

**MAY 2020**



**UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM**

# **An investigation into volunteer transfer in Birmingham**



LARA KIRWIN

SUPERVISOR- PROF. VICTORIA BURNS

SCHOOL OF SPORT, EXERCISE AND REHABILITATION SCIENCES

# Executive summary

## Introduction (Page 3)

In 2017/18, 20.1 million people volunteered in the UK, highlighting the large-scale of volunteering. Sport Birmingham identified this as an opportunity to explore how volunteers could transfer across the community, cultural and sport sectors, discussed as volunteer transfer. However, a limited understanding of the **benefits** and ways to **promote volunteer transfer** provides scope for this project, to explore the **desirability** and **feasibility** of **volunteer transfer** in Birmingham.

## Collecting and analysing our data (Page 4)

We collected our data by conducting **7 semi-structured interviews** and **3 focus groups** with **13 volunteer managers** across the sport, community and cultural sectors. This gained insights into **thoughts and feelings** of volunteer transfer in Birmingham.

We analysed our data using **thematic analysis** to create a **summary of volunteer managers' thoughts and feelings** towards volunteer transfer.



## We identified reasons why volunteer managers support volunteer transfer (Page 5)



Develops volunteers' skills  
Contributes to the community



Increases workforce capacity  
Creates new volunteer opportunities



Maximises Commonwealth Games opportunities  
Volunteer transfer is already happening

## We identified reasons why volunteer managers are concerned about volunteer transfer (Page 6)



Challenge of matching volunteers to opportunities



Loss of volunteer trust



Practical issues

## Theoretical information- self determination theory (SDT) (Page 7)

SDT states that individuals are optimally engaged in a behaviour when they have **autonomous motivation**, as behaviour is determined by choice and not pressure. This occurs when feelings of **competence**, **autonomy** and **relatedness** are satisfied. I have considered SDT to create recommendations to promote volunteer transfer and optimally engage and satisfy individuals.



## Recommendation- creating a community of practice (CoP) (Pages 8-9)



I recommend creating a **CoP** for volunteer managers and volunteers on Facebook. This can promote volunteer transfer as managers and volunteers can share existing transfer practice and opportunities between sectors.

## Recommendation- advertisements that motivate volunteers to transfer (Page 10)



I recommend including **information** that **motivates** volunteers in advertisements. This can promote volunteer transfer by overcoming the challenge of matching volunteers to opportunities by providing volunteers with clear role information.

## Research limitations and future directions (Page 11)



We interviewed **less managers from the cultural and community sectors**, which may have missed important information about volunteer transfer. We **did not interview any volunteers** whose insights may have increased our understanding of volunteer transfer.



A future project should **interview volunteers** who have and have not transferred to identify motivations, barriers and opinions on my recommended role advertisements. This can provide another viewpoint on transfer and explore the effects of my recommendations.

## Acknowledgements and references (Page 12)

## Sport Birmingham and volunteering

Sport Birmingham is a **non-profit organisation** and Birmingham's **strategic sport partnership**. The organisation aims to be the city's lead for supporting inclusive sport by connecting individuals and communities (1). Non-profit organisations rely on the work of volunteers and without them, sport programmes and events would not take place (2). Sport Birmingham support volunteering by promoting available roles on their website to help organisations recruit and allow volunteers to find opportunities, enabling sport programmes and events to take place in the city.

## Volunteer transfer

In 2017/18, **20.1 million people** volunteered for a group, club or organisation in the UK (3). This highlights the large-scale of volunteering and available opportunities for volunteers to become involved in. Of these volunteers, **55%** were willing to help **multiple organisations** (4). Sport Birmingham identified this as an opportunity to explore how volunteers could utilise the range of opportunities available by volunteering for multiple organisations in **different sectors**. This is discussed as **volunteer transfer** and refers to the movement of willing volunteers across the **community, cultural and sport** sectors (Figure 1).

Volunteer transfer is the movement of willing volunteers across the community, cultural and sport sectors.



