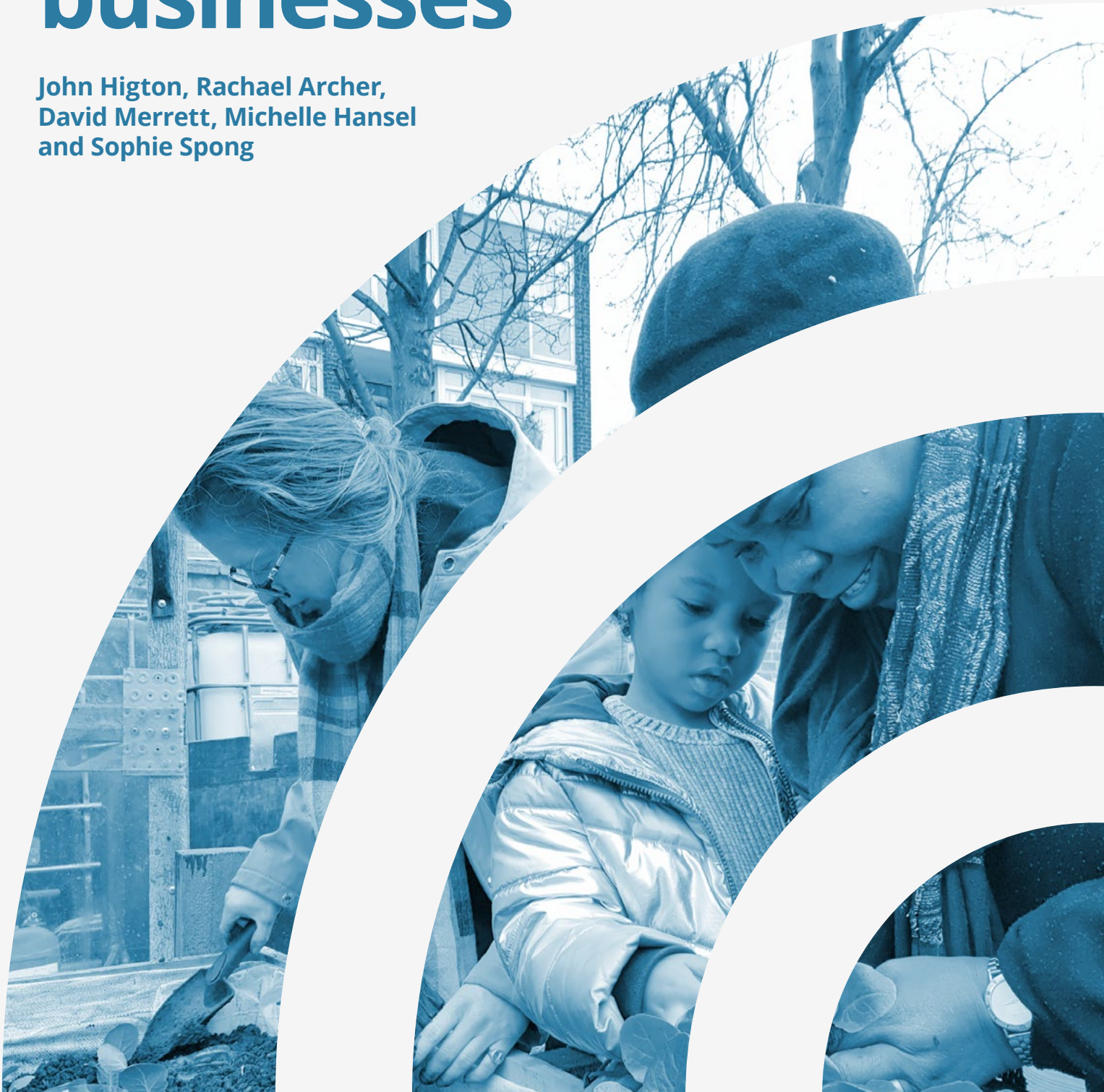


# The role of volunteers in community businesses

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## The role of volunteers in community businesses

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## About this report

This research was funded in 2020 by a grant from the Power to Change Research Institute's open call for research. These grants aimed to support the community business sector and its partners to deliver the evidence the sector needs for its own development, and to make the case for the value of community business. The open call for research grant programme has now closed, in line with Power to Change's new strategy and direction. The work and any views presented are the authors' own.

CFE Research's design was prompted from analysis of prior research we conducted from Power to Change. Previous editions of the Community Business Market Survey identified that little was known about the composition, utilisation and views of the sector's volunteer workforce. This mixed-method study was designed to address some of these gaps in evidence.

## About CFE Research

Founded in 1997, CFE Research is a highly-regarded, independent social research company, providing research and evaluation services to government departments, public sector agencies, education providers and local and national charities.

CFE is a not-for-profit organisation, employing a team of dedicated consultancy and research professionals as well as an extensive network of quality-assured associates selected for their expertise. Our reputation for depth of knowledge, timely results, innovative research methods and flexible approach has seen us become a leading social research agency within the UK. Our services help customers to understand what works, in what context and why.



# Acknowledgements

CFE Research extends its thanks to all those who made the research possible. Sophie Reid provided valuable guidance throughout the project in a professional and personable manner. The wider Power to Change team also helped in aspects of data collection and ensuring the research outputs are fit for purpose. We extend our largest “thank you” to the community business representatives and volunteers that gave even more of their time to participate, especially during a time of considerable turmoil prompted by the global coronavirus pandemic.



# Executive summary

This study examined the structure and role of voluntary labour for community businesses. Four chapters discuss the profile and working patterns of volunteers, how volunteers are recruited and employed, how volunteers' skills are utilised, factors covering their training and professional development and the wider motivations to volunteer.

This report presents the findings from surveys and in-depth interviews with community businesses and their volunteers carried out by CFE Research (CFE). All fieldwork was conducted between May 2020 and March 2021 and hence coincides with the three lockdown periods resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. The effect of the pandemic on the UK economy is important context for the findings and is reflected throughout in the analysis. Because of these unique economic circumstances, this report uses the past tense.

The volunteers we surveyed were drawn from 26 community businesses engaging a large number of volunteers who agreed to distribute a survey on CFE's behalf. The volunteer survey was conducted between September and October 2020 which coincided with the period between the first two Covid-19 lockdowns.

A total of 195 community business representatives completed detailed questions about volunteering as part of Power to Change's annual Community Business Market Survey. The fieldwork for this survey was conducted between May and July 2020 which coincided with the end of the first Covid-19 lockdown.

We conducted longer, in-depth qualitative interviews with 15 volunteers and 10 community business representatives between January and March 2021, coinciding with the second UK lockdown period.

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**26**

**volunteers we surveyed were drawn from 26 community businesses**

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**195**

**community business representatives completed detailed questions about volunteering**

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**15**

**longer, in-depth qualitative interviews with volunteers and 10 community business representatives**

## The profile of volunteers

The volunteers surveyed were generally representative of the wider community business sector, but unrepresentative of adults in England or the UK. **Volunteers were older than typical for the UK population:** analysis of the volunteer and community business representative surveys showed a third (34%) of volunteers were aged 65 years or older compared with a quarter (24%) of adults in England.

- **Fewer volunteers were in work** (42%) when compared with the adult population of England (64%) as reported by the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2020c).<sup>1</sup> Two in five (42%) volunteers surveyed said they were retired. Based on volunteers' current or prior occupation, participating volunteers were broadly representative of the working population in England in terms of socio-economic classification.
- **Women were also over-represented in the volunteer population**, accounting for 57 per cent of the volunteer workforce according to community business representatives surveyed.
- **Surveyed volunteers were less ethnically diverse than average for England.** Nine in ten (90%) reported their background as White British compared with four in five (81%) in England and Wales in the 2011 census.
- Four in five (82%) community business representatives felt their volunteer workforce reflected the profile of people living in their area.

## Time spent volunteering

**On average, volunteers spent 3.4 hours volunteering in the week prior to completing the survey.** When the 46 per cent of volunteers who did not volunteer in that week are excluded, the remaining 54 per cent spent 6.2 hours volunteering in that week. This time did not vary significantly by age, employment status or gender. Of those that volunteered in the prior week, two-thirds (64%) said they volunteered for the same amount of time as usual. One in five (21%) spent fewer hours and one in eight (12%) spent more hours volunteering than usual.

**People volunteered less during the pandemic:** the proportion volunteering for fewer than five hours per week during the pandemic increased by 11 percentage points to 71 per cent. Through in-depth interviews, volunteers said these reductions in hours were due to either a fall in business activity due to the pandemic or reluctance or inability to volunteer due to shielding guidance. Community business representatives put increases in hours down to increased interest from furloughed workers.

<sup>1</sup> Data reported between October 2019 and September 2020.

## The roles of volunteers

More than half (55%) of **community business representatives agreed that their business would become increasingly reliant on volunteers in the future** to meet increased demand for services and increased interest in volunteering. Two-thirds (65%) of representatives said their community business was considering recruiting more volunteers to increase the pool of skills within the volunteer workforce.

Volunteers played a variety of important roles in community businesses. **Community business representatives identified delivering services and products to customers as the most important contribution of volunteers to the business:** three-quarters (75%) rated this contribution as very important. More than half (54%) of community business representatives said volunteers made a very important contribution to the business' financial and accountancy functions.

**Volunteers also played an important role as trustees.** Four in five (79%) community businesses engaged volunteers at the chief executive officer (CEO) or senior management team level of the business. Director-level volunteers made important contributions to financial and strategic decision-making. Evidence from the in-depth interviews shows that trustees form a large cohort of volunteers at director level, many of whom were experienced in finance, human resources and strategic business leadership.

## The volunteer skills base

**Community business representatives felt their volunteer workforce was proficient<sup>2</sup> in all the skills discussed in the survey.** The main skill required of volunteers for which proficiency was lower was in social media skills. However, even here, three-quarters (74%) of business representatives said their volunteers were proficient. But by way of comparison, 17 in 20 community businesses needed communications skills from volunteers and, when required, nearly all (96%) rated their volunteers proficient. Two-thirds (66%) agreed with the statement that the roles undertaken by volunteers were different from those undertaken by paid staff; a quarter (25%) disagreed.

Volunteers were asked to self-assess their skill level and say how frequently they used a skill. Skills were then categorised into four classes as per Table 1. See Figure 4 for more detail.

2 Where community businesses gave a rating of either 'fairly' or 'very' proficient.



Table 1: Categorising skills by volunteers' rating of their own proficiency and use

	Used often	Used less often
<b>Proficient (self-identified)</b>	Volunteers said they were proficient in six skills they used often. For example, communication – oral or written was used by nearly all (92%) participants who said they were at least fairly skilled communicators. Generally, this category comprised softer skills such as problem-solving and customer-handling.	Volunteers were proficient in four skills they used less. These were mentoring or teaching others, managing others, administrative and secretarial skills and skills in mathematics.
<b>Less proficient (self-identified)</b>	Skills associated with a trade were the only ones used by more than a third of volunteers but most displayed low proficiency. Trade skills are relatively specialist with specific applications.	Volunteers identified 10 skills in which they were less proficient and used less. These were typically specialist or management skills. Community business representatives sought four of these skills in particular amongst some volunteers: fundraising, business marketing and communications, social media administration skills and financial (accountancy, financial planning, etc.).

Analysis identified a core set of interrelated business administrative skills used by volunteers. These skills were used in combination to fulfil operational functions within community businesses. Statistical relationships existed between the use of skills such as business marketing and communications, fundraising and financial skills.

## Training and skills development

Community business representatives typically felt volunteers were proficient in the skills they had. The skills used most by volunteers were generalist, people-centred skills rather than specialist or higher-level management skills. However, those volunteers that did deploy specialist and management skills were already proficient at them.

Three in five (61%) of community businesses offered or planned to offer training or professional development to volunteers. A quarter (25%) of volunteers received training from their community business. Views of training from this small cohort were positive. Nine in ten agreed that they had gained new skills or knowledge valuable to the community business and that the training helped them carry out their voluntary work to the best of their abilities.

**Two-thirds (64%) of the 120 volunteers in paid employment agreed their volunteering 'developed new skills and/or knowledge valuable in the workplace'.** However, most other volunteers did not think their skills had developed as a result of their volunteering. As community businesses were mostly utilising existing skills, this finding is logical. The main skills which developed through volunteering were fundraising and mentoring or teaching others.

## Recruiting and retaining volunteers

**Retaining volunteers was not a big issue for community business representatives** with more than four in five (82%) disagreeing that their community business struggled to retain volunteers. However, 45 per cent agreed that they face barriers when recruiting volunteers. These barriers were typically in sourcing some of the specialist skills required in areas like computing and higher-level managerial skills.

## Motivations and benefits of volunteering

Community businesses benefit from volunteers in many ways. **Three in ten (29%) said volunteers were essential to the business or that they had no paid staff.** Many of these businesses aimed to operate with few or no paid staff hence volunteering was part of their ethos. There was also an emphasis on community value: one in five (22%) saw wider benefits to the community through engaging local volunteers. Examples of the community benefits given during interviews included providing opportunities for people to socialise, increasing people's skills and experience to make them more employable, and improving the local environment. One in six (16%) representatives valued the local knowledge and community belonging drawn from volunteers.

Volunteers gained many benefits from volunteering too. **Helping the local community was a strong driver for many in their decision to volunteer.**

Three in five (58%) wanted to improve things and help people in the local community. This was also the strongest motivator identified by two in five (42%) participants in NCVO's survey of volunteering in the wider community and voluntary sector (NCVO, 2019). Personal reasons also featured heavily in decisions to volunteer with community businesses. Volunteers cited having spare time (38%), that the business' work was important to them (35%), and a wish to meet new people and make new friends (27%). The same types of personal motivations were reflected in the wider sector within NCVO's volunteers' survey.

Around half (48%) of volunteers recognised mixing with new people as a benefit of volunteering and 47 per cent drew satisfaction from seeing the difference the business made to the community. When asked specifically about the personal impacts of volunteering, **nine in ten (89%) said working with the community business gave them a sense of personal achievement and three-quarters (77%) recognised an improvement in their mental wellbeing.** Similar benefits were reported in NCVO's survey.

