

Working with Scotland's Communities 2018 Workforce analysis of community learning and development (CLD) in Scotland - Messages about CLD volunteers

1 About the original report

Rocket Science was commissioned in March 2018 by Education Scotland and the CLD Standards Council Scotland to conduct research to understand the community learning and development (CLD) workforce in Scotland. The research focuses on understanding the make-up of the current workforce, the challenges it faces and the development and support needs of the workforce. Of the 1114 individual CLD practitioners responding to the survey 151 were volunteers (13.3%).

2 The contribution of CLD volunteers

One of the key findings of the report is that 'Volunteers are a hugely valued part of the CLD workforce'. Volunteers are seen by practitioners and employers as a vital part of supporting communities and bring important skills and an understanding of communities. Some practitioners and employers noted that a lot is expected of volunteers.

In interviews, employers and practitioners were very positive about using volunteers, viewing them as a valuable resource whose involvement was at the core of CLD. Employers highlighted the best feature of using volunteers as their ability to represent and engage with their local communities and to be trusted.

"We see the proper value in their part, they sit around the table with the staff."

"They bring a lot – help us stay on the ground and understand what is going on out there"

"They have a massive skillset and depth of skills and experience, we wouldn't be able to develop services otherwise, we give them the same training and support as the paid staff"

"We try to recognise volunteers as much as possible (...) We value our volunteers, we wouldn't be able to do what we do in the community without them, we enable and support them because they deliver our service" – Employer

3 How many CLD volunteers are there?

The survey estimated that there is likely to be in the region of 255,000 volunteers working in CLD across the third sector and local authorities in Scotland.

4 How much time do CLD volunteers contribute to organisations?

Employers were asked to provide an estimate of the amount of time, on average, that people volunteered within their organisation each week. Results showed that volunteering was split between those who did fewer than five hours per week, and those who did between five and 15 hours (Figure 35), with very few volunteers (0.2%) volunteering more than 15 hours on average.

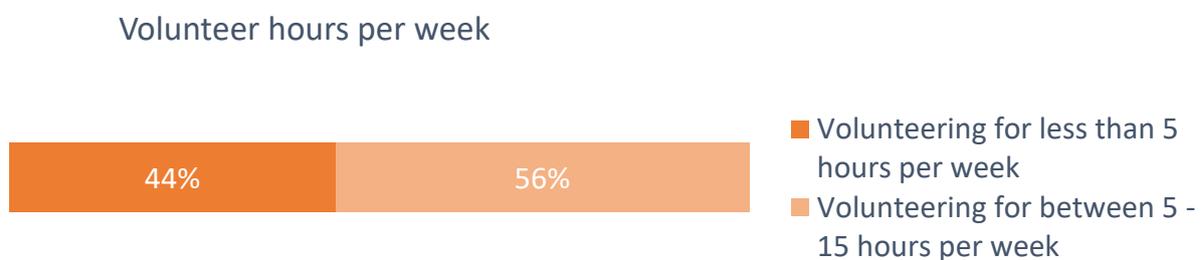


Figure 1: volunteer hours per week from employer survey

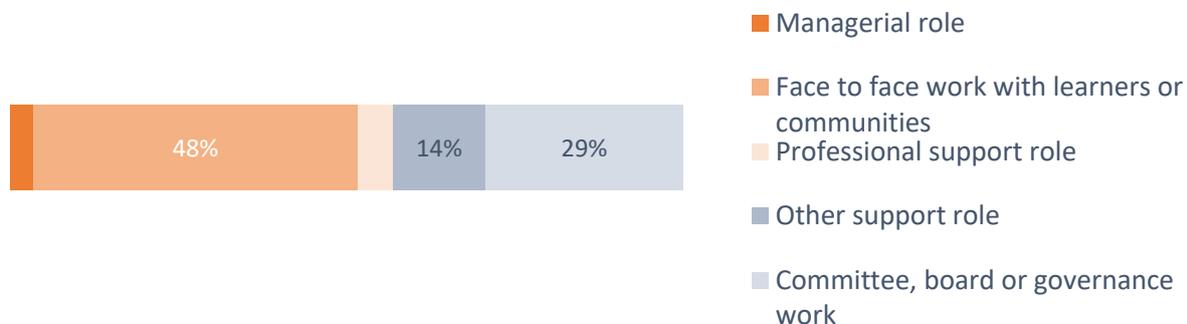
There were some trends by sector to note:

- Volunteers in the public sector were slightly more likely to work a greater number of hours per week than in the third sector
- It was more common to volunteer more than five hours per week in Youth Work than in Community Development or Adult Learning.

5 What do volunteers do?

Volunteers performed a wide variety of functions in CLD, and the way that volunteers tended to be used varied by sector and job focus. Around half of all functions performed by volunteers were face-to-face roles with learners or communities, while 29% were Committee, Board or Governance work. It was not common for volunteers to be providing managerial or professional support functions.