Figure 1- Volunteer transfer illustration.

Research highlights that volunteering benefits both volunteers and organisations (4,5). This suggests that volunteering in different sectors, through volunteer transfer, may have similar benefits. However, this cannot be assumed as research highlights that volunteering in different contexts can lack similarity dependent on an individuals interests and the volunteering role and environment (6). A lack of research into volunteer transfer suggests it has limited Sport Birmingham's understanding of the benefits of volunteer transfer and how it can be promoted amongst the different sectors. This provides scope for this project to help Sport Birmingham promote volunteer transfer by developing a deeper understanding into its desirability and feasibility.

## This Project

To create this project, **Sport Birmingham** collaborated with the **University of Birmingham** to explore **volunteer transfer**. The project was approved by the School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences' Ethics Committee. I immersed myself into **50 hours of volunteering** with Sport Birmingham to **deepen my understanding** of volunteers' experiences during events. I applied my knowledge gained throughout my research and when producing recommendations.



The aim of this project is to help Sport Birmingham promote volunteer transfer by exploring its feasibility and desirability in the different volunteer sectors in Birmingham. This report will explain and justify the research project's conduct, findings and evidence based recommendations.

# Collecting our data

We used **qualitative methods** to gain an in-depth understanding of volunteer transfer in Birmingham. Depending on the location and availability of the participant, we conducted either an **individual interview** or **focus group** as they can gain **insight** into **experiences and beliefs on volunteer transfer** (7). **Semi-structured interviews** were used to give our discussions guidance, whilst allowing participants to elaborate on important information that we may not have considered and planned for.

We conducted 7 interviews and 3 focus groups.



To give our discussions focus, we created an **interview schedule** with planned questions based on the **desirability** and **feasibility** of transfer within Birmingham (7).

To promote transfer it was vital to interview managers to provide us with relevant information (8). We interviewed 13 freelance event and volunteer managers across the community, cultural and sport sectors. Interviewing managers from **different volunteering sectors** was important to understand **multiple viewpoints** (9), ensuring that our findings met Sport Birmingham's interests and focus.

13 volunteer managers across 3 sectors:



3 community managers



2 cultural managers



8 sport managers

# Analysing our data

To analyse our interviews we used thematic analysis. This method identified, analysed and reported patterns in our data (10), organising it into richly detailed descriptions about volunteer transfer.

## Thematic analysis process



Our interviews were **audio recorded** and **transcribed into text**. Our transcriptions **included verbal** aspects but **ignored non-verbal** aspects of our interviews (11). We checked our transcriptions to ensure they accurately represented our discussions and familiarised ourselves with the data.



We identified **important quotes** in our transcript that related to volunteer transfer and gave them a code. Each code was labelled with a **summary of the quote** content and could be understood alone.



**Themes** emerged that captured **important codes** relevant to volunteer transfer. Sub-themes were used to give structure to a complex theme. **Reviewing our themes** ensured that they were **distinct** from each other and **represented** the identified codes.



Themes and sub themes are displayed through a thematic map to show an overarching summary of the data. Our thematic map summarised managers' **support** and **concerns** about **volunteer transfer**, shown on pages 5 and 6 of this report.

# Support for volunteer transfer

We identified reasons why managers support volunteer transfer, summarised into six main themes shown below in a thematic map. Each theme is named, defined and an example quote is given, icons in the speech bubble indicate the sector each quotation is from. **Managers' support suggests Sport Birmingham should promote volunteer transfer. My recommendations will consider this.**



## Develops volunteers' skills

Transfer to new experiences can develop volunteers' skills.

"Getting them to different projects because it's going to build resilience and skills."



## Increases workforce capacity

Transfer can help organisations who need to recruit volunteers.

"When there's great big sporting events, they need volunteers."



## Contributes to the community

Transfer can help volunteers to engage with their community.

"Sport leaders are now doing projects in the community... to go out and become more active in their communities."



## Creates volunteer opportunities

Transfer can provide volunteers with awareness of new experiences.