# 1. Introduction

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This report describes the findings from CFE Research's study into volunteering in the community business sector funded by an open call for research grant from Power to Change.

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Community businesses rely on volunteers. Before the advent of the coronavirus pandemic, an estimated 148,700 volunteers worked for community businesses compared with 37,800 paid employees (Higton et al., 2021). However, there was a gap in evidence about how community businesses could successfully engage, recruit, train and retain their voluntary workforce. CFE's own research previously identified the important role volunteers played in community businesses and the challenges such organisations experienced in recruiting and retaining them (Higton et al., 2019).

## 1.1 Aims and objectives

This study was designed to examine the structure and role of voluntary labour for community businesses. It explored the following research questions:

- What is the demographic and skills profile of volunteers engaged by community businesses?
- What roles do volunteers fulfil within community businesses, e.g. strategic, operational, administrative support?
- What are the average periods of engagement of volunteers within community businesses? What challenges, if any, does this create and what measures are taken to manage these?
- Are community businesses able to recruit a sufficient volume of volunteers into the roles they most need to fill? Where are the greatest skills gaps and skills shortages? What is the impact of these skills shortages on businesses?
- What training do they implement in response to these skills shortages? How are skills challenges overcome?
- What benefits do community business volunteers gain from the experience?
- What benefits do community businesses gain from volunteers? Is there any added value from a volunteer workforce that is different from paid employees?
- How can community businesses better articulate the benefits of volunteering within a community business to potential volunteers of the future?

It is intended that this study's findings provide practical insights that can be used by community businesses to engage, recruit and train their voluntary workforces. For example, community businesses could use the findings to develop and inform their recruitment strategies and training and development plans. We have created six standalone case studies to illustrate which aspects have worked well.

## 1.2 Methodology

The report is based on surveys and in-depth follow-up interviews with community business representatives and volunteers. This section summarises our methods.

### 1.2.1 Research with representatives of community businesses

#### Surveys

For the purposes of this study, an additional set of questions focused on volunteering (the volunteer module) was added to the 2020 Community Business Market online survey conducted by CFE on behalf of Power to Change.

The volunteer module covered the composition, skills and roles taken by the volunteer workforce, community business motivations to use volunteers and the benefits they gain as a business and the challenges faced in recruiting, training or retaining volunteers. We also covered the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the retention and recruitment of volunteers.

The survey was disseminated online between May and July 2020. We contacted prior participants of the 2019 Community Business Market survey willing to be surveyed again, as well as Power to Change's grant applicants. Power to Change's partners shared a link via emails, newsletters and social media.

In total, we received 195 complete and valid responses to the volunteering module. We excluded partial responses from our analysis.

#### In-depth interviews

We also conducted 10 in-depth, follow-up interviews in January 2021 with community business leaders who had completed the survey. These interviews were based on a purposive sample reflecting the range of sectors within the community business market and the different sizes of community business based on the number of volunteers engaged.

The focus of the interviews was on understanding in more detail the role volunteers played and the value they brought to community businesses, and the challenges and successes experienced in recruiting, training and retaining them.

A sample of interviewees also agreed to participate in a case study illustrating what works in terms of recruiting, training and retaining volunteers.



### 1.2.2 Research with volunteers

#### Survey

Community businesses completing the volunteering module were asked if they would be willing to disseminate a survey to their volunteers. We selected a sample of 31 businesses from those that agreed. The sample reflected the range of sectors operating within the community business market and the number of volunteers engaged. More larger community businesses (those engaging more volunteers in February 2020) were sampled to maximise the number of completed surveys from volunteers.

An online survey of volunteers was distributed by 26 of the 31 businesses in the sample. The survey covered the amount of time and frequency of volunteering, the motivations and benefits, the skills volunteers possessed and utilised by the business, and the likelihood of continuing to volunteer. We tailored the description of skills to reflect the different audiences for the two surveys.

This survey was distributed to volunteers in September and October 2020. In total, we received 286 complete and valid survey responses. We excluded partial responses from analysis.

Several questions in the volunteers' survey were based on those used in NCVO's 2018 survey of volunteering and tailored to the community business audience (NCVO, 2019). This was to enable comparison between the experiences of community business volunteers and those in the wider sector.

#### In-depth interviews

We conducted fifteen in-depth, follow-up interviews with volunteers who completed the survey in February and March 2021. Nine of these were selected because a representative of the community business for which they work was also interviewed. This meant case studies could be developed by triangulating survey and interview responses from business representatives and volunteers. The remaining six interviews were based on a purposive sample to reflect businesses in the wider market.

Potential interviewees were identified via a re-contact question in the volunteering survey. The focus of the interviews was on understanding in more detail the motivations and benefits for volunteers of working for community businesses, the training and development opportunities available to them in their role, and any challenges they had faced when volunteering.

We transcribed all the interviews and coded our analysis thematically into a framework.

## 1.3 Report structure

We present our findings in the following four sections:

- **Chapter 2** considers the profile and working patterns of volunteers participating in the survey and how that compares with volunteer data provided by community businesses.
- **Chapter 3** examines how volunteers are employed by community businesses, their recruitment and how their skills are used.
- **Chapter 4** explores the training and professional development that volunteers experience alongside any skills gaps that exist.
- **Chapter 5** outlines what motivates volunteers and the benefits that result from volunteering for volunteers and the businesses that engage them.
- The conclusions drawn from the study as a whole are found in **Chapter 6**.

This report uses the past tense because much of the data was collected during the Covid-19 pandemic. For the purpose of this study, the height of the pandemic is considered a unique moment in time despite the ongoing impact at the time of writing.

Data tables for this study are found in the accompanying Excel data file. Annex A of this report summarises the findings from logistic regression completed on data from volunteer participants.

## 2. Profile of volunteers

### 2.1 Profile of volunteers<sup>3</sup>

#### 2.1.1 Older people and women were more likely than others to volunteer

Volunteers were more likely to be older than the English population at large. Three in five volunteer participants (61%) were aged 55 or older, and one-third (34%) were 65 or older. Three per cent were aged between 18 and 24. These figures match what representatives of community businesses said in their survey. Data from the Office for National Statistics shows that 23 per cent of the adult population in England were aged 65 or older in 2019 (ONS, 2021b).<sup>4</sup>

Marginally more women than men volunteered with community businesses (57%) and participated in the survey for volunteers (56%). 51 per cent of England's total population are women (ONS, 2020a).

These findings on the age and gender of volunteers mirror those found in the wider sector as reported by NCVO's survey of volunteers (NCVO, 2019).

#### 2.1.2 Volunteers were less ethnically diverse than the population of England

Volunteers were more likely to be 'White British' compared with the population in England. Nine in ten (90%) volunteers reported their ethnicity in this way. ONS figures showed that 81 per cent of the population in England and Wales identified as White British in the 2011 census (ONS, 2020b). The remaining 10 per cent of surveyed volunteers were spread across the other survey options.<sup>5</sup>

Four in five (82%) of community business participants tended to agree that the profile of their volunteers represented people in their local area. During qualitative interviews, a few community business representatives commented on the lack of ethnic diversity and people with disabilities among their volunteers. These interviewees felt a volunteer workforce representative of the wider community would demonstrate that the service was relevant and accessible to all members of the community.

**“ It’s quite balanced in gender terms I would say, but not balanced in terms of diversity for people with disabilities and other Black and ethnic minority groups. That is, yes, definitely an area that we, you know, really would like to expand.**

Community hub representative

#### Volunteers comprise an equal proportion of retirees and people in work

3 We asked questions about age and gender to enable comparisons between participants in the volunteers' survey and those responding on behalf of community businesses. It is therefore possible to assess the representation of surveyed volunteers.

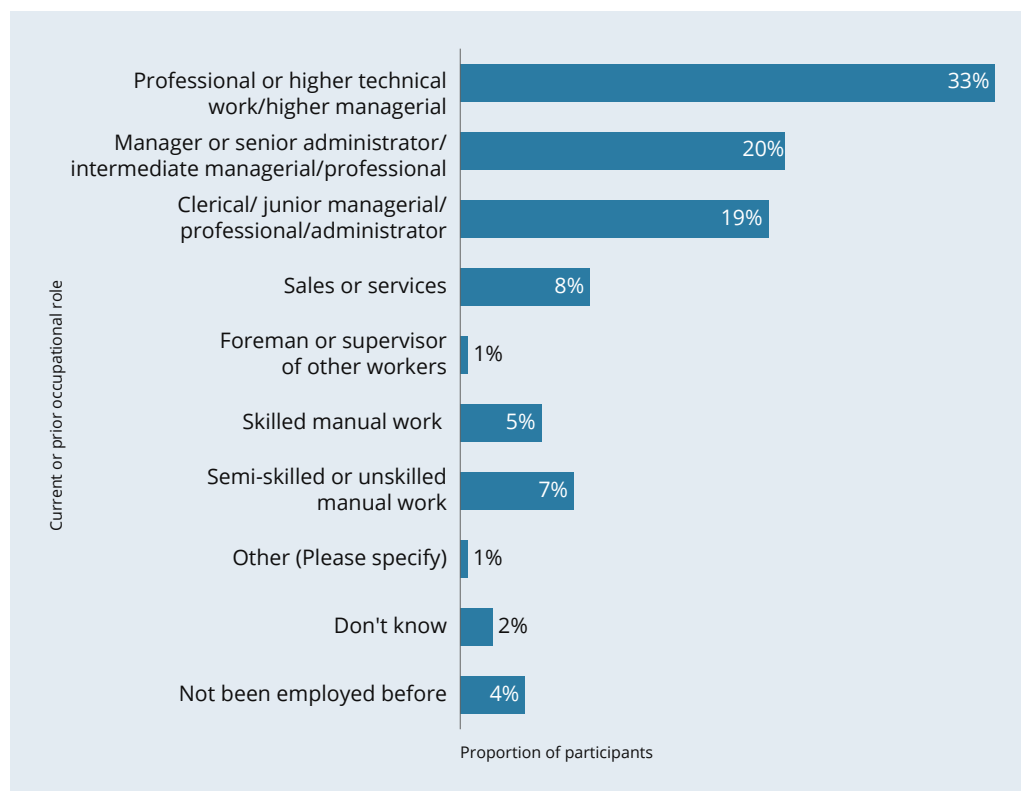
4 Where adult population refers to those aged 16 and older.

5 White Other; Mixed; Asian/Asian British; Black/Black British; Other ethnic group; Prefer not to say. Base=286

Volunteers were less likely to be in work compared with the adult population of England. Two in five (42%) volunteer participants were in work and a similar proportion (41%) had retired. The remainder were either unfit for paid work, students or preferred not to answer the question. The most recent annual population survey showed that nearly two-thirds (64%) of all adults were in work between October 2019 and September 2020 (ONS, 2020c). The NCVO volunteering survey also found that people working full-time were less likely to have volunteered in the last year compared with retirees or full-time students (NCVO, 2019).

The occupational profile of volunteers reflected that of the general population in England. The volunteers' current, or most recent occupational role is shown in Figure 1. A third (33%) of volunteers held, or had previously held, professional, higher technical or higher managerial roles which is similar to the proportion for England as a whole (34%) (ONS, 2020c).

Figure 1: Volunteers' current or most recent job roles



Base: All volunteers (n=286)

### 2.1.3 Half of volunteers gave their time to more than one organisation

Volunteering for multiple organisations is common among volunteers. Nearly half (45%) of participants said they volunteered for more than one organisation. Of this group, half again (51%) volunteered for one other organisation and three in ten (30%) for two others. The rest volunteered for at least three other organisations. On average, retired people volunteered for more organisations (a mean of 2.0) than other participants (1.7). These figures are similar to those found in NCVO's Time Well Spent report on volunteering in which 55 per cent volunteered for more than one organisation in the previous year (NCVO, 2019).

Nearly all volunteers interviewed had volunteered for multiple organisations. These included parish councils, food banks, Scouts, churches and community activities such as litter picking.

Community business representatives reported that a third (35%) of their volunteers were in paid employment with other organisations. They also said that one in twenty (5%) of their volunteers also had a paid role within their community business.

## 2.2 Profile of community businesses with volunteers

All community businesses relied on volunteers. Table 2 summarises key measures of volunteer numbers, staffing and income for all community businesses participating in the 2020 Community Business Market Survey (CBM2020), those that went on to complete the more detailed volunteering module and the businesses who disseminated a survey to their volunteers. The table shows the mean and median numbers of volunteers are higher than staff numbers in all instances. More businesses that engaged large numbers of volunteers were purposefully asked to invite their volunteers to a survey. This explains the very large difference in mean and median volunteer numbers for this cohort. The income data shows that those completing the volunteering module represented businesses with a similar profile to all businesses surveyed in CBM2020.



Table 2: Profile of community businesses at different survey stages

Respondent group	Metric	Staff May 2020 (n)	Volunteers May 2020 (n)	All income (prior year)	Trading income (prior year)
<b>All</b>	Mean	8.8	14.4	£272,800	£180,500
	Median	2	6	£110,000	£63,500
	Base	401	395	375	330
<b>Completed volunteering module</b>	Mean	7.2	18.4	£276,100	£162,200
	Median	3	8	£120,700	£76,500
	Base	191	191	180	166
<b>Volunteer response received</b>	Mean	13.0	37.2	£371,900	£197,000
	Median	2.5	27	£121,000	£80,000
	Base	26	26	25	23

## 2.3 Impact of Covid-19 on the profile of volunteers

### 2.3.1 Hours spent volunteering at the time of the survey

More than half (54%) the volunteers surveyed spent at least one hour volunteering, with an overall average of 6.2 hours and no significant difference between age, employment profile or gender.<sup>6</sup> This was the same amount of time as usual for two-thirds (64%) of the volunteers, but one in five (21%) had spent fewer hours and one in eight (12%) had spent more hours than usual.

