected people, made volunteers feel good and feel valued. When they believed they were contributing in a meaningful way, this made them feel that what they were doing was worthwhile.

“ It helped me with my anxieties and I feel the more I continue the better I will get.”



Full question wording – these are the ONS Personal Wellbeing questions:

Life satisfaction: Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
0–10 scale (0=Not at all satisfied and 10=Completely satisfied).

Things I do are worthwhile: Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile? 0–10 scale (0=Not at all worthwhile and 10=Completely worthwhile).

Happiness: Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday? 0–10 scale (0=Not at all happy and 10=Completely happy).

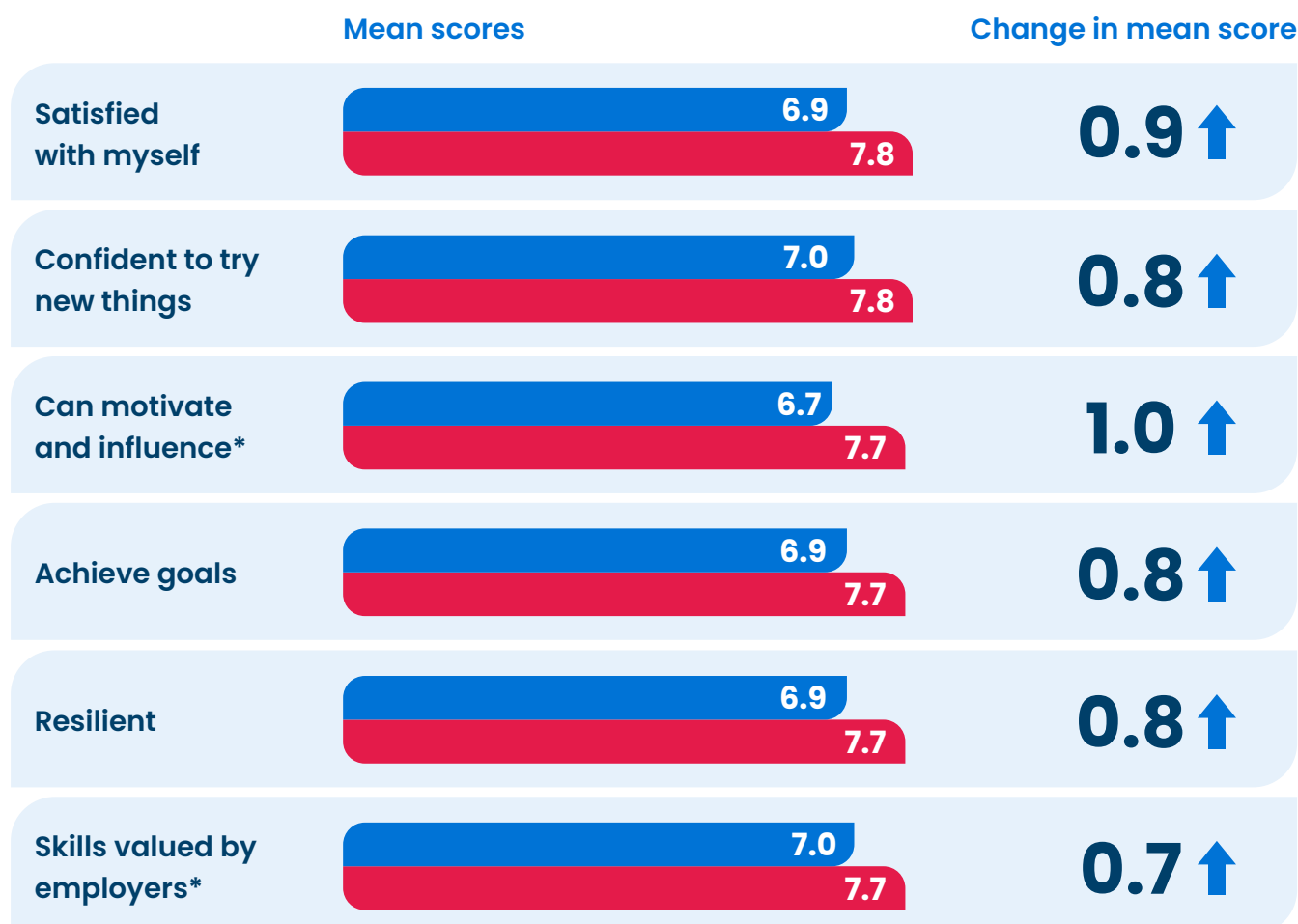
Anxiety: Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday? (Opportunity projects only)
0–10 scale (0=Not at all anxious and 10=Completely anxious). The results for this question have been reversed in the graph above so that 10=Not at all anxious and 0=Completely anxious.