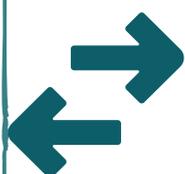
"Just make it easier on them to know about the opportunities to volunteer."



## Maximises Commonwealth Games opportunities

Transfer can help maximise volunteering experiences developed from the Commonwealth Games.

"We want to make sure at the end of the Games we're ready to say 'and don't stop'... we want to build on those opportunities."



## Volunteer transfer is already happening

Transfer is already occurring between sectors in Birmingham.

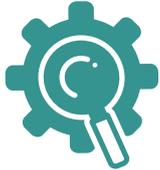
"Volunteers were expecting to do the sports event and have never volunteered for an arts event. But because they did, now they volunteer weekly doing community arts stuff."



# Concerns about volunteer transfer

We identified reasons why managers are concerned about volunteer transfer, summarised into three main themes and eight sub themes shown below in our thematic map. Each theme is named, defined and an example quote is given, icons in each speech bubble indicate the sector the quotation is from.

**To promote transfer, managers' concerns need to be considered in my recommendations.**

Main themes	Sub themes
 <p><b>Challenge of matching volunteers to opportunities</b></p> <p>Transfer can be prevented if volunteers and opportunities are not matched.</p>	 <p><b>Individual readiness</b></p> <p>Volunteers need to be ready with suitable skills to transfer.</p> <p>"They may want to go and volunteer...They may not be ready, that may be the only thing." </p>
	 <p><b>Challenge of recognising transferable skills</b></p> <p>Transfer relies on recognising volunteers' transferable skills.</p> <p>"You would have to know your volunteers to see how they could transfer to something like that." </p>
	 <p><b>Matching volunteers' interests to opportunities</b></p> <p>Volunteers must be interested in opportunities to transfer across sectors.</p> <p>"I don't think you can share volunteers across sectors if they are not interested." </p>
<p><b>Loss of volunteer trust</b></p>  <p>Transfer can lose volunteer trust as volunteers transfer between sectors.</p>	 <p><b>Loss of volunteer value</b></p> <p>Volunteer transfer can potentially lose a volunteer's value within an organisation.</p> <p>"I put a lot of time and effort into looking after people and they might then expect that from someone else and not receive it." </p>
	 <p><b>Loss of volunteer relationship's</b></p> <p>Transferring to different sectors can lose existing volunteer relationships.</p> <p>"At these big events, sometimes you kind of lose the personality... and that personal relationship's gone." </p>
 <p><b>Practical issues</b></p> <p>Practicality issues within the volunteering sector can limit volunteer transfer.</p>	 <p><b>Location of volunteering opportunities</b></p> <p>Transfer is dependent on the accessibility of the opportunity's location.</p> <p>"Some people will only ever be at the event which is in their local neighbourhood." </p>
	 <p><b>GDPR issues</b></p> <p>GDPR restrictions may create difficulties in sharing information about opportunities.</p> <p>"We're having a massive difficulty about like data, GDPR." </p>
	 <p><b>Sharing information between organisations</b></p> <p>Volunteers' information storage would be complex and time consuming to share between organisations.</p> <p>"I collect my information on excel spreadsheets...say a different event wanted to access that information...each time it's updated it needs to be done manually." </p>

# Theoretical information

Prior to making recommendations, I have considered **Self Determination Theory** (SDT) to understand motivations of human behaviour. SDT highlights how an individual's behaviour is affected by the **quality** of **motivation** and feelings of **competence**, **autonomy** and **relatedness** (12).

## Types of motivation

SDT differentiates between **controlled** and **autonomous** motivation, which underpin human behaviour and result in different outcome qualities (12).

**Controlled motivation** is where behaviour is determined by feeling pressured, composed of types of **extrinsic motivation** where behaviour is for a separate consequence. This can be **external**, such as gaining a reward or avoiding a punishment or **internal**, such as increasing self-esteem or avoiding failure. In contrast, **autonomous motivation** expresses an individual's choice and self-endorsement in a behaviour. Autonomous motivation can be composed of types of **extrinsic motivation** where the value of a behaviour is **identified** by an individual or **integrated** into their beliefs. It can also be composed of **intrinsic motivation**, where behaviour is solely for enjoyment.