### 2.3.2 Changes in the time spent volunteering

Overall, fewer hours were spent volunteering during the pandemic. Table 3 shows the difference in hours that volunteer participants spent volunteering recently compared with pre-pandemic levels. The proportion volunteering for fewer than five hours per week increased by 11 percentage points for the three months prior to completing the survey, compared with levels before the pandemic.

<sup>6</sup> Volunteers were asked 'How many hours of voluntary work did you undertake with [NAMED COMMUNITY BUSINESS] in the last full week?' The mean amount of time spent volunteering in the week prior by all participants (including those recording no hours volunteering) was 3.4 hours.

Table 3: Typical hours volunteers spend volunteering

Hours spent volunteering	Over last three months (June/July–September/ October 2020)	Pre-Covid-19 (before March 2020)
Fewer than 5 hours per week	71%	60%
5–9 hours per week	17%	25%
10 or more hours per week	13%	16%
Base	257	279

Note: Totals in columns do not sum to 100 per cent due to rounding. Data excludes 'don't know' responses.

### 2.3.3 Reasons given for changes in hours spent volunteering

During their qualitative interviews, community business representatives explored any changes in hours spent volunteering and why those changes happened.

#### **Volunteering hours fell as business activity diminished and volunteers' concerns increased**

In cases where hours spent volunteering fell, business representatives identified two main causes: a fall in business activity due to Covid-19 and a reduced appetite for volunteering among volunteers. Many community businesses' activities reduced in scale or stopped altogether due to the pandemic, particularly for services involving face-to-face customer engagement (although community shops were a frequent exception). This resulted in less need for volunteers' time.

“ We’ve had to step back from it all, really. Because you can’t do the public engagement and then the school activities ...

Environmental community business representative

The supply of willing or able volunteers also fell because of shielding guidance or a wariness about mixing with other people. This especially affected older volunteers who were over-represented in the community business volunteer workforce.

**“ ... If you’re a museum with an education service and your [volunteers] are anywhere between 20 and 50, then you could say ‘we’re definitely running education’, [but] I couldn’t do that because too many of ours were too old [and physically vulnerable].**

Community museum representative

#### **More spare time and concerns about mental health drove some interest in volunteering**

Some community business representatives, however, noticed an increased appetite for volunteering during the pandemic. One community hub representative said there were 100 people on its volunteer waiting list. When the business opened up for the short period between the first and second national lockdowns, they received about 20 volunteer applications per week. This far exceeded their prior experience and was many more than they could place in available positions. They reasoned that some people (such as furloughed workers) had more spare time. They recognised that others took the opportunity to improve their mental health by volunteering and doing something for the benefit of others. One community business representative said their organisation had benefited from the free time of a furloughed web designer.

**“ ... We had a website designer design us a new website ... They were bored, furloughed at home. So, thought, ‘Oh I know, I could use my time and create some websites for people as a volunteer’.**

Community museum representative

#### **Continued need or demand for some services meant no change in volunteering hours**

Several types of community business, including community shops, continued to operate during the lockdowns. Others provided health and wellbeing activities outdoors via gardening and building activities, and used volunteers to maintain infrastructure. These businesses needed to maintain volunteers’ working hours during the pandemic. Instances of shielding, or concerns among people about mixing, led some community businesses to seek replacement volunteers. Such volunteers included furloughed workers or students home from university during lockdown, especially within community shops.

**“ ... One of the youths who came and had an employed post earlier in the year has now come back as a volunteer because she can’t go back to uni, so she’s offered to come and volunteer for me which is really nice.**

Community shop representative

### 2.3.4 Community businesses paint a picture of committed volunteers

Community business representatives described a committed volunteer workforce at the point the pandemic began. In February 2020, community businesses reported around two-thirds (68%) of their volunteers had worked with the businesses for more than a year.<sup>7</sup> At the time of the survey, community businesses estimated that half (50%) of their volunteer workforce volunteered most weeks.<sup>8</sup> A third (33%) of volunteers were estimated to volunteer ‘most months’, one in ten (10%) ‘most days’ and one in twenty (5%) less frequently than most months.

The average hours all volunteers contributed to community business prior to the pandemic was just over 600 per community business per month. However, this figure was skewed by a few larger community businesses: the median total volunteer hours per community business was 160 per month.

Volunteering was also a useful recruitment tool for many community businesses. Nearly half (49%) of community business representatives said some of their paid staff used to volunteer with the business prior to the pandemic.<sup>9</sup> For this cohort of community businesses, former volunteers comprised half (50%) of the paid workforce for these businesses at this time.<sup>10</sup>

7 ‘In February 2020 prior to the Covid-19 crisis, what proportion of your volunteers worked with you for more than one year?’

8 ‘What proportion of your [NUMBER WHEN VOLUNTEERS GREATER THAN 1] volunteers would you estimate to work with your community business on a daily, weekly or monthly basis?’ Median figures presented.

9 ‘And what proportion of your paid staff working for you in February 2020 used to volunteer with your community business?’

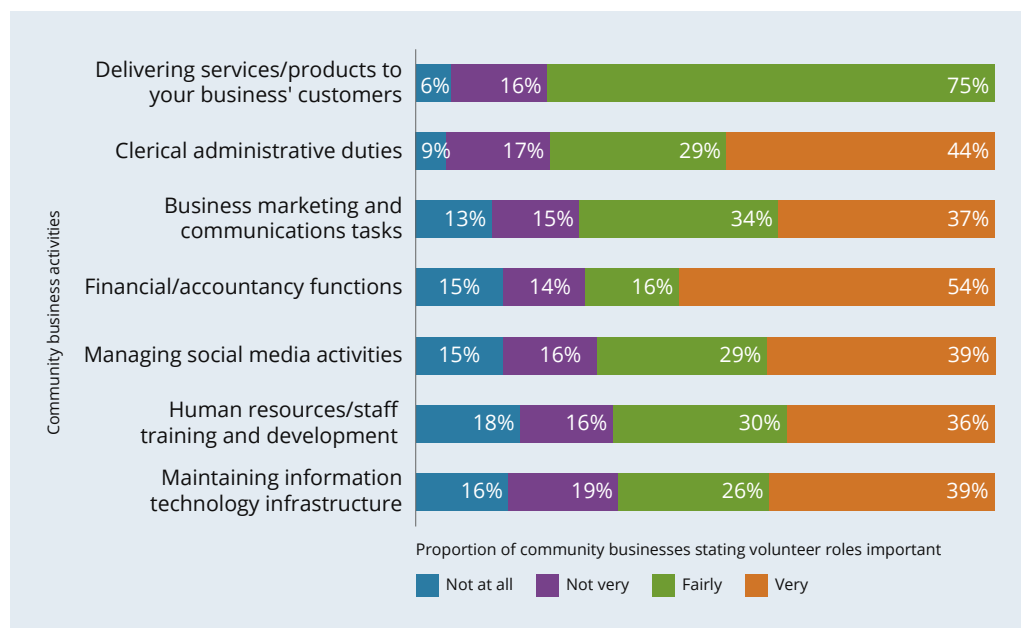
10 Base: n=91. Median is 40%.

### 3. Volunteer employment, recruitment and skills

#### 3.1 Community business' views on volunteer roles

Volunteers made important contributions to community business operations in several ways (see Figure 2). Three-quarters (75%) of community business participants said volunteers played a very important role in delivering services and products to their customers. Between 65 and 74 per cent of community business representatives said volunteers made at least a fairly important contribution to all the other listed activities. The data suggests that volunteers contributing to financial and accountancy functions may be more specialist: more than half (54%) said volunteers made very important contributions to such activities. This proportion was higher than for all other activities bar delivery of service and products.

Figure 2: Importance of volunteers' contribution to business activities



Base: Community businesses completing volunteer module (n=195)

Note: Items do not sum to 100 per cent due to rounding and the exclusion of 'don't know' responses which were either 1 or 2 per cent



### 3.1.1 Variety of roles and levels of responsibility

The roles that volunteers performed in community businesses and how these compared with those of paid employees were explored in the in-depth interviews and varied by business.

In most cases, volunteers supported operational activities managed and led by paid members of staff. The paid employees provided consistency and continuity within the business while volunteers provided additional operational capacity as required by, for example, increasing the number of customers served or days the organisation operated.

**“ ... Volunteers can undertake tasks that are essential, but not of best value for the part-time paid employee, whether it’s clearing weeds and painting the outside of the premises, or painting railings, or cutting grass ...**

Community hub volunteer

#### **Volunteer roles come with less responsibility and offer flexibility**

Volunteers and community business representatives acknowledged that an unpaid role often came with greater flexibility and less responsibility compared with paid staff. This sometimes posed challenges to community businesses with no or few employees that were highly dependent on volunteers, including managing the frequency and regularity of volunteers’ attendance and encouraging volunteers to undertake tasks they are not paid for.

**“ I can do as much or as little as I want, to fit in whatever else is going on. And, because it’s volunteering, it’s not like having the demands or expectations of a paid job, where you wouldn’t have so much flexibility.**

Health and social care community business volunteer

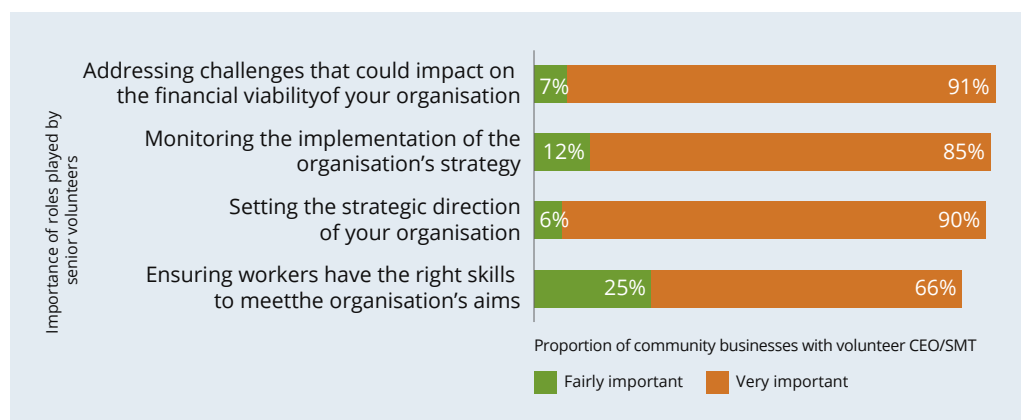
### 3.1.2 Volunteers often make significant contributions at board and director level

Volunteers were present in directorial or senior management roles in the majority of community businesses. In nearly four in five (79%) community businesses there were volunteers in chief executive officer (CEO) or senior management team (SMT) roles. Figure 3 shows such director-level volunteers made important contributions to decision-making. Nearly all community business representatives (91%) said director-level volunteers played a ‘very important’ role in addressing challenges that could ‘impact the financial viability’ of the business. Similar proportions said the contribution that director-level volunteers made to strategic decisions was very important.

Director-level volunteers 'ensuring workers had the right skills' to meet the community businesses' aims was considered less important, but still very important to two-thirds (66%) of community business representatives. Very few felt the contribution of director-level volunteers was unimportant and these are excluded from Figure 3.

During interviews, many community business representatives said unpaid senior roles were board trustees. These typically had professional experience and skills in the areas of finance, HR and strategic leadership. Their skills were used by community businesses to help them develop and write strategies, navigate local political relationships, interpret balance sheets and the implications for financial planning, and attend and lead committees. These were particularly valuable to community businesses with few paid staff in senior roles. In this context the volunteers provide additional experience and resource to support delivery at a strategic level.

Figure 3: Whether roles of managerial or board-level volunteers were very or fairly important



Base: Community businesses who engage volunteers at the CEO or director level (n=154)

Note: Excludes 'not very' and 'not at all important', and 'don't know'.

### Some community businesses' workforce comprised only volunteers

Volunteers were essential in the community businesses which had no paid staff. Nearly three in ten (28%) community businesses who participated in the survey had no employees. A representative from one of these community businesses had 900 members, of which 70 to 100 were active volunteers. The business was run with a consensus decision-making model which allowed volunteers to take an active role in running the community business. The interviewee said the business listened to all volunteers' opinions and that the business did not have a hierarchy. The aim of the model was for all volunteers to feel invested in the purpose of the community business and to feel valued. The model meant all staff had an equal responsibility for the business which removed the need for tiers of management.

**“ If we introduce pay then what will happen is the people who were getting paid, the three or four managers, everyone would just sit back and leave the work for them. ‘They’re getting paid so let them do it.’ So, it makes, it puts everyone on an equal footing.**

Community arts centre representative

In another instance, a community business was originally a volunteer-led activity and then sought the professional skills of paid staff to secure community engagement and long-term funding.

## **3.2 Community businesses’ views on volunteer skills**

### **3.2.1 Community business representatives thought volunteers possess useful, well developed skills**

Community business representatives were broadly satisfied with their volunteers’ skills (see Table 3). Community business representatives highly rated volunteers’ proficiency for the skills they needed most. When asked ‘how proficient, if at all, would you say your current volunteers are in the organisational skills you need?’, more than four in five participants rated their volunteers as at least fairly proficient for most skills listed in Table 4. The exceptions were specialisms such as complex computer programming (52%), social media (74%) and research and evaluation skills (77%).

Table 4: Community business views on skill requirements and stated proficiency of volunteers

	<b>Community business survey</b>		<b>Volunteer survey</b>
<b>Skills</b>	Skills needed from at least some volunteers	At least 'fairly proficient' if skill needed	Volunteers that state they use this skill
<b>Community engagement</b>	92%	91%	-
<b>Working with others/ team working</b>	90%	98%	-a
<b>Communication skills</b>	86%	96%	69%
<b>Organisational governance</b>	76%	90%	-
<b>Organisational financial management</b>	69%	92%	17%b
<b>Fundraising</b>	69%	83%	29%
<b>Basic computer literacy/ using IT</b>	71%	88%	42%
<b>Social media skills</b>	70%	74%	20%c
<b>Business development</b>	67%	82%	21%d
<b>Customer-handling skills</b>	71%	97%	53%
<b>Problem-solving skills</b>	65%	90%	55%
<b>Persuading or influencing others</b>	61%	89%	-
<b>Research and evaluation</b>	52%	77%	-
<b>Instructing, teaching or training people</b>	47%	86%	28%e
<b>Managing or motivating other staff</b>	45%	89%	26%f
<b>Specialised or complex computer programming</b>	15%	52%	10%
<b>Base</b>	195	Varies	

Skill descriptions used in the volunteers' survey: a 'Partnership working skills' – the closest comparison, but could be interpreted as something different (41% of volunteers used this skill); b Finances (accountancy, financial planning, etc.); c Social media administration skills; d Business marketing and communications; e Mentoring or teaching others; f Managing others.