CLD volunteers by the type of work they do



There were some trends by sector to note:

- 67% of the functions of public sector volunteers were face to face roles, compared with 40% of the third sector
- 20% of third sector volunteer functions were 'other support roles', which made up none of public sector volunteer functions
- Volunteers in Community Development were slightly more likely to perform an 'other support role' function and slightly less likely to have a face to face role.

6 Are volunteers expected to have qualifications?

Employers were asked whether volunteers were sometimes required to undertake specific CLD training too. Only 17% reported that they were, while 30% stated that they were not. However, it was most common for employers to feel that this did not apply to them.

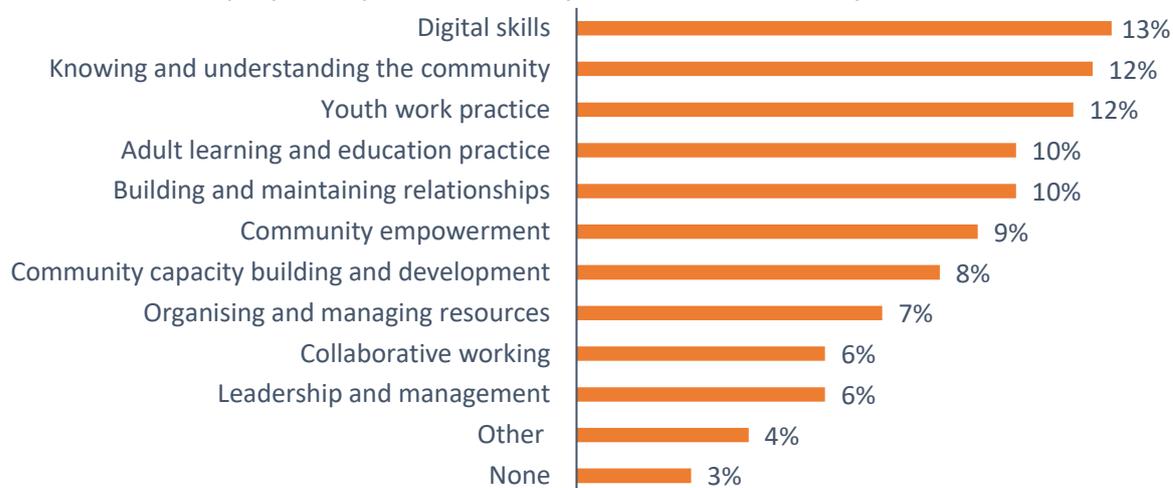
7 Recruitment and development needs for volunteers

When employers were asked whether they could recruit volunteers with the appropriate skills and competencies, the majority felt they could.

Employers interviewed were clear that they did not tend to look for already skilled volunteers, valuing commitment and passion more.

Employers most commonly felt that the volunteers they recruited had development needs related to digital skills (Figure 53). As employers also report a lack of digital skills amongst their employees, this may be a difficult development need to support.

Employers reported a variety of volunteer development needs



The majority of employers interviewed felt they could provide adequate support and training to volunteers. Among those who did this successfully, volunteers were provided with a range of development opportunities which included accredited learning and leadership courses. In many cases, there was an appointed member of staff responsible for volunteer training and management.

Among employers who felt their organisation could not provide adequate support to volunteers, common elements were capacity, in terms of not having the appropriate staff to manage volunteer recruitment or enough time and funding to invest in training volunteers. This tells a similar story to issues concerning staff professional development.

“The problem is volunteers need servicing –to direct, support them, and that comes at a cost, a matter of financial shortages preventing us to do more with volunteers” – Employer

8 Impact of reduction in size of paid CLD workforce

Employers were asked whether the size of their workforce had changed since 2015. Overall, a greater proportion felt that the number of paid workers in their organisation had decreased, than increased. Survey analysis revealed that public sector employers were having to combat reducing staff numbers by recruiting more volunteers.

Adult Learning employers were more likely to have seen an increase in volunteers since 2015 than Youth Work or Community Development employers. This suggests that employers in this area are having to mitigate the effects of diminishing staff numbers through recruiting more volunteers.

9 Understanding the role of volunteers in the CLD sector

The research highlighted that to better understand the profile and role of volunteers in CLD further research is required. The big message coming out of the research is that: **'Volunteers are a hugely valued part of the CLD workforce'** and that **'their involvement is at the core of CLD'**. Findings which merit further exploration include:

- The view that a lot is expected of volunteers
- Employers who felt their organisation did not have the capacity to provide adequate support to volunteers in terms of not having the appropriate staff to manage volunteer recruitment or enough time and funding to invest in training volunteers.
- Survey analysis revealed that public sector employers were having to combat reducing staff numbers by recruiting more volunteers.

CLDSC will continue to advocate for the need both for paid, professionally qualified practitioners and for properly supported volunteers.

In response to the full findings of the survey CLDSC has initiated a review which will look at the Professional Learning (PL) opportunities available to CLD practitioners including volunteers and assess the extent to which there is a PL pathway along which volunteers can travel and gain accreditation leading to paid employment in CLD if they wish to do so.