## Autonomous motivation and volunteer transfer

**Autonomous motivation** is discussed as the optimal motivation for enjoyment in a behaviour, resulting in improved **performance** and **wellbeing** (12), compared to when individuals feel controlled. This was identified in a range of contexts (13), including volunteering (14), and should be promoted in all social environments to optimally satisfy individuals. I have considered this when creating my recommendations to optimally motivate volunteers and managers in different sectors to promote transfer and engage individuals with a full sense of willingness and choice.

## Three basic psychological needs and volunteer transfer

 To develop autonomous motivation, an individual's three basic psychological needs should be satisfied (12). They are competence, autonomy and relatedness.

 **Competence** is the need to feel effective in an environment based on individual capacities.

 **Autonomy** is the need to perceive and perform a behaviour from interests, values and choice.

 **Relatedness** is the need to feel connected to others and gain a sense of belonging in a community.

The three basic psychological needs can be used to explain managers' concerns for volunteer transfer identified in our interviews. An **individual's readiness** to transfer was a concern in line with **competence**, as volunteers need to feel effective in a different volunteering sector. Another concern was that opportunities need to **match volunteer's interests**, as to satisfy **autonomy** in line with SDT, transfer opportunities need to be perceived by choice and interests. The **loss of volunteer value** and **relationships** was also a concern, this is in line with **relatedness** as feelings of connectedness may be lost when transferring to a different organisation and sector.

**SDT has increased my understanding of how to overcome managers' concerns for transfer by satisfying the three basic psychological needs in my recommendations. This can enhance volunteers' and managers' autonomous motivation to promote volunteer transfer.**

# Recommendations

Based on the support and concerns for transfer identified in our interviews, I have created a set of recommendations to promote volunteer transfer in Birmingham.

## I recommend creating a community of practice (CoP) for the Birmingham voluntary sector

Managers supported volunteer transfer as it can help organisations recruit volunteers and increase awareness of opportunities. However, for this to happen, managers stated that the different sectors need to connect with each other. This can be done by creating a CoP.

"Connecting everyone up is critical."



Community sector

**A CoP is a group of people who share a passion, such as volunteering, and interact regularly to learn how to do it better (15).**

Learning takes place in a CoP through members **sharing experiences, practice and information** to increase the knowledge of others. This can be explained by situated learning theory, as learning takes place through collaboration with others in authentic environments (15).

A CoP can be established in any domain to overcome challenges that members are experiencing (16). This suggests that despite a lack of specific research, creating a CoP for the different sectors in Birmingham can help promote transfer and overcome concerns identified in our research. The following recommendations can help promote volunteer transfer in the CoP.

## I recommend sharing volunteer opportunities in the CoP

Managers highlighted that to promote transfer, they needed to increase their awareness of volunteer opportunities in different sectors. A CoP can do this as research found it was effective to increase members' awareness of information in their organisation to improve their knowledge (17). This provides support that sharing opportunities in the CoP can help managers to promote volunteer transfer and increase volunteers' awareness.

"I need some awareness of what is going on so I can support them."



Sport sector

## I recommend sharing examples of volunteer transfer in the CoP

We identified in our interviews that sharing examples of practice can promote volunteer transfer. A CoP can do this as managers and volunteers can share their experiences to increase the knowledge of others in different sectors (18). This can help them understand how to implement and promote volunteer transfer.

"Sharing good and bad practice, what works, what doesn't work."



Community sector

Creating a CoP is in line with SDT (17). Connecting the volunteers and managers from different sectors can satisfy volunteers' and managers' relatedness by developing a sense of belonging. Sharing knowledge and learning about volunteer transfer can satisfy volunteers' and managers' competence to promote and engage with volunteer transfer effectively. This can promote autonomous motivation to promote and engage with volunteer transfer.