### Volunteers' skills checklist

A limited number of community businesses assessed the skills of the volunteers they recruited. Those that did, sought to assign the volunteers to tasks that utilised their strengths, while identifying the needs of others so they could be assigned to relevant training courses.

“

**... Sometimes we get really skilled people who [have] been working twenty years as a carpenter ... Short induction, and away they go. Whereas other people have never touched the tool, and they might need to go on the building skills course to build up their skills ...**

Environmental community business representative

The methods used to assess volunteers' skills were simple but effective, including short surveys completed by volunteers to demonstrate their confidence and experience in using specific equipment.

“

**[We] have a skills survey ... it's like a basic smiley face tick sheet to say if you're really confident with these tools, or you've had a go with these tools, or you've never touched [them]. So, we've got a list of tools and competencies just so we know who we're working with really.**

Environmental community business representative

Volunteers said they frequently used three of the skills shown in Table 4: communication (69%), problem-solving (55%) and customer-handling (53%). Each of these are mental, softer skills rather than specialist or occupation-specific. At least nine in ten community business representatives said their volunteers were proficient at these skills.

Several skills in Table 4 are specialist but in demand, characterised by a high level of need and good proficiency amongst business participants and low reported usage amongst volunteers. For example, organisational financial management skills were needed by over two-thirds (69%) of community businesses and the reported proficiency of volunteers was high at 92 per cent. However, only 17 per cent of volunteers said they used skills associated with 'finances (accountancy, financial planning, etc.)'. Fundraising and business development skills tell a similar story in Table 3.



Most volunteers taking part in an in-depth interview held, or had previously held, professional roles. These included occupations in engineering, teaching, policing and social work. Interviewed volunteers and community business representatives commented on the valuable experience volunteers could bring from their working lives. This included technical skills and managerial experience as well as communication skills.

The variety of experiences that volunteers brought from their personal and professional lives was valued by several community businesses interviewees who felt such skills could be applied to their role. Such experiences could help volunteers to empathise and communicate with customers, services users and colleagues as well as teach them new skills and knowledge.

**“ I think it’s the range and the diversity of their life experience, gives a very different view of a situation, which adds a huge amount of value.**

Community hub representative

Few community business interviewees suggested businesses identified their volunteers’ skills to assign them work roles aligned to these strengths. However, a representative of an environmental community business said they used a checklist of skills during the induction of volunteers. This enabled them to assess each volunteer’s skills and appoint them to the most appropriate position.

Where community businesses required volunteers to have particular non-specialist skills or knowledge to undertake their role, for example food hygiene or safeguarding children, most community business representatives said they offered specific training to volunteers (see Section 4.2).

### 3.3 Volunteers’ views on the skills they use when volunteering

#### 3.3.1 Community businesses were usually using skills that volunteers already possessed

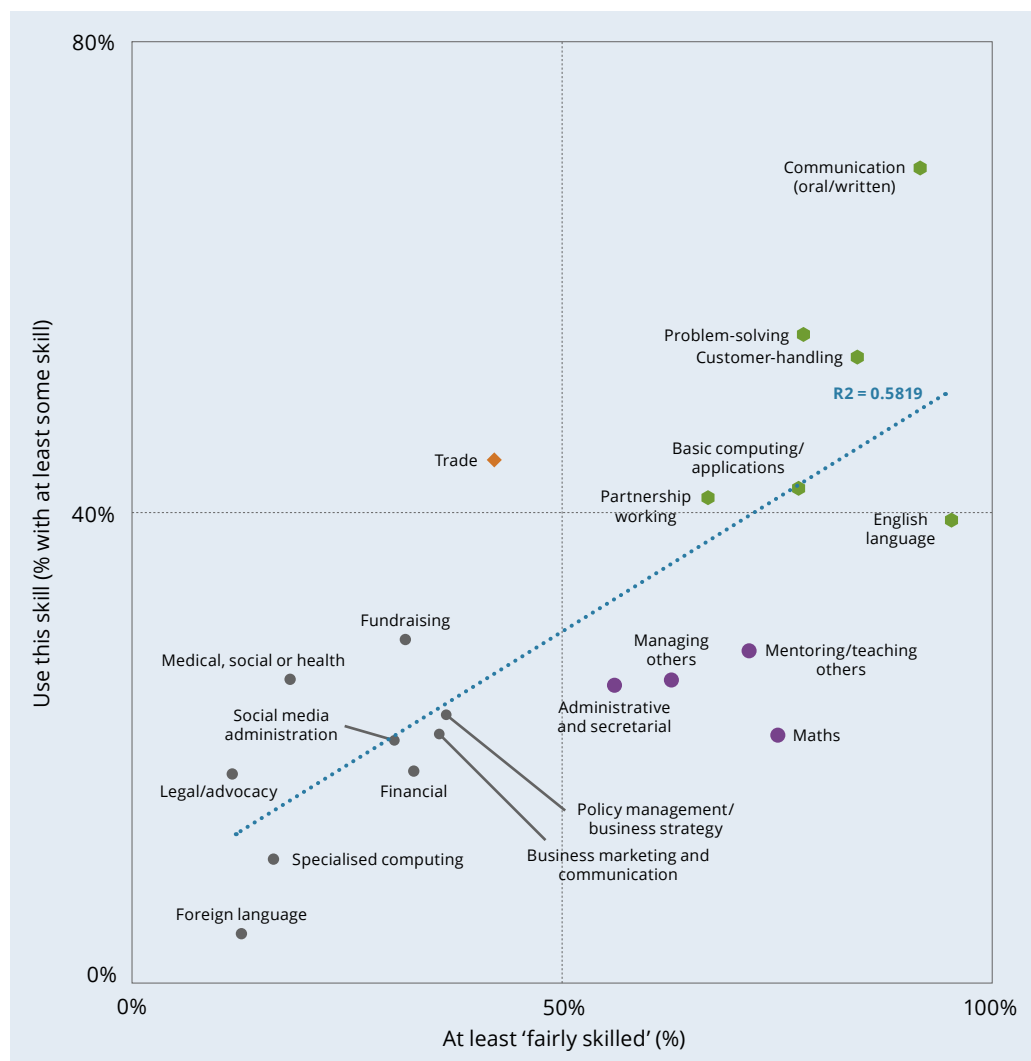
Comparing volunteers’ perceived levels of competence in a skill and its use for the community business helped us to develop several categories of skill. Volunteers were asked to assess their abilities for a range of activities.<sup>11</sup> Those who said they had at least ‘limited skills’ for each activity were then asked whether they used each skill with the community business.<sup>12</sup> Figure 4 shows the positive relationship between the proportion of volunteers that reported they were ‘fairly’ or ‘very

11 Q19–21. ‘How skilled, if at all, would you say you were in the following ... technical areas (19) ... interpersonal and communication areas (20) ... areas of management and administration (21)?’

12 Q22. ‘Which, if any, of the following skills do you use when volunteering with [NAMED BUSINESS]?’

skilled' in an activity (x-axis) and the proportion that used that skill (y-axis).<sup>13</sup> This shows that skills usage tends to increase with reported skill level. Community businesses, therefore, utilise the skills that volunteers possess. You can find a description of the four categories of skill in Table 4 and details of how each skill has been classified in Table 5.

Figure 4: Relationship between skill level and usage reported by volunteers



More than half of volunteers (55%) also said they 'used skills and experience gained through employment' in their community business volunteering role. A similar proportion (56%) brought skills and experience from 'outside of employment'.<sup>14</sup>

13 The R2 value of 0.58 means that 58% of skills usage can be explained by skill level, and that 42% remains unexplained.

14 Both statements drawn from Q18. 'Thinking specifically about the skills and/or experience you use when volunteering with [NAMED BUSINESS], which, if any, of the following statements apply to you?'

Volunteers who were interviewed in depth found it easier to identify the benefits they gained from their experience than the specific skills they used or developed. The few interviewees more able to articulate the skills they used when volunteering were either:

- retired volunteers, often trustees or playing specialist roles, who used particular skills from their professional experience which were of value to the community business, or
- younger people motivated to become a volunteer to develop and demonstrate skills and experience to progress into employment or change career.

Table 4: Volunteer skills categories – levels of competence and use





<p> <b>Higher skill, more use</b></p> <p>More than half of volunteers said they were at least ‘fairly skilled’ and more than a third used these skills in their voluntary work. They tended to be interpersonal and communication skills rather than technical or specialist. Partnership working may be the exception, although team-working would fall into this category.</p>	<p> <b>Higher skill, less use</b></p> <p>More than half of volunteers said they were at least ‘fairly skilled’ but fewer than a third used those skills in their voluntary work. Three of the four skills here are management and administrative skills and the other is maths. Their placement suggested some under-utilisation by community businesses although this would depend on local circumstances. For example, the community business might employ managers and administrators to fulfil these roles.</p>
<p> <b>Lower skill, more use</b></p> <p>Fewer than half of volunteers said they were at least ‘fairly skilled’ and more than a third used this skill in their voluntary work. This is a single item: ‘skills associated with a trade’. The types of community businesses engaging a large proportion of volunteers with trade skills included those renovating buildings for community hubs, those offering workshops, a cinema and a museum dedicated to construction.</p>	<p> <b>Lower skill, less use</b></p> <p>Fewer than half of volunteers said they were at least ‘fairly skilled’ and fewer than a third used these skills in their voluntary work. This group comprised specialised skills of which ‘fundraising’ and ‘medical or social or health care skills’ were most common.</p>

Table 5: Classification of skills by skill level and usage reported by volunteers

Skill area	'Fairly' or 'very' skilled	Use this skill*	Skilled	Used	Icon (Figure 4)	Community business needs skill from some volunteers
Communication skills (oral or written)	92%	69%	Higher	More	■	86%
Problem-solving skills	78%	55%	Higher	More	■	65%
Customer-handling skills	84%	53%	Higher	More	■	71%
Basic computing/using computer applications	78%	42%	Higher	More	■	71%
Partnership working skills	67%	41%	Higher	More	■	-
English language skills	95%	39%	Higher	More	■	-
Mentoring or teaching others	72%	28%	Higher	Less	●	47%
Managing others	63%	26%	Higher	Less	●	45%
Administrative and secretarial skills	57%	25%	Higher	Less	●	-
Skills in mathematics	75%	21%	Higher	Less	●	-
Skills associated with a trade	43%	44%	Lower	More	◆	-
Fundraising skills	33%	29%	Lower	Less	▲	69%
Medical or social or health care skills, including mental health	20%	26%	Lower	Less	▲	-
Policy management/business strategy	38%	22%	Lower	Less	▲	-
Business marketing and communications	38%	21%	Lower	Less	▲	67%
Social media administration skills	32%	20%	Lower	Less	▲	70%
Finances (accountancy, financial planning, etc.)	34%	17%	Lower	Less	▲	69%
Legal/advocacy skills	14%	17%	Lower	Less	▲	-
Specialised or complex computer programming skills	18%	10%	Lower	Less	▲	15%
Foreign language skills	15%	4%	Lower	Less	▲	-

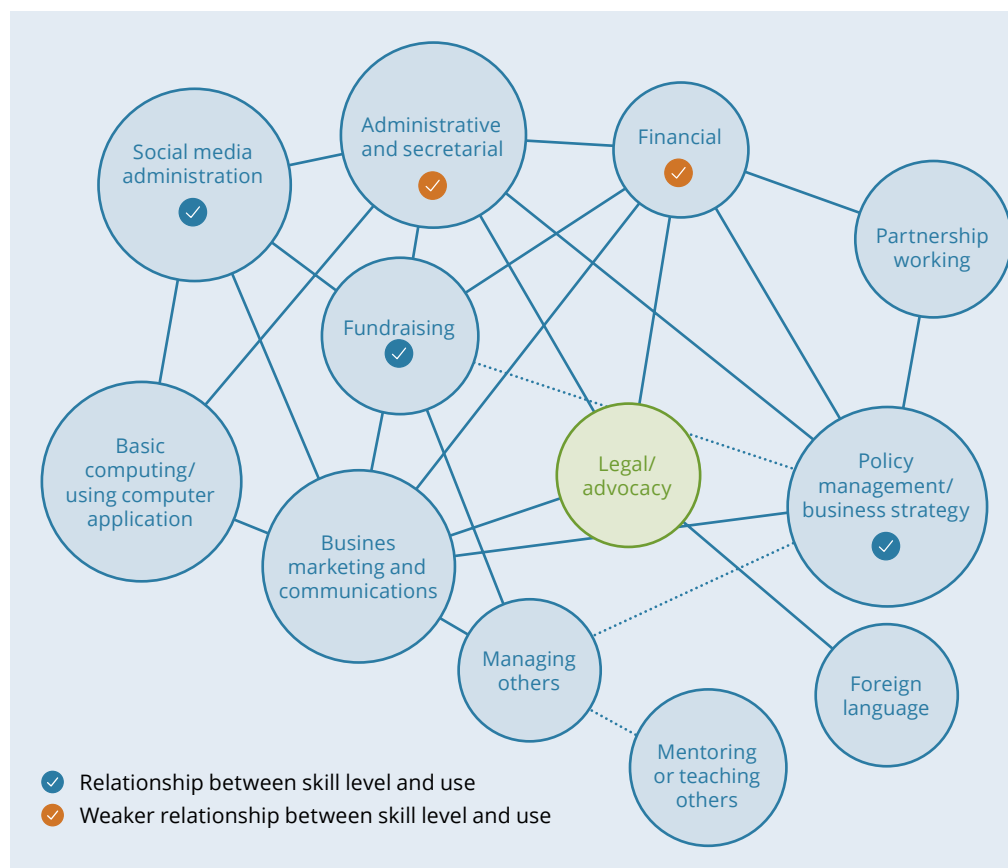
\* Percentage of all reporting at least limited skill only – differs to data tables.