Individual development

Volunteers also experienced improvements in individual development, with an increase in all mean scores measuring this.

Volunteers increased their confidence because they were doing something outside of their comfort zone, being given responsibility or simply by interacting with others. Project activities also gave volunteers a sense of purpose. Increased confidence then enabled them to make a positive difference in their own lives and within their community.

“ It has been extremely valuable in both developing useful skills and improving my mental health and self-confidence.”



[See full question wording](#)

Increased confidence and self-belief also gave volunteers a sense of agency or the belief they can achieve social change, particularly amongst younger volunteers.

Go Wild Get Fit

Offers training and development opportunities directly related to employability skills as part of the volunteering opportunity, including interview and CV writing support. Other skills such as teamwork and time management are acquired implicitly through working alongside fellow volunteers on conservation activities.



Full question wording:

Satisfied with myself: On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. 0-10 scale (0=I do not agree at all and 10=Completely agree).

Confident to try new things: I feel confident at having a go at things that are new to me. 0-10 scale (0=I do not agree at all and 10=Completely agree).

Can motivate and influence: I am able to motivate and influence other people. 0-10 scale (0=I do not agree at all and 10=Completely agree).

Achieve goals: I can achieve most of the goals I set myself. 0-10 scale (0=I do not agree at all and 10=Completely agree).

Resilient: If something goes wrong I am able to bounce back and carry on. 0-10 scale (0=I do not agree at all and 10=Completely agree).

Skills valued by employers: I have skills and experience that are valued by employers. 0-10 scale (0=I do not agree at all and 10=Completely agree).

[Back to individual development graphic](#)

Community and social development

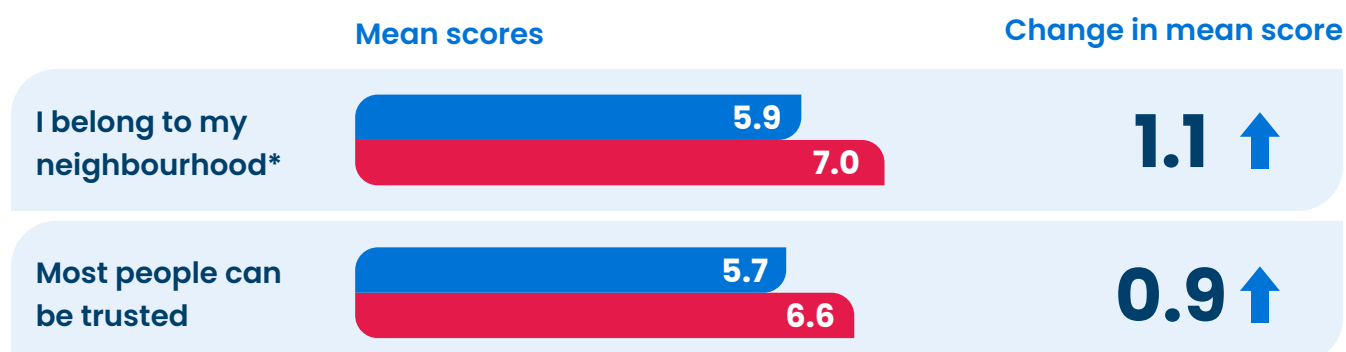
Volunteers gained an improved sense of community trust and belonging to their immediate neighbourhood.

Increasing volunteers' sense of inclusion or belonging in the local area was achieved through:

- 1 improving the inclusivity of volunteering activities to engage marginalised groups
- 2 co-designing activities alongside volunteers to benefit their local area and community

Some volunteers had also developed new friendships and support networks through taking part in the activities

“ I moved to the area 4 years ago and didn't settle. Since being involved I've got fitter, it's had a positive impact on my wellbeing and I finally feel I'm part of the local community.”



Full question wording:

Most people can be trusted: I think that most people in my local area can be trusted. 0-10 scale (0=I do not agree at all and 10=Completely agree).