# Recommendations

To **create a CoP** with engaged members who share knowledge and contribute to promote volunteer transfer (15), I have created the following recommendations.

## I recommend creating a separate CoP for volunteers and managers

A concern for connecting the different volunteering sectors in our interviews was being overloading with information. Research supports this as irrelevant information shared in CoP's can reduce engagement (19). Creating different CoP's for managers and volunteers can overcome this and promote engagement as information shared is more relevant.

"Being bombarded with too many different things."



Community sector

## I recommend creating the CoP online

A concern for transfer in our interviews was the **location of volunteer opportunities**, supported by UK volunteering data, as 81% of volunteers stated that they volunteered in their local area (4).

An online CoP can overcome the issue of meeting up at an accessible and convenient location for all members, increasing the diversity of CoP membership (19). Volunteers and managers from different sectors and areas of Birmingham can join, access and contribute easily (20,21), increasing the potential of members to promote and engage with volunteer transfer.



In line with SDT, autonomous motivation has been found to promote knowledge sharing in a CoP (22). To do this I have created recommendations that satisfy competence, relatedness and autonomy (17). This can motivate managers and volunteers to engage with the CoP and promote volunteer transfer.

## I recommend creating the CoP on Facebook to satisfy competence and relatedness

A concern for transfer identified was the practical issue of **sharing information amongst sectors**. Using Facebook to create the CoP considers this and is feasible as we identified in our interviews that a CoP for the cultural sector has been created on Facebook. Research found that Facebook can promote engagement as it increases members' confidence to contribute as it is widely and frequently used (21,23). This is in line with SDT, as managers and volunteers have the **competence** to use Facebook, compared to a new app or database. This suggests that using Facebook to create a CoP can overcome sharing information amongst sectors and promote engagement in the CoP, by increasing managers' and volunteers' autonomous motivation to promote volunteer transfer.

Facebook can build online relationships between members (24). This suggests that volunteers and managers will engage in the CoP as it can satisfy **relatedness**, by developing a sense of belonging and feeling connected to different sectors (17). This can promote volunteer transfer as managers and volunteers can maintain relationships through the CoP, overcoming the loss of volunteer relationships and trust identified as a concern for volunteer transfer in our interviews.



## I recommend collecting feedback and establishing voluntary engagement in the CoP to satisfy autonomy

Sport Birmingham should ensure that volunteers and managers participate in the CoP voluntarily without feeling a sense of pressure. This can satisfy **autonomy**, in line with SDT, by providing choice to engage with a community that reflects their beliefs (17). Providing opportunities for feedback can also satisfy autonomy as members can give their input. This can promote commitment and engagement to the CoP and increase its effectiveness by adapting it based on members' needs.



## I recommend creating role advertisements with information to motivate volunteers

**Matching opportunities to a volunteer's interests** was a concern for transfer in our interviews and supported in research, as volunteers engaged in opportunities they were most interested in (25).

To overcome this, I have created recommendations to ensure that volunteer opportunities shared in the CoP include information that helps volunteers to identify a suitable opportunity (25). Research supports that using volunteer motivations in advertisements can attract volunteers to an organisation (13). To do this, I have used motivations for volunteering for an organisation in the UK in 2018 (4). I have also used SDT to include information that satisfies a volunteer's **autonomy, competence** and **relatedness**. This suggests that volunteers will be able to choose an opportunity that they enjoy or identifies with their beliefs, interests and choice, increasing their autonomous motivation (26). This can promote transfer as if the information provided matches the volunteer's needs and interests, they can willingly choose to transfer to a role and be satisfied (13,27).

 To help match volunteers to opportunities, I recommend including the following information in advertisements.

## I recommend including how the role helps people and their community

This can motivate volunteers as it is in line with volunteer's motivations in 2018 (4):



**42% wanted to help people.**



**28% felt there was a need in the community.**



Using this information can satisfy a volunteer's **relatedness**, in line with SDT, as volunteers can choose to transfer to a role where they can care for others and feel connected to a community. This can promote transfer as feeling connected is at the core of volunteering (4) and volunteers who cooperated with others were most satisfied (13).