### 3.4 Relationships between the different skills volunteers use

#### 3.4.1 Skills are often used in combination

Volunteers fulfilled a core group of related administrative and operational functions for community businesses. Figure 5 shows a network of skills which intercorrelate, meaning that some skills were often used together. For example, business marketing and communications correlates to seven other skills; administrative and secretarial and policy management/business strategy correlate to six others. Other relationships were more specific, such as that between foreign language skills and legal/advocacy skills.

Figure 5: Administrative skills used in combination by volunteers



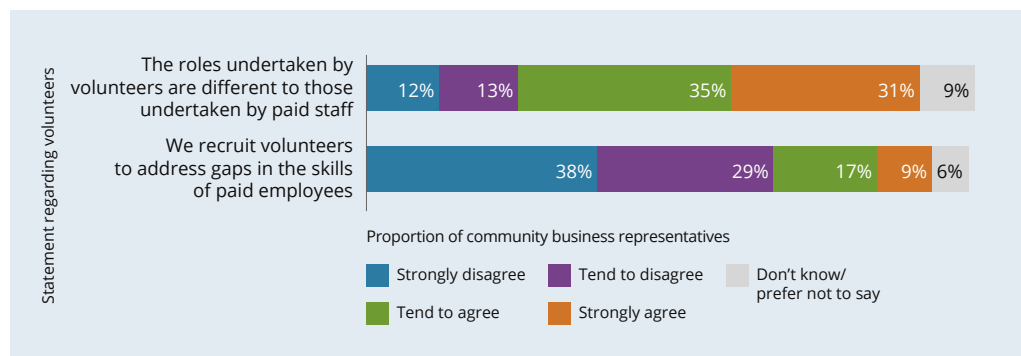
Note: Solid connecting lines in Figure 5 show a medium-strength statistical relationship between two skills. Dotted lines are relationships just below the significance threshold set. Legal/advocacy is in a lighter blue box as the sample size for many interrelationships is lower than 100. Blue ticks represent medium-strength statistical relationships between skill level and use of that skill. Orange ticks show relationships just below the threshold set.

### 3.5 Views on the roles volunteers fill for community businesses

#### 3.5.1 Volunteers usually performed different roles from paid staff

Most community business representatives said they did not recruit volunteers specifically to address skills gaps, with only a quarter (26%) saying that they did (see Figure 6). Two-thirds (66%) agreed that the roles undertaken by volunteers were different from those undertaken by paid staff, while a quarter (25%) disagreed.<sup>15</sup>

Figure 6: The roles and skills of volunteers compared with paid employees



Base: Community business representatives completing the volunteer module (n=195)

<sup>15</sup> There was no statistical correlation between these two factors, meaning that participants who agreed with one statement did not disagree with the other.

## 3.6 Recruiting and retaining volunteers

### 3.6.1 Volunteers were harder to recruit than retain

Most community businesses faced few problems retaining volunteers. Only 17 per cent of business representatives agreed that their community business struggled to retain volunteers whereas nearly half (45%) agreed that their community business faced barriers when recruiting volunteers (see Figure 7).

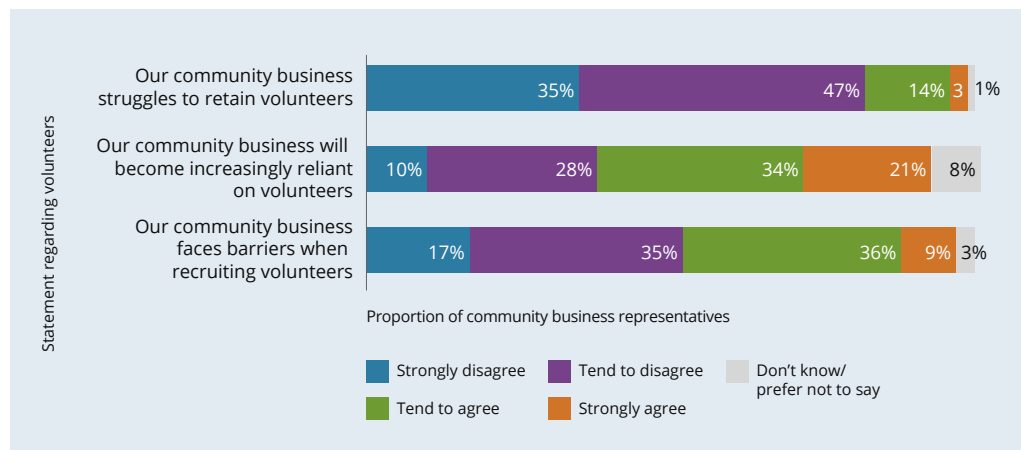
More than half (55%) of participants also agreed that their business would become increasingly reliant on volunteers in the future. A few community business representatives alluded to this at interview. For these businesses, their anticipated increasing reliance on volunteers was an impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their organisation, including:

- more volunteers needed to meet increased demand for their services
- growth in the numbers of people interested in volunteering to support their community.

Nearly two in five (38%) disagreed their business would be increasingly reliant on volunteers and opinion here differed by the size of the business, albeit based on small base sizes, with lower disagreement from smaller businesses.<sup>16</sup> A quarter (24%) of participants representing businesses with no employees disagreed their business would become increasingly reliant on volunteers. In comparison, 36 per cent of participants from micro businesses and 65 per cent from small- and medium-sized businesses disagreed.

<sup>16</sup> Participants from community businesses with: no employees (n = 54), micro businesses of 1–9 employees (n=104), small- and medium-sized business of 10–249 employees (n=31).

Figure 7: Views on recruiting and retaining volunteers



Base: Community business representatives completing the volunteer module (n=195)

### 3.6.2 Causes of recruitment challenges

The qualitative interviews with community businesses reflected the survey findings that the retention of volunteers raised few concerns. Some specific roles were more challenging in terms of recruitment. A few interviewees explained some of the difficulties they faced for specific roles.

A couple of community business representatives referenced specific IT roles requiring digital skills, some of which had arisen as a result of the pandemic. One sought digital animation skills to develop online educational resources to replace the in-person activities affected by the pandemic. Another said they lacked volunteers with skills to update and maximise the use of their website. This business intended to address these skills gaps by offering training to existing volunteers.

One community business representative found it challenging to fill volunteer trustee roles. The representative said few volunteers with the relevant managerial skills or experience and inclination to perform that role, had come forward. This community business unsuccessfully advertised these roles but found that applicants did not have the skills required.

**“ ... That’s much more hit and miss, even if you put an advert, we’re looking for two trustees, one in legal and one in marketing and the only applications we’ve had so far is for neither.**

Community museum representative



### 3.6.3 Approaches to recruitment

#### **Generic skills and enthusiasm were traits valued amongst recruits**

During interview, community business representatives said they usually sought general attributes like willingness to volunteer, a strong work ethic and good communication skills from volunteers. They did not usually actively seek specific skills, although the earlier examples do show some exceptions. Willingness to volunteer was often the sole motivation needed.

“... It tends to be people who have moved into the area and they say, ‘I can see you’ve got a shop, I’d like to get to know the area and I’ll volunteer’. So, it is on an ongoing basis, it’s informal.

Community shop representative

Such loose requirements were underpinned by the method of recruitment. Many recruited by word of mouth, either via existing employees or volunteers, or through contacts in local networks such as other voluntary and community organisations or education establishments.

“I think we, as a board individually, are going to get more volunteers by our personal knowledge or personal relationships should I say.

Community hub representative

A few volunteer interviewees experienced more formal recruitment processes. These included application forms and interviews to assess their suitability for the volunteering position.

“I filled in an application form and had an informal interview talking to the people who founded it ... before I started volunteering properly.

Community arts centre volunteer

A couple of community business representatives mentioned recruitment through newsletters or social media. However, these were limited to general calls out to those willing to volunteer rather than the recruitment of people with specific skills.

### 3.6.4 Filling skills gaps

#### **Volunteers can be the ones to suggest how their skills could be used to best effect**

During interview, several volunteers said they, rather than the community business, identified ways in which their skills and experience could benefit the organisation. Examples included former retired professionals with experience working with vulnerable groups, and volunteers with technical skills. One of the latter included expertise in land management planning and asset purchase.

“... Because I had a special interest, and I was able to say to the officers at the [community land trust] that if they wanted some support in approaching the [council] over purchasing the old school then I was happy to provide support for them [given my prior experience in this field].

Community hub volunteer

#### **Potential usefulness of recruitment tools**

One community business interviewee reflected that a job specification might help during the volunteer recruitment process. She said this could clarify the role and relevant skills and experience she anticipated would be needed for the volunteer positions and provide a framework against which potential volunteers could outline their attributes for her to review.



## 4. Volunteer training and development

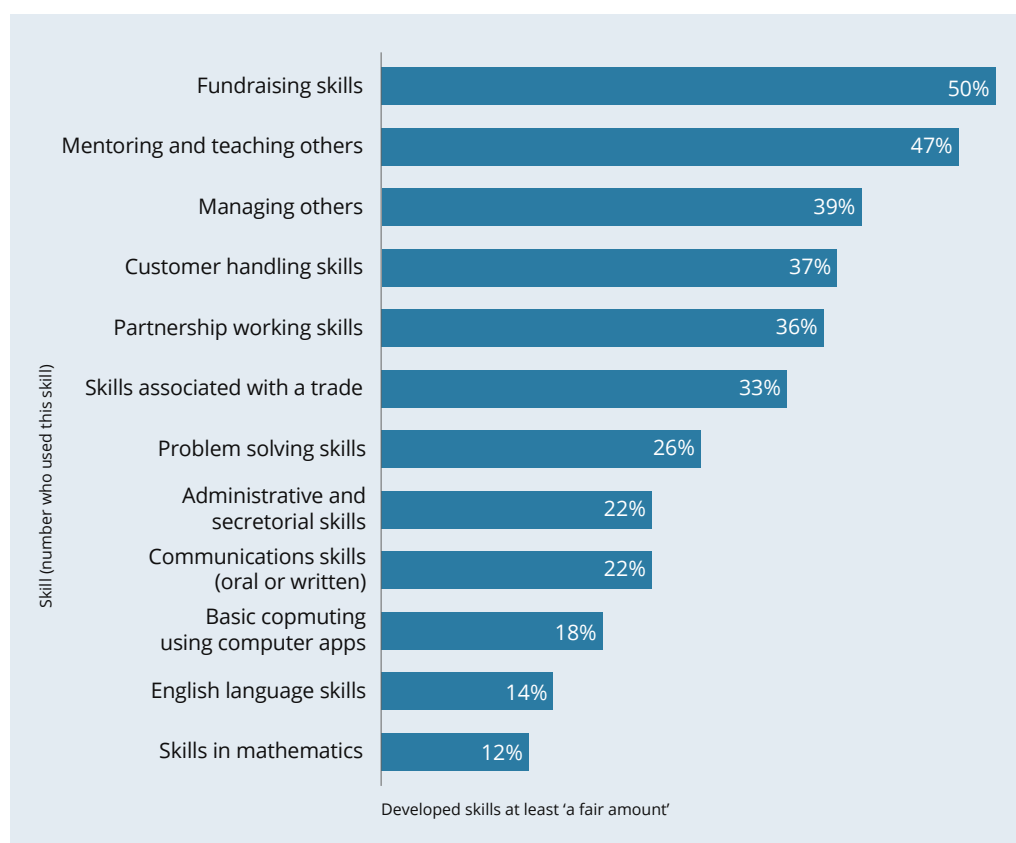
### 4.1 Skills developed by volunteers of community businesses

#### 4.1.1 Training and development needs were governed by volunteers' existing skills base

Evidence to this point shows instances of skills gaps among volunteers was low (Table 3), the roles of volunteers were not usually specialist (Figure 4 and Table 4), and most community business representatives felt volunteers were already proficient in most skills (Table 3). One in four (25%) volunteers said they had undertaken vocational training with the community business.

The existing high volunteer skills base and the large proportion of retired volunteers (41%) may explain why most volunteers using the skills listed in Figure 8 did not develop them further through volunteering. The exceptions were fundraising and mentoring skills: around half of those volunteers using them (50% and 47% respectively) said the community business had helped them develop these skills.<sup>17</sup>

Figure 8: Proportion of volunteers developing stated skills by at least 'a fair amount'



Base: All volunteers using skill with community business (excludes skills used by fewer than 50 volunteers)

17 Q23. 'How much, if at all, has [NAMED BUSINESS] helped you develop the skills you use with them?'

Only a few of the volunteers interviewed identified skills they had developed through working for a community business. Most of these related to skills specific to their community business' work, although the majority of these were transferable. These included:

- project planning and costing for a community housing business
- gardening skills at a community hub farm
- event organisation, marketing, front of house, money management at a community arts centre.

## 4.2 Training and development activity implemented by community businesses

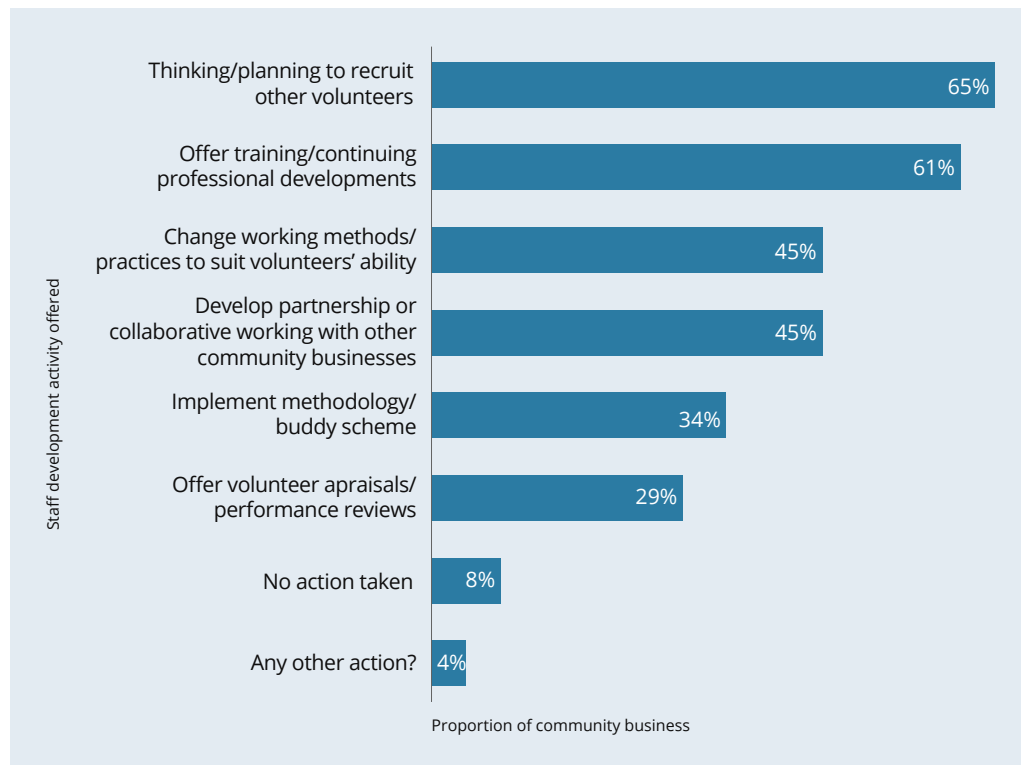
### 4.2.1 Community businesses usually offer training if required

Although training requirements were low, most community businesses offered training. Figure 9 shows that three-fifths (61%) of community businesses either offered or planned to offer training and continuing professional development to volunteers. Under half (45%) planned to, or had already changed, working practices to suit volunteers' abilities.

There was limited evidence from in-depth interviews about the changes community businesses had made or planned to make to training. A few community business representatives commented on the use of induction meetings, handbooks or agreements so volunteers were clear about what their role entailed and the specific skills, if any, required. One community business had a skills checklist to better align volunteers to tasks based on their abilities. Another representative planned to introduce a job description, including a person specification, for their future volunteering roles so they could more easily identify the suitability of the applicants. Over a third (34%) of surveyed business representatives offered mentoring or buddy schemes and three in ten (29%) offered appraisals or performance reviews.

One in twelve (8%) said they did not take any action to improve volunteers' skills or competences, or plan to do so. Two-thirds (65%) were considering further recruitment to increase the pool of skills within the volunteer workforce.

Figure 9: Steps community businesses have taken or will take to develop volunteers' skills



Base: Community businesses completing volunteer module (n=195)

### Training and development plays an important role in working safely

Community business interviewees said they provided training and development so that volunteers could carry out their roles safely and effectively. This differed according to the nature of the community business and included:

- health and safety and food hygiene qualifications for those working in cafés
- stocktaking and ordering for shops
- coaching qualifications for those delivering sports sessions
- safeguarding training for those working with children.

Much of the training was informal and 'on the job'. Volunteers developed skills through experience and observing other volunteers and employees at work. According to one volunteer interviewee, the community arts centre used an electronic timetabling system which allowed volunteers to self-serve their training and observation opportunities.

**“ You just go on the online rota and think ‘Well, I’m free on Saturday and I know there is a club night on and I want to learn how to do this’. There might be a shadower tab that you can put your name into or in the notes you can say ‘I want to shadow this person’ or you could just, if you’ve got a number, call them and be like ‘I’m going to shadow you for this’ and that’s a really great way of training.**

Community arts centre volunteer

#### 4.2.2 Training can improve volunteers’ employability

Community businesses can play an important role in helping volunteers develop skills suitable for other workplaces. A small number of community business representatives described the training and development opportunities they offered to strengthen volunteers’ CVs. For example:

An environmental education community business used university student volunteers to help deliver educational sessions and events. Volunteers developed resources to engage children in science activities and deliver teaching sessions using these resources. This business also provided training in the volunteers’ areas of interest, particularly where this aligned with the organisation’s skills gaps. For example, they funded a young volunteer’s snorkelling instructor training so they could lead underwater safaris to raise participants’ awareness about marine biology.

A community hub and farm provided opportunities for volunteers to help deliver sessions with individuals with additional needs. These sessions were valuable for those volunteers interested in careers supporting vulnerable groups. Other volunteers in this business also received structured training about gardening, which included a visit to a garden centre to illustrate examples of how they could use their skills in employment in future.

**“ ... Lots of people who helped with Steps To Work ... came to volunteer because they were looking to change their career, and this was going to be a good way to help them refocus their CV.**

Community hub representative



“ The eight-week garden placement was amazing because it was really structured. We went down to [a] garden centre, and we did a tour with the manager there, to see whether it was something that people were interested in with regards to future employment.

Community hub volunteer

**Funding for training and development activity can be vital**

Access to funding was critical to the delivery of volunteer training for some community businesses. Without additional funding, the training and development opportunities that some community businesses provided their volunteers would be more limited or non-existent.

“ We’ve been able to get funding over the years to put them through training courses like [Football Association coaching] Level 1, safeguarding, and first aid courses ...

Sports and leisure community business representative



### On-the-job training

Volunteers were positive about the on-the-job training they received from community businesses. This was often delivered informally via an experienced volunteer or paid member of staff demonstrating the desired approach to a task. More structured methods were adopted by some community businesses. Examples included:

tutorials from volunteer leaders at a community hub with a farm about various gardening methods, such as planting seeds and re-planting shrubs.

an online rota system at an arts centre enabling volunteers to identify people undertaking roles, for which they would like to learn the skills required, and request to shadow them.

#### 4.2.3 Volunteers' views on training provided by community businesses

##### Volunteers value training

For the quarter of volunteers receiving vocational training, views on its value were positive. Nine in ten (90%) of the 71 trained volunteers agreed that they had 'gained new skills and knowledge valuable to the community business' and that 'the training helped me carry out my voluntary work to the best of my abilities' (91%).<sup>18</sup> Seven in ten (70%) volunteers agreed they had 'gained new skills and knowledge valuable in other workplaces'. Many retirees chose the 'not applicable' option for this question.

The interviews showed volunteers were broadly happy with the on-the-job training they had received from community businesses. The key benefit of training was increased confidence to undertake their role. The final section of the report notes that seven in ten volunteers agreed their confidence had increased as a result of volunteering (see Figure 13).

**“ ... They're so good at giving you the tools that you need, the confidence that you need, assuring you, giving you a tutorial on how to carry out the task.**

Community hub volunteer

<sup>18</sup> Unless stated otherwise, aggregate measures are used whereby 'agree' is all participants choosing 'tend to' or 'strongly' agree. Similarly, 'disagree' means all those choosing 'tend to' or 'strongly' disagree.



**Desire to train varies between volunteers**

Receptiveness and commitment to training sometimes differed between volunteers and this appeared to relate to motivations for volunteering in the first place. For example, a community museum representative gave the example of the museum's new bookkeeper who had retired from a different job but was interested in learning a new skill, so took it upon herself to learn the accounting system and approach used by the organisation in her own time. Conversely, many volunteers who helped maintain the museum's historical machinery were less receptive to training. The latter wanted to work on something about which they were passionate and already knowledgeable.

**“ They kind of feel they’ve had all the training they ever need. They’ve done CPD their entire working life. They are literally coming to enjoy themselves, not to make life hard.**

Community museum representative

**Challenges of managing volunteer engagement**

The interview findings demonstrated several challenges for community businesses in managing volunteer engagement and retention.

**Levels of commitment**

Some community business representatives identified two different groups of volunteers: a small core group offering time regularly for at least a year, and a larger transient group who volunteer less frequently for shorter periods. The latter group can present several interlinked challenges for community organisations. These include:

- their reliability in terms of attendance and supporting the community business' work
- the time required for induction and fully understanding their needs and aspirations
- the administrative burden of planning for their involvement if they do not attend
- the cost–benefit ratio of training investment to improve their skills and hence carry out their tasks effectively.

**“ ... sometimes it is a bit difficult because you don’t know how many people are going to turn up, you don’t know what skills they’re going to have. Anybody could turn up.**

Community hub representative

## Volunteer coordinators

Paid volunteer coordinators were important staff in many community businesses. They would oversee volunteers, maintaining contact and communications. Coordinators supported volunteers, assigned tasks and identified training needs.

This role could result in volunteers feeling more valued members of community businesses and elicit greater commitment from them. Coordinators particularly benefited community businesses with many volunteers and programmes which sought to recruit and support volunteers with additional needs.

“

**[Between a volunteer coordinator and volunteers] there's a lot of talking, a lot of sort of soothing, a lot of encouraging and just generally being there for everybody, as well as doing all the paperwork ... I think if you're going to use a large number of volunteers, you'll need to think about that role.**

Community museum representative

“

**[The volunteer coordinator] sends out weekly communications to all the volunteers with the news from the farm, but she also provides other really helpful information like employment workshops, useful contacts for anybody that's particularly struggling ... I think she really makes everybody feel part of the farm and is a real positive presence in her role and she's never not been there or available if anything did crop up.**

Community hub volunteer

#### Providing volunteers with meaningful engagement opportunities

A couple of community business representatives said that finding meaningful tasks for volunteers to engage with could be challenging. This appeared to be a concern for community businesses with large numbers and a slow turnover of volunteers. Only a limited number of volunteers were getting the opportunity to participate in the projects.

**“ It’s not that efficient to work with large groups of volunteers on design and build. So, if people stay for a long time, then it means that other people can’t join.**

Environmental community business representative

#### Managing turnover rates

A few community business representatives discussed the high turnover rates of volunteers. This could be as a result of volunteers’ low commitment levels or the perceived unattractiveness of the tasks available for volunteers to undertake (which also relates to volunteers’ expectations of the roles they would take in the business). Some community businesses established volunteering opportunities to help individuals into education or employment and viewed high turnover as a measure of success.

**“ With our less supported volunteers, their lives tend to change more rapidly and so we have volunteers who might stay for six months and then something will change. They will get a job; they started a new course ...**

Community hub representative

#### Managing expectations

Several community business representatives shared examples of how volunteers’ expectations influenced their engagement with their organisation. One interviewee felt their business’ lack of clarity about the role volunteers were to play, their purpose and the value they would add led some volunteers to leave their positions.

**“ I think if you’re starting out from scratch you need to make it very clear to people what you want them to do. It’s no good just saying, ‘We just want volunteers’. You need to know in your mind how you’re going to use those volunteers.**

Retail community business representative

Representatives of other community businesses described tensions between volunteer staff and paid employees. One noted tension arising when volunteers criticised paid staff. Another reported that experienced volunteers had sought paid employment even though they knew the organisation's business model could not financially sustain paid staff.

**“ There’s always a little bit of a tension where we have long-term volunteers who get really skilled up and then [say], ‘Well, you can just give me a job now’.**

Environmental community business representative

#### **Addressing volunteer engagement and retention issues**

Both community business representatives and volunteers cited approaches which they believed could improve volunteer engagement and retention. For example:

- Employing a dedicated volunteer coordinator. This individual would manage volunteers and ensure their needs and expectations were understood and met as effectively as possible. They would work within the objectives of the community business while minimising the administrative burden for other members of staff.
- Providing a comprehensive induction where the volunteering role was explained, the expectations of the volunteer understood and the anticipated value of the volunteer to the community business outlined.
- Increasing the number of meaningful engagement opportunities by supporting volunteers to set up new projects within the community business for them to develop, lead and engage additional interested volunteers.
- Recognising that volunteers were committing their time and energy for free and identifying ways to demonstrate they were valued. This could include involving them in decision-making, recognition for their role, training to undertake their role effectively and develop their skills for their intended next steps, flexibility in the commitment required of them, and providing a fun and stress-free environment in which to work.

## 5. Motivations and benefits

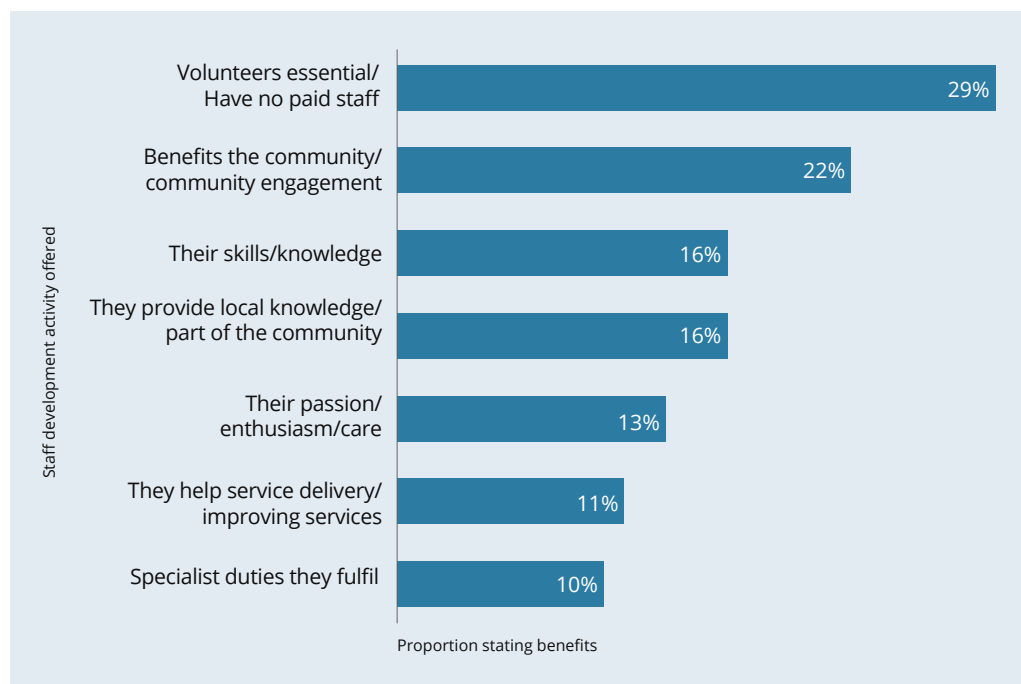
### 5.1 Benefits community businesses gain from volunteers

#### 5.1.1 Volunteers' knowledge of their community is valuable to businesses

Community businesses derive a variety of benefits from using volunteers. Three in ten (29%) community business participants said that volunteers were essential to the business, some of which had no paid staff. There was also an emphasis on community value. More than one in five (22%) felt there were wider benefits to the community through engaging local volunteers; one in six (16%) valued the local knowledge and community belonging drawn from volunteers.

Other benefits mentioned included the reduction in costs resulting from engaging volunteers (9%) and specific benefits such as the ideas and expertise volunteers provide (8%), and their marketing, sales or business skills (7%).

Figure 10: Most important benefit community businesses derive from volunteers



Base: Community businesses completing volunteer module (n=195)

Note: Only includes coded responses made by at least one in ten participants

### 5.1.2 Volunteers are core to the community business model

The centrality of volunteers to the community business model was confirmed during the in-depth interviews with representatives of community businesses. Many said volunteers were essential to operate their business model. There are several reasons for this.

#### **Volunteering as central to the premise of a community business**

For a minority of the community business representatives interviewed, the volunteers were essential as they were the core purpose of the organisation. Volunteering was part of their business model and hence a core element of the business' purpose.

**“ ... for the overall organisation the volunteers are a key central component. We've got a volunteer management committee who manage the organisation. Then we have a membership as well, which is made up of people with a long-lasting and meaningful connection with the organisation. They vote on the management committee to represent them ... All the projects really are done for the benefit of the volunteers ...**

Environmental community business representative

#### **Volunteers help sustain the financial model**

According to most interviewees, a volunteer workforce was critical to their organisation's financial model. Business models reliant on grant funding or subsidising service costs could only sustain a limited number of paid staff.

**“ Without the volunteers we wouldn't be able to operate ... The community land trust would soon run out of funds to be able to do that.**

Community hub volunteer

**“ To put it bluntly, if it were not for the time that the volunteers put in, there wouldn't be a shop. It is the thing that makes the shop sustainable, because of the number of hours they put in.**

Community shop representative

**Costs for customers are minimised through using volunteers**

The use of volunteers also enabled several community businesses to keep costs low for customers. Interviewees thought this attracted customers and enabled the business to offer competitive services.

“... if we paid everybody that was doing every role at the moment, we wouldn't be able to survive because we wouldn't have the money to do that. We'd have to either charge a fortune and then we wouldn't get people in the door, but to do it as a social enterprise and do it as a not-for-profit, the volunteers are essential.

Health and social care community business representative

**Volunteers help respond to fluctuations in demand**

Volunteers can add flexibility to a business' wider workforce. Business representatives with this view believed it was easier to increase or decrease workforce capacity in response to demand for services when supported by volunteers rather than, or in addition to, paid employees.

“... Because we don't need regular support, and we can't afford regular support, what we need is support during these activities, when it's too much for our small team to deal with, just occasional support.

Environmental community business representative

**5.1.3 Engaging volunteers also offers benefits to the community**

Community business representative interviewees mentioned several ways in which engaging volunteers brought wider benefits to the community. Many highlighted how volunteering offered an opportunity to socialise with others which in turn could help improve their mental health. Several provided skills and experience which they said helped volunteers become more employable. For instance, a representative of a community café said some of their volunteers moved into hospitality roles. A few business representatives co-created projects with volunteers to improve the local environment, for example developing a community garden.

#### 5.1.4 Examples of how businesses used volunteers' existing skills and experience

Business representatives identified numerous examples of the skills and experience volunteers brought to community businesses. These included:

- engineering skills volunteers used when restoring the historical machinery for a museum
- the asset acquisition experience of one volunteer who was helping a community hub to purchase an old school from a local authority
- an individual with land management knowledge who developed a strategic plan for a health and social care community business
- website development by a student volunteer for another community business.

#### 5.1.5 Added value of volunteers

For some community businesses, paid staff had similar skills, knowledge and experience to the volunteers. In this scenario, volunteers were essential to the financial viability of many community businesses as they provided more flexible capacity compared with the salaries and employment law associated with employees or the fees of consultants. In some instances, community businesses trained volunteers to increase the business' capacity to deliver services for the community and plug gaps in skills like social media and project work.

The passion of volunteers drove the establishment of a smaller proportion of community businesses. Examples included:

- a museum where hobbyist volunteers came together to restore historical machinery in their spare time – paid staff were then employed to identify funding streams to open up access to the public and deliver educational services
- an arts centre which combined the skills of professionals in the sector willing to invest their time for free to bring cultural opportunities to their community
- an environmental consultancy whose volunteer co-founders sought to expand children and young people's knowledge and experience of the world around them by developing educational resources and sessions.

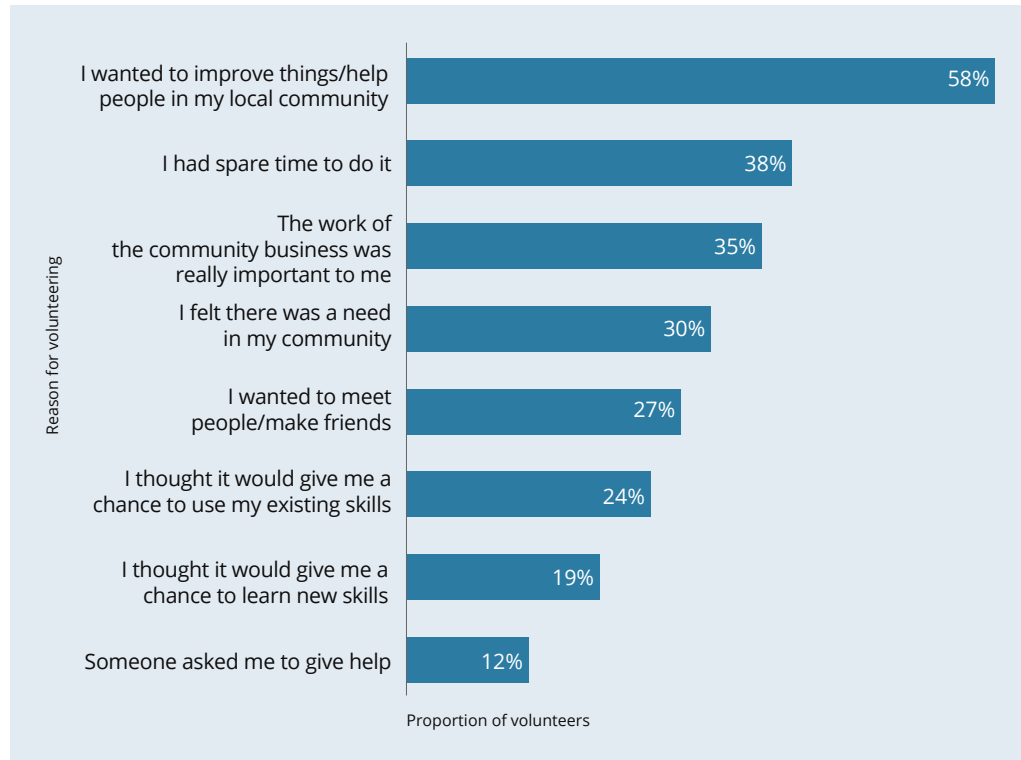


## 5.2 Motivations of volunteers who support community businesses

### 5.2.1 Community altruism was a strong motivation for volunteers

The strongest motivation to begin volunteering with a community business voiced by volunteers was to improve things and help people in the local community; three in five volunteers (58%) said this (see Figure 11).<sup>19</sup> NCVO's survey of volunteers found, 'to improve things and help people' was the most frequently cited motivator of volunteers, but amongst a smaller proportion (42%) of their sample (NCVO, 2019). A further three in ten (30%) started volunteering because they felt there was a need in the local community. The other three main reasons were related to personal circumstances or ambitions. Again, this type of motivation was reflected in NCVO's survey of volunteers.<sup>20</sup> The strong community focus mirrors some of the important benefits that community business representatives said they gained from engaging volunteers (see Figure 10).

Figure 11: Most important reasons given by volunteers for starting to volunteer



Base: All volunteers (n=286)

Note: Chart shows all responses greater than 10%

19 Q11. 'Which THREE, if any, of the following were the most important reasons why you started volunteering with [NAMED BUSINESS]?'

20 'I had the spare time to do it' (38%); 'The group/club/organisation was really important to me' (38%); 'The cause was really important to me' (37%); 'I thought it would give me a chance to use my existing skills' (28%); and 'I wanted to meet people/make friends' (21%).

Several volunteers and community business representatives believed most volunteers were primarily motivated by a desire to do something to support their local community. A couple of volunteers believed their support for a community business was necessary to ensure its endeavours were effective.

**“ You need to put that input in to keep the building open, to keep the community space open. If it wasn’t for the volunteers, it wouldn’t be open.**

Community arts centre volunteer

An increase in spare time was often an enabling factor for volunteers wishing to support their community. Several volunteers who had retired or were near to doing so recognised they had more time to volunteer. This motivation was also echoed by some community business representatives.

**“ ... a few people have got work experience in working with vulnerable people and they’ve done different kind of groups and support groups in the past and they just want to give something back.**



### 5.2.2 Health and social care community business representative

#### **Giving something back was important to some volunteers**

Some volunteers conceptualised their work for community businesses as 'repaying' their community or a community business because they had benefited from their services in the past. This was the case for one disabled volunteer who had been a beneficiary of one community business' food parcels.

“**The only way I can give back, put into the community how they've helped me, is offer to do volunteer work for them.**

Community hub volunteer

#### **Social aspects of volunteering were important**

Other volunteers hoped involvement with a community business would widen their friendship network. Examples included individuals whose personal circumstances had changed, such as children leaving home meaning their related friendship circle had reduced, or friends that were busy with other commitments like looking after grandchildren. Others volunteered as they were new to an area. Volunteers approached the community businesses to make new friends.

“**Once my son had grown up, I was quite disconnected from the village, so ... I, kind of, lost touch with a lot of those people.**

Community pub volunteer

Some volunteers were motivated to overcome social isolation. This applied to people with limited commitments or reduced opportunities to interact with others.

“**I used to play a lot of sport ... due to age and my knees, I can't do that anymore, so it's something else to replace those social activities with as well.**

Community arts centre volunteer

### 5.2.3 Some volunteers wanted to put their skills and experience to good use

A couple of volunteers said a community business' aims aligned with their own passions, interests and skills. They believed they had relevant skills and experience which could benefit the community business to achieve valuable benefits.

“**I can try and help the project to be successful in its vision, because I do have experience of purchasing [buildings] in another part of [location].**

Community hub volunteer

Many of the volunteers were motivated through altruism to share their knowledge, skills and experience to support their community.

**“ I’m a Scout leader [as well] ... It’s basically giving your time, helping where you can, passing on the knowledge that you’ve got.**

Health and social care community business volunteer

#### 5.2.4 Learning new skills

A few community business representatives believed their organisation attracted volunteers who were seeking to learn new skills. Examples included particular forms of gardening at a community hub with a farm.

**“ ... lots and lots of people want to come and volunteer and learn more about organic gardening. And that desire to find out more and to learn more about gardening is a big pull.**

Community hub representative

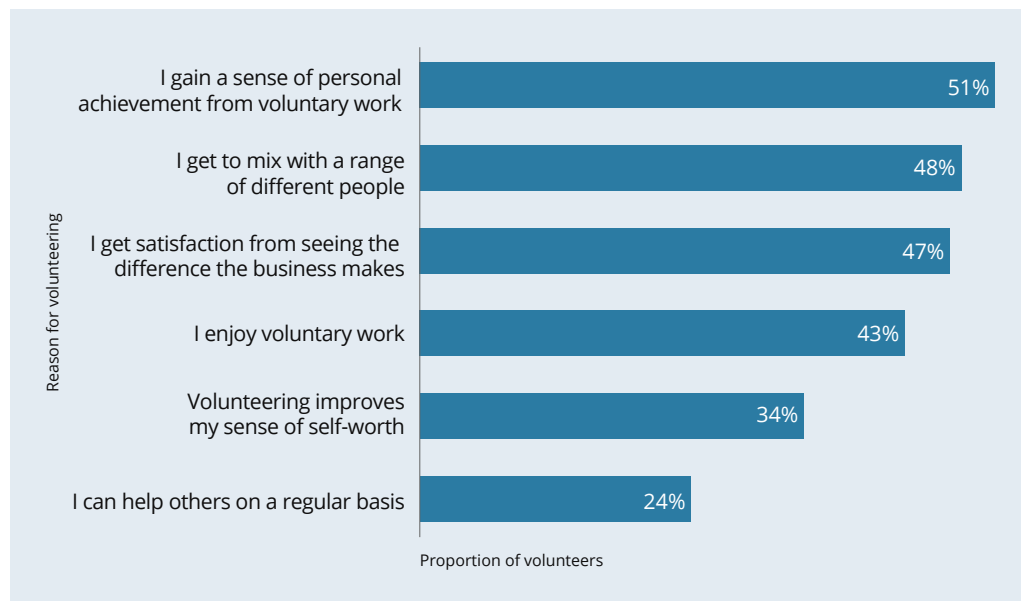
### 5.3 Benefits of volunteering

#### 5.3.1 Volunteers gain personal benefits from volunteering

Volunteers reported strong personal benefits from volunteering with a community business; professional or practical benefits were less frequently reported. Around half of volunteers gained a sense of personal achievement from voluntary work (51%), got to mix with a range of different people (48%) and drew satisfaction from seeing the difference the [community] business made (47%). Similar findings were reported in NCVO’s survey of volunteers (NCVO, 2019). Figure 12 shows all benefits listed by more than one in ten volunteers.

By comparison, fewer volunteers referenced employment benefits. One in eleven (9%) said they had developed a range of transferable skills, while one in twelve (8%) got a change of scene from their paid employment. This was also reflected in NCVO’s survey of volunteers where there was a low level of agreement with the statement that volunteering ‘improves my employment prospects’ (34%) (NCVO, 2019).

Figure 12: Benefits of volunteering as expressed by volunteers



Base: All volunteers (n=286)

### 5.3.2 Volunteering helped some volunteers in paid employment develop their skills

Volunteering for community businesses provided some volunteers with valuable skills in employment. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of volunteers in paid employment agreed they had 'developed new skills and/or knowledge valuable in the workplace' through their volunteering for community business.<sup>21</sup> Nearly one in three of this group (29%) also agreed volunteering with the community business had improved their 'promotion prospects in paid employment'. However, 43 per cent of volunteers in paid employment said this question was not applicable to them.

Similar questions were posed to those of working age who were not in employment. However, only seventeen volunteers fitted this profile, so the data is not reported here.

Some interviewees reflected on the developmental benefit derived from working for community businesses. Interviewees, both community business representatives and volunteers, alluded to opportunities to learn new skills and gain experience, in areas like horticulture, land management, football coaching and the marine environment. For many volunteers, these were ways to support personal development in areas of interest. Developmental opportunities were particularly valuable for younger volunteers, who could also strengthen their CVs in preparation for returning to education, entering employment or changing career paths.

<sup>21</sup> Base: 120 volunteers

“ ... having not done the eight-week garden placement, and had the practical opportunities to build on my skills, and my development, I doubt that I would have had the confidence to then go on and apply for the [Royal Horticultural Society] Level 2 course.

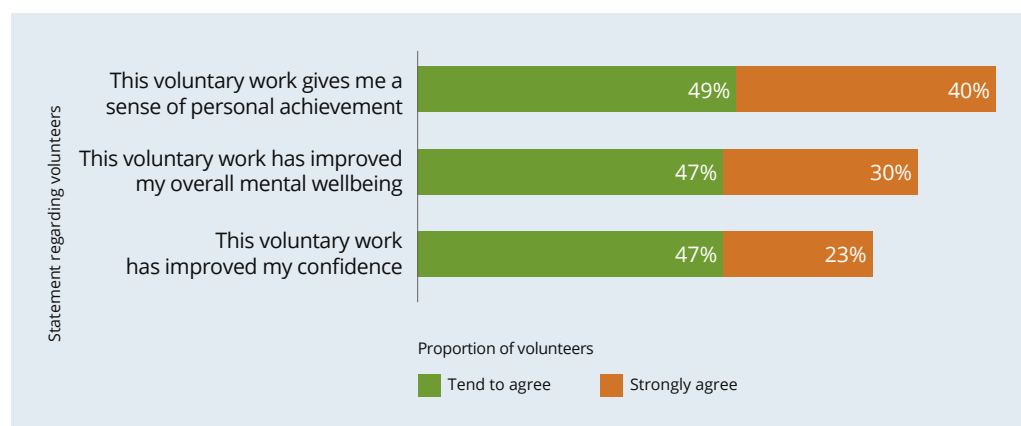
Community hub volunteer

### 5.3.3 Some of the greatest benefits arising from volunteering concerned wellbeing

Volunteers reported strong psychological benefits from volunteering. Nine in ten (89%) volunteers agreed their voluntary work gave them ‘a sense of personal achievement’. More than three-quarters (77%) agreed that voluntary work ‘improved my overall sense of wellbeing’. Seven in ten (70%) volunteers said their confidence had improved through volunteering with the community business.<sup>22</sup>

These positive outcomes may help explain why nearly all volunteers (94%) said they were either ‘fairly likely’ (20%) or ‘very likely’ (74%) to continue volunteering with the community business over the next 12 months. This is higher than the 80 per cent of volunteers in the NCVO survey who said they were likely to continue volunteering in the next 12 months (NCVO, 2019).

Figure 13: Personal impact of volunteering



Base: All volunteers (n=286)

22 One in seven (15%) felt the statement on improved confidence was not applicable to them.

Many volunteers and community business representatives explained how volunteering improved the mental wellbeing of volunteers, including:

- reducing isolation by getting out and about
- socialising with other people
- having a routine and structure helped retired volunteers to spend the time they would have previously invested in their paid work
- having a sense of purpose gave volunteers a sense of meaning to their day and was intellectually stimulating
- gaining a sense of achievement, feelings of pride and of being part of something bigger – it is being a part of a collective effort.

**“ ... it gives you a routine. It makes you feel that you’re doing something worthwhile so you feel valued. But it’s also that enjoyment and meeting with customers and other volunteers and generally, it’s a social thing.**

Community shop volunteer

For a few interviewees, the benefits of volunteering for mental wellbeing proved to be particularly valuable during the coronavirus pandemic, helping to counter some of the negative effects of the pandemic on their mental health. Volunteering enabled them to engage proactively in something even when restrictions limited their other activities.

**“ So for me to keep busy as well, especially during this lockdown, when we’re permitted to work in bubbles. It’s been great to get back out again. It’s been a lifesaver to be honest. I’ve been climbing the walls.**

Sports and leisure community business volunteer

### 5.3.4 Volunteering benefits also included physical wellbeing

A few interviewees also commented on the potential for some people to improve their physical as well as their mental health through volunteering for a community business.

**“ ... now he’s working outside, he’s mixing with people, he’s lost weight, his blood pressure’s reduced and he’s the healthiest and happiest he’s been in a long time. So, that actually improves their wellbeing.**

Health and social care community business representative



### 5.3.5 Volunteering provided a sense of achievement

Several volunteers described the satisfaction they gained from helping other people and supporting their community. The findings showed that volunteers' sense of achievement was increased in instances where they received recognition. Some volunteers felt recognised when it was their personal contribution being acknowledged or when the whole community business was praised by the community and fellow volunteers. Others responded well to opportunities for training and development and support with gaining qualifications and accreditations.

**“ The biggest success is seeing other people enjoying the benefits that have been provided to them, really, with the support they’ve needed. That’s the most important thing. Even just in the community conversations, we’ve had a few open days outside the premises that we’ve acquired, just with a table and chairs outside and the drawings on the wall, and invited people who are passing by, and the number of people that have come up and said, ‘This is an amazing project’.**

Community hub volunteer





## 6. Conclusions

### Volunteers are used to deliver and manage services, and lead organisations

Two broad categories of volunteers emerged from our analysis.

**Operational volunteers** deliver services and perform the back-office functions that keep the community business running. Community businesses value softer skills from such volunteers like communication and customer-handling. There are generally no other skills requirements for operational volunteers.

A large collective of personable and adaptable volunteers bind the services of many community businesses together. The most important attribute that community businesses seek is a willingness to volunteer in the first place.

The overall number of volunteers working with businesses taking part in this study was usually unaffected by the pandemic, but the characteristics of volunteers often changed. Business representatives said more older people shielded, while furloughed workers often operated as replacements. Those community businesses reliant on selling or distributing vital supplies, such as community shops, experienced an even greater need for volunteers.

Volunteers can offer adaptability and resilience in challenging circumstances and can be deployed more flexibly (as evidenced by the fall in hours spent volunteering during the pandemic) – especially the larger cohort of generalist volunteers offering time rather than specialist skills. This helped community businesses meet challenges during the pandemic and many proved more adaptable and resilient as a result. These found new customers or offered services that local people increasingly valued and now have the chance to cement these gains as the economy reopens.

**Managerial and specialist volunteers** provide important strategic and technical business support. Many businesses rely on volunteer trustees to use their existing experience, direction and leadership skills to help steer the business. These skills are naturally scarce because of the occupational experience required to develop them and smaller communities will also have a smaller local pool from which to draw.

Where skills shortages exist amongst community businesses, they tend towards specialist expertise and managerial experience. Using these rarer skills for the benefit of the community business is the key determinant separating managerial from operational volunteers.

## **Some community businesses are unviable without volunteer labour**

Voluntary labour is a central element of the financial model of many community businesses, some of which can only operate with volunteers fulfilling operational and leadership roles. Community businesses also benefit from the flexibility of volunteers and the absence of administrative functions associated with paid employees, such as payroll and managing human resources.

More than half of community business representatives agreed that their business would become increasingly reliant on volunteers, to meet increased future demand for their services and a growing interest in volunteering. Such change may offer opportunities to expand and diversify operations, especially where community businesses can integrate the wider skills available from a larger pool of volunteers. Indeed, nearly three in five representatives said their community business was considering recruiting more volunteers for this express purpose.

## **Volunteers' characteristics dictate whether and how they engage with community businesses**

Statistically, retired volunteers are three times more likely than those in employment to want to use their existing skills, and they also volunteered for more hours. Interviews found that volunteering offers a channel for retirees to serve their community with the skills they build over their working lives. There is considerable potential for businesses to make clear how much they value the kind of strategic and leadership-level experience these volunteers can offer, helping address some of the skills gaps currently hindering their business development.

Although the research identified no relationship between how volunteers are deployed by community businesses and their demographic characteristics such as age or gender, there is some evidence that certain sections of the community a local business serves can be under-represented in the volunteer workforce. Community businesses value diversity and representation, not least because it reflects a business's success in reaching its local community and opens a potentially wider market for the public-facing services it wants to provide. Attracting trustees from currently under-represented groups can broaden the appeal of the business to a wider cross section of the community it serves, and a more representative leadership can advise on how to design new or adapt existing services that better meet the needs of the whole community.

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[Data derived from Figure 7]

## Annex A: Logistic regression

Logistic regression is a predictive method of analysis. It compares binary options for a dependent variable against one or more nominal, ordinal, interval or ratio-level independent variables. In this case, the analysis considers whether a volunteer's economic status predicts how they respond to questions within a model. Two logistic regressions were run based on whether or not a volunteer was employed (Model A) and whether or not they were retired (Model B).

In each model, employed and retired participants were assigned a value of 1 versus a 0 for all others. Two conditions were observed when performing this analysis.

- a. Independent variables were subjectively chosen for each model based on whether they may sensibly relate to the dependent variable. For example, Model A considers whether the likelihood or factors such as increased hours spent volunteering and take up of existing skills, is higher for volunteers who are employed compared to those that are not. Independent variables that can be reasoned as more connected to employability are included in the model.
- b. Independent variables displaying multicollinearity (i.e. those that are strongly interrelated) were noted and one of an interrelated group chosen to place into the model. For example, responses regarding the impact of volunteering on wellbeing, confidence and their sense of personal achievement were all highly correlated. The impact on the sense of personal achievement was used in the model as this variable is (subjectively) more relevant to employment than the other two options.
- c. The number of variables in models was limited to minimise any effects from over-fitting which reduces the value of the model for wider interpretation.

The key output of logistic regression model is a likelihood ratio (a chi-squared test) which compares the null model (i.e. a model with no predictors) with the estimated model (with predictors).

Two test statistics are presented for each of the independent variables in the following tables: the odds ratio (Exp(B)) and the standard error for the log-odds from which Exp(B) is calculated.

- The odds ratio describes how much the dependent variable increases in relation to the independent variables.
- Values above 1 indicate the variables move together, less than 1 means the independent variable decreases as the dependent variable increases.
- The extent to which this ratio is significant to the 95% confidence interval ( $p < 0.05$ ) is indicated by an \*. Insignificant finds are shown in grey text.
- All tables are ranked by significance and the independent variables making a significant contribution to the model highlighted.

## Model A: Employed volunteers

**Dependent variable:** Whether or not the respondent was employed.

**Binary selection:** 1 = employed; 0 = not employed.

**Model likelihood ratio chi-square test:** 35.9,  $p < 0.001$

### Commentary:

- Employed volunteer participants nearly twice as likely than those not employed to self-report good social media administration skills.
- Employed volunteer participants half as likely than those not employed to agree they gain a sense of personal achievement from voluntary work and to say they thought volunteering would give them a chance to use their existing skills.

Independent variable	Exp(B)	Standard error
Skill level: Social media administration skills	1.762*	0.157
q12_7 Benefits of volunteering: I gain a sense of personal achievement from voluntary work	0.483*	0.281
q11_10 Most important reasons why started volunteering: I thought it would give me a chance to use my existing skills	0.477*	0.349
'Total months spent volunteering with named community business'	0.995	0.004
Skill level: Communication skills (oral or written)	1.289	0.226
q11_1 Most important reasons why started volunteering: I wanted to improve things/help people in my local community	0.812	0.296
q8 Before Covid-19, did you spend more/same/less hours per week volunteering with the community business compared with now?	1.139	0.186
q13 Have you received vocational training from the community business in the past year?	1.220	0.320
q12_6 Benefits of volunteering: I develop a range of transferable skills	0.926	0.483

## Model B: Retired volunteers

**Dependent variable:** Whether or not the respondent was retired.

**Binary selection:** 1 = retired; 0 = not retired.

**Model likelihood ratio chi-square test:** 62.7,  $p < 0.001$

### Commentary:

- Retired volunteer participants nearly three times as likely than those not retired to say they thought volunteering would give them a chance to use their existing skills.
- Retired volunteer participants nearly twice as likely than those not retired to say they gain a sense of personal achievement from voluntary work and that they wanted to improve things and help their local community.
- Retired volunteer participants half as likely than those not retired to self-report good social media administration skills.

Independent variable	Exp(B)	Standard error
Skill level: social media administration skills	0.406*	0.182
q11_10 Most important reasons why started volunteering: I thought it would give me a chance to use my existing skills	2.710*	0.355
'Total months spent volunteering with named community business'	1.009*	0.004
q12_7 Benefits of volunteering: I gain a sense of personal achievement from voluntary work	1.829*	0.296
q11_1 Most important reasons why started volunteering: I wanted to improve things/help people in my local community	1.891*	0.321
q12_6 Benefits of volunteering: I develop a range of transferable skills	0.323	0.622
q8 Before Covid-19, did you spend more/same/less hours per week volunteering with the community business compared with now?	0.756	0.202
Skill level: Communication skills (oral or written)	0.927	0.231

CFE Research

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