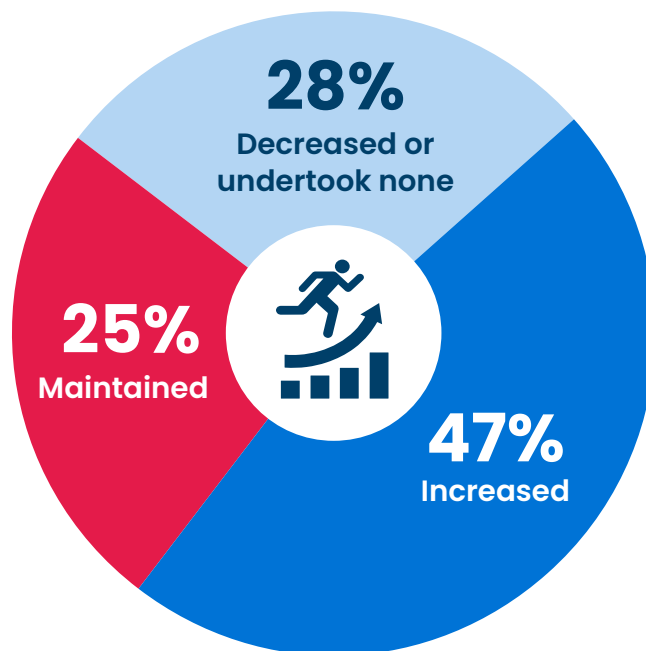
I belong to my neighbourhood: I feel that I strongly belong to my immediate neighbourhood (Please think of the area within a few minutes walking distance from your home). 0-10 scale (0=I do not agree at all and 10=Completely agree).

Physical activity: In the past week, on how many days have you done a total of 30 minutes or more of physical activity, which was enough to raise your breathing rate? This may include sport, exercise and brisk walking or cycling for recreation or to get to and from places, but should not include housework or physical activity that is part of your job.

Physical activity levels

Alongside providing volunteering opportunities, a number of projects aimed to increase the physical activity levels of those taking part. They did this by integrating physical activity into training or support sessions or through the volunteering opportunities themselves being active (e.g. litter picking, nature walks or moving equipment).

Nearly half of all volunteers at these projects increased the number of days in which they did physical activity in the last week.



Volunteers have had an impact on their local community

Each project was tailored to the local area it is being delivered in; therefore, volunteering activities and the associated impacts are diverse and differ across projects.

Volunteers provided a score of

8.4 out of 10

when considering the positive impact their volunteering had on other people

Wave Rangers

Wave Rangers is a form of environmental therapy. The project runs in North Devon and engages vulnerable young people, aged 10 to 20, with mental health difficulties. Once they have done 25 hours of volunteering, they go surfing as a reward. The volunteering activities are designed to directly help the environment, including beach cleaning, bird box building, paddle boarding to clean rivers and lakes, building fences, planting wild flowers, and conservation surveys. Activities are also developed with partners to support their work. For example, they worked with Westcountry River CSI and volunteers helped to undertake their river surveys.

Weston Active Volunteers

Sustrans' Weston Active Volunteers project recruited adults from a neighbourhood in Southampton located on the National Cycle Network. The project aimed to increase volunteering, physical activity and social inclusion within communities with areas of high deprivation. The project co-designed activities with volunteers and included led cycle rides and walks, family trails and activities, and bike maintenance sessions for the community. This has increased the number of free, outdoor, local activities available for the community, particularly for families who have appreciated these during the school holidays.

Bright Futures

Bright Futures, a project run by Diversity Matters North West, engaged women from marginalised communities in the North West who experienced barriers to volunteering and physical activity. The project removed these barriers and built trust within the community to engage women in volunteering and physical activity. Over time, the women engaged friends and family in the activities, they also developed the confidence to engage with the wider community, showcasing their cultures and traditions which improved community cohesion in the area. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the project re-deployed its volunteers to support the creation of a food bank for the community.



Volunteer it yourself

Volunteer it Yourself recruited young people aged 16 to 24, who were unemployed or at risk of leaving education, to help repair and refurbish sport club facilities. Young people worked alongside professional tradespeople to learn new skills and had the opportunity to gain Entry Level City & Guilds trade accreditations. The refurbishments helped the clubs improve the experience for their members whilst also increasing their capacity to support new and more diverse members. Clubs have also reported an increase in their revenue and longer term sustainability. Additionally, clubs achieved an improved culture of volunteering within their membership, improved intergenerational community cohesion and better partnerships with schools.





Sport England
1st Floor
21 Bloomsbury Street
London WC1B 3HF

sportengland.org

June 2022