## I recommend outlining the cause of the role and the organisation's values

This can motivate volunteers as it is in line with volunteer's motivations in 2018 (4):



**38% volunteered as the group or organisation was really important.**



**37% volunteered as the cause was important.**



Using this information can satisfy a volunteer's **autonomy**, in line with SDT, as volunteers can choose to transfer to a role that expresses their values. This can promote transfer as when opportunities are meaningful to volunteers, it can increase engagement (4).

## I recommend including the role outline, time, location and skills required

This can motivate volunteers as it is in line with volunteer's motivations in 2018 (4):



**38% volunteered due to spare time .**



**28% wanted to use their existing skills.**



Using this information can satisfy a volunteer's **competence**, in line with SDT, as volunteers can choose roles they have capacity to carry out effectively. It is also supported by our findings as managers highlighted that a volunteer may only transfer if they had the appropriate skills and if the location was accessible.

To promote transfer, the above recommendations should be shared in the CoP so managers can create role advertisements that can motivate volunteers to transfer to a matched opportunity.

## We did not interview a balanced number of managers from each sector

We interviewed more sport managers as we used Sport Birmingham's connections to recruit managers to interview. By interviewing less managers from the community and cultural sector, we might have missed important information that we could have gained by interviewing more managers (28), as we did in the sport sector. Despite this, I do not feel it has affected my findings as it had little impact on how managers perceived the desirability and feasibility of volunteer transfer. Furthermore, we interviewed all managers who were willing and available, to meet Sport Birmingham's requirements.



8 sport managers



3 community managers



2 cultural managers

## We did not interview any volunteers

We did not interview volunteers due to time constraints. Interviewing volunteers would have provided us with insight into **volunteers' perceptions on transfer**. This would have increased our understanding on how to promote volunteer transfer and helped to create recommendations (7). However, interviewing volunteer managers provided us with **rich information** about **volunteer transfer**, allowing me to create feasible and effective recommendations nevertheless. Future projects should interview volunteers to develop a deeper understanding on volunteer transfer.

# Future directions

## A future project to explore volunteers' perceptions on volunteer transfer

Based on limitations of this project and my recommendation to create role advertisements that motivate volunteers to transfer, I propose a future project to explore volunteers' **motivations, barriers** and their opinions on the role advertisements. This can explore how effective my recommended role advertisements have been to promote transfer, whilst developing a deeper understanding of volunteer transfer by gaining a different perspective.

Volunteers who are members of the CoP, created from my recommendations, could be interviewed to gain insight into their views. This should include volunteers who have and have not transferred to explore why some transfer and others do not. Using questions based on motivations, barriers and effectiveness of the advertisements in semi structured interviews can do this, whilst allowing volunteers to elaborate on ideas we may not have considered. Analysing this could summarise why volunteers may or may not transfer based on their motivations and barriers. This can also review how effective the role advertisements have been to promote transfer.

## Study Design



Use the online CoP to identify volunteers who are willing to participate in the project.



Prepare interview schedules based on volunteers who have and have not transferred.



Conduct semi-structured interviews with volunteers who have and have not transferred.



Use thematic analysis to create a detailed summary of volunteers' motivators and barriers of volunteer transfer.



Produce recommendations acknowledging volunteers' motivations and barriers to transfer.

# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank James Grinstead, Adam Warden and the Sport Birmingham team for creating this project and their continued support and guidance throughout our placement and research. I would also like to thank all the freelance event managers, volunteer managers and organisations who participated in our interviews and provided us with rich and meaningful data. I am extremely grateful for my project supervisor Prof. Victoria Burns, who gave me continued encouragement and reassurance throughout the project. Finally, a special thanks to Ellie Beachell who partnered with me on the project. To see findings and recommendations on volunteer retention, please see Ellie's report